
The Long-term Effects of Father Role Meanings on Men's Psychological Well-being in the U.S.

This study aims to explore the men's perceived meanings attached to the father role and to investigate the relationship between the father role meanings and men's psychological well-being. Using two waves of data from the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH) across 5 years, this study estimated the influences of the father role meanings at T1 on psychological well-being of fathers at T2 with hierarchical Ordinary Least Square (OLS) regression models. Findings showed that the majority of fathers felt the father roles interesting, appreciated, sociable, and well-done. However, stepfathers reported significantly more negative meanings of the father role than fathers having biological children. Positive role meanings attached to the father role in terms of interesting and well-done were significantly associated with men's psychological well-being. Although this study has some limitations by using the secondary survey data (NSFH), this study has an advantage in exploring the association between fatherhood experiences and men's psychological well-being from men's own perspectives. Also, this study has strength in a sense that long-term effects of the father role meanings were investigated and empirically provide findings in consistent with role identity.

As the traditional meaning of fatherhood – the physically present father who serves as a primary economic provider for the family – has gradually diminished over the past 50 years, the attention of public policy makers and scholars to fatherhood has

increased (Lamb, 2004). Specifically, changes in social consciousness in terms of the growth of feminism and the egalitarian perspective on gender roles contributed to the emergence of the image of androgynous fathers (Palkovitz, 2002). Social economic changes such as increases in women's participation in labor force, declines in men's income, and the growth of dual-earner families have encouraged men to engage in child-rearing more actively as well as contribute to breadwinning (Williams, 2000).

Along with both cultural and practical needs for actively involved fathers in child-rearing, a substantive body of research has explored fathering activities beyond the dichotomy between father-presence and father-absence and paid attention to father identity beyond the role of family breadwinner (Flouri, 2005). Numerous studies attempted to elaborate concepts and measures in reference to various kinds and levels of fathering activities and involvement (Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2004) and father role identity and meanings (Ihinger-Tallman, Pasley, & Buehler, 1995). Furthermore, a substantial amount of research has investigated distinctive relationships between fathers and children and the independent contributions of fatherhood to child development (Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2004).

Despite the growth of attention to meanings of the father role, there is a substantive void in previous literature. First and foremost, relatively little is known about the impact of the father role on men's own development or well-being (Eggebeen & Knoester, 2001; Palkovitz, 2002), even though parenthood is considered one of the most important

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and influential life events that provide central roles for adults (Erikson, 1982). Moreover, little research has explored the association of fatherhood and men's well-being with a long-term perspective. That is, the long-term effects of meanings of the father role have not been investigated.

The overarching purpose of this study is to fill this gap by investigating the relationship between fatherhood and men's psychological well-being. Using two waves of data from the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH) across 5 years, this study investigates the extent to which meanings of the father role affect men's psychological well-being over time. My specific goals are to explore patterns of fathers role meanings across various configurations of fathers role and to estimate the long-term effects of the father role meanings on men's psychological well-being.

Theoretical and Empirical Background

Role-identity Theory Role-identity theory provides theoretical underpinning for the idea that psychological well-being is influenced by meanings attached to a particular role. According to role-identity theory, a role provides people with a sense of purpose and meanings, which can be internal sources of their psychological well-being (Thoits, 1983). Moreover, a role yields the rewards, such as economic benefits and social supports, which can be external sources of psychological well-being. Therefore, meanings of the father role are expected to influence men's psychological well-being.

The association between meanings of the father role and men's psychological well-being can be conceptualized with the concepts of *role meanings* and *reflexivity* premised on role-identity theory. *Role meanings* indicate meanings that persons attribute to themselves in a particular role (Burke, 1980; Stryker, 2002). Contrary to role salience, which refers to the importance and centrality of the role in one's intangible role-identity hierarchy, role meanings involve more various aspects beyond the importance. For example, the role can be perceived as interesting, boring, manageable, or overwhelming in terms of individual responses and identification with the role.

These various meanings attached to the role have

emerged through the principle of *reflexivity* premised on role-identity theory. *Reflexivity* refers to 'the feedback to the self of the consequences of the processes that are the self' (Stryker, 2002, p.132) and represents the nature of ongoing and cyclic identity process. For clarity, it may be helpful to keep in mind two central themes of role identity theory: self and society. The core principle of role identity theory, *reflexivity*, is that the two domains or structures of 'self' and 'society' impact each other reciprocally and incessantly through interactions between them. That is, a feedback regarding a specific role leads individuals to identify and respond to the role with various meanings, such as pleasurable or tiresome, respectfulness or neglectfulness, confidence or uneasiness, competence or incompetence, connection with others or isolation, and so on.

Role identity theory assumes that subjective meanings attached to a particular role make a greater impact on psychological well-being than the role per se given from social structure (Higgins, 1987). In other words, subjective meanings toward the father role rather than the father role per se enhance or threaten men's psychological well-being. For example, pleasure or competence through a father role makes men happy whereas a feeling of isolation, neglectfulness, or uneasiness in terms of the father role makes men distressed. Because a person tends to achieve and maintain positive meanings of the social role (Tajfel & Turner, 1988), positive meanings of the father role among various meanings attached the father role (e.g., interesting, competent) are expected to enhance men's psychological well-being.

In sum, role-identity theory provides useful concepts to understand relations between meanings of fatherhood and men's psychological well-being. Specifically, positive meanings related to the father role rather than negative meanings are expected to affect positively men's psychological well-being. One thing important to note is that the definition of the father role can be subjective. Some men may emphasize good relationships with children within the father role, while others may stress the breadwinner role or the disciplinarian role as the primary aspect of the father role. Nevertheless,

personal meanings concerning the father role are expected to affect men's psychological well-being, regardless of the aspects that a man stresses as the essence of the father role.

Role-identity theory assumes that role identity and role behaviors can be understood only within a specific situation context and, therefore, ambiguous situation hinders strong role identity and appropriate role behaviors and, furthermore, may threaten a person's psychological well-being. Therefore, I expect that various structures of the father role in terms of marital status, residential status, and types of relations with children significantly influence men's psychological well-being.

Empirical Evidence Most previous studies about the father role identity have employed the concept of father identity salience (Pleck & Masciadrell, 2004; Pleck & Stueve, 2004). Role-identity theory assumes that multiple identities are hierarchically organized based on the subjective importance and centrality of roles (Stryker, 2002). According to role-identity theory, salient role-identity encourages a greater commitment to the role. Greater role commitment, in turn, contributes to positive assessment of self-esteem and self-worth because of meanings and purposes that the role provides (Reitzes & Mutran, 1994; Thoits, 1983; Thoits, 1992). Surprisingly, however, there are only a few studies that examined the direct relations between paternal identity and men's psychological well-being. Instead, most previous studies on paternal identity have paid attention to the paternal identity as a source of father involvement or behaviors (Henrey & Pasley, 2005; Ihinger-Talman *et al.*, 1993; McBride *et al.*, 2005; Minton & Pasley, 1996; Rane & McBride, 2000; see Pleck & Masciadrell, 2004 for a review).

Furthermore, the limited studies regarding the associations between role identity and psychological well-being did not support for role identity theory in which salience or importance of the role is expected to be positively associated with psychological outcomes and negatively associated with psychological distress. For example, Thoits (1992) predicted that role salience would reduce distress or the usage of alcohol or drugs with randomly selected 700 married

and divorced adults in the Indianapolis area. The author asked respondents to sort roles that they occupy into three groups: the most important, second most important, and third most important to them. Findings showed that almost all men and women sorted the parental role into the most important role, and a parental role was placed in higher ranking than a worker role based on the mean salience ranking of each role in respondents' role hierarchies. Contrary to her expectations, however, role salience was not related to psychological distress or substance use. To compensate for the drawback of the cross-sectional data, the author subsequently investigated whether positive or negative events related to the role salience affected substance use or psychological distress two years later (Thoits, 1995). However, findings still showed that role salience measured by relative importance of the role did not systemically reduce negative psychological outcomes.

Similarly, Reitzes and Mutran (1994) also predicted positive relations between role importance and self esteem but little significant association was found from the regional data with middle aged working men and women. Among worker, spouse, and parent roles, only worker role was significantly associated with self esteem for men and, the association was against the prediction about the positive associations. That is, men who thought the parent role important did not show a significantly higher self esteem than those who thought it less important and, furthermore, men who thought the worker role important were more likely to show a lower self esteem than those who thought it less important.

Likewise, the empirical literature does not provide a consistent result to support role identity theory regarding the positive association between role identity and psychological well-being. This discrepancy between the theory and empirical findings may be partly because role identity has been measured with the concept of role salience in spite of that various meanings can be embedded in one salient role and the effects of the role identity on one's psychological well-being are varied by its meanings. The study by Reitzes and Mutran (1994) merits attention because it fills the void in previous

studies about role-identity by including various role meanings. With interviews with middle-aged employed men and women in North Carolina, the authors investigated associations between role meanings attached to a parent, a spouse and a worker role and self-esteem. Specifically, role meanings were assessed with three dimensions: competent, sociable, and confident. 'Competent' is the task-directed or instrumental dimension that represents self meanings of success or achievement in a role and was assessed with three semantic items: active vs. inactive, successful vs. unsuccessful, and competent vs. not competent. 'Sociable' is the expressive dimension of role meaning that represents self meanings related to an outgoing interpersonal style and was assessed with three semantic items: warm vs. cold, open vs. closed, and social vs. solitary. 'Confident' refers to an emotional or affective aspect of identity meanings that reflect a feeling of self-assured in a role. Confident meaning was measured with three semantic items: relaxed vs. tense, happy vs. sad, and confident vs. anxious. Findings show that confident and sociable meanings attached to the parent role were positively associated with self esteem. However, the effects of sociable dimension disappeared when other identities (i.e., worker and spouse) were considered in the analysis and the effects of confident dimension on self esteem were marginal for men.

In sum, relatively little research has investigated the effects of the father role meanings on men's psychological well-being empirically, and furthermore, the literature does not provide clear and consistent results with regard to role-identity theory. This discrepancy may be in part resolved by taking into account various aspects of role meanings of the parent role which is usually perceived one of the most important/salient roles. Various positive role meanings attached the father role, such as pleasure/enjoyment, reflected appraisal, confidence, sociability, and competency, are expected to be associated with a greater psychological well-being.

Based on aforementioned theoretical and empirical backgrounds, I proposed to investigate two research questions:

- Do father role meanings vary in terms of

structure of fatherhood (i.e., men's marital status, residential status, and types of relationship with children)?

- What effect do father role meanings exert on men's psychological well-being prospectively?

METHODS

Data

For the present study, I analyze two waves of data from the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH). The first wave (T1) of the NSFH collected interviews about various family issues from 13,017 respondents who were randomly selected from a multistage area probability sample of the United States between 1987 and 1988. Interviews were conducted with randomly selected non-institutionalized adults age 19 or over. The NSFH includes a double sample of African American, Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans, single parents, stepparents, cohabitators, and recently married persons. The second wave (T2) of this survey, collected about 5 years later (i.e., between 1992 and 1993), included re-interviews of 10,007 of the original primary respondents at Time 1 and additional interviews with current spouse or partner, a focal child, and parents of the main respondents. The response rate at Time 1 was about 75% and the response rate at Time 2 was almost 82% of first wave respondents.

Analytic Sample

The analytic sample for the present study consists of the NSFH main respondents who were married fathers having one or more biological/adopted or stepchildren age 5 to 18 in their household at Time 1 (N=1,249 at T1). I restricted the analytic sample to fathers who were married at Time 1, because it would help to simplify the measurement of changes in the structure of fatherhood over 5 years of the survey. Also, I limited my sample to fathers who had children aged 5 to 18. The response rate at T2 of the analytic sample was 80.8% (N=1,009). In other words, analytic sample attrition between T1 and T2 was 19.2%. Table 1 displays summary of analytic samples regarding key variables of this study:

Table 1. *Summary of Analysis Variables*

	Num	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Psychological Well-being					
T1 self esteem	1151	5.66	1.64	3	15
T2 Psychological Wellness	956	41.90	11.64	18	108
Father Role Meanings					
Interesting – Boring	1120	5.73	1.30	1	7
Appreciated-Unappreciated	1123	5.47	1.48	1	7
Manageable - Overwhelming	1114	5.02	1.70	1	7
Sociable - Lonely	1113	5.66	1.33	1	7
Well-done – Poorly-done	1113	5.71	1.18	1	7
Structures of the Father role					
Types of relations with children (T1) (ref. only bio)					
Only stepchildren	1249	.094	.29	0	1
Both Bio and step	1249	.101	.30	0	1
Marital Status (ref. continuously married)					
Marr → Divorced	1009	.117	.32	0	1
Marr → Div Remar	1009	.041	.20	0	1
Residential Status (ref. continuously only resident)					
Resident → Non resident	1009	.120	.33	0	1
Nonresident → Resident	1009	.051	.22	0	1
Nonresident → Nonresident	1009	.053	.22	0	1
Control Variables					
Age	1249	38.90	8.15	18	72
Race (ref. white)					
Black	1249	0.16	0.37	0	1
Hispanic	1249	0.14	0.31	0	1
Age of the youngest child	1249	7.99	5.15	0	18
Age of the oldest child	1249	12.56	4.77	5	30
Timing of fatherhood	1020	24.25	4.835	13	42
T2 Income (log)	980	10.61	0.92	5.66	13.82
T2 Education (ref. high school diploma)					
Less than high school	1009	.140	.347	0	1
Some college experiences	1009	.253	.435	0	1
College degree or more	1009	.264	.441	0	1

dependent variables (i.e., men's psychological well-being), independent variables (i.e., father role meanings), and control variables along with the structure of fatherhood.

Measures

Dependent Variable Psychological Well-being
Psychological well-being is a multidimensional

construct regarding optimal experience and functioning beyond the opposite of pathological mental illness (Ryan & Deci, 2001). To investigate the effects of the father role meanings on men's psychological well-being, I measured the psychological well-being with Ryff's psychological wellness scale. Ryff (1989a, 1989b, 1991, & 1995) highlights the multidimensionality of the psychological wellness,

which reflects the optimal or successful adult development. The composite index of Ryff's six dimensions of positive psychological wellness includes autonomy, positive relations with others, purpose of life, self-acceptance, environmental mastery, and personal growth. In the NSFH, each dimension was assessed with three of the original 20 items. Respondents were asked to rate how strongly they agreed with each statement on a six point scale (from 1-strongly agree to 6-strongly disagree) at T2. Internal reliability of this 18-item composite index of psychological wellness was .82.

Independent Variables Meanings of the Father Role

Meanings of the father role at T1 were assessed with six adjective pairs in a bipolar semantic differential scale. Respondents were asked to describe the things they do as a parent rated on a seven-point five semantic differential scales: interesting/boring, appreciated/unappreciated, manageable/overwhelming, sociable/lonely, and well-done/poorly-done. The semantic differential scales of interesting/boring and appreciated/unappreciated were reverse-coded. The closer scores to interesting, appreciated, manageable, sociable, and well-done were interpreted that the more positive meanings fathers have. That is, a higher score reflects the more positive meaning of the father role. These five items can be related to various meanings of the role, such as pleasure, reflected appraisal, confidence, comfort, sociability, and competence. The role meaning of interesting/boring reflects the pleasure that the father role gives. The role meaning of appreciated/unappreciated implies the reflected appraisal through the father role. The meaning pair of manageable/overwhelming is associated with the confidence that a person has regarding the father role. The meaning pair of sociable/lonely is related to how a father feels the father role socially supportive and recognizes it as a kind of social network. Finally, the pair of well-done/poorly-done may represent the competence that a person has as a father.

Structures of the Father Role Types of relationships with children were assessed with the information on what types of children they had in the household

(i.e. biological/adopted children, stepchildren, or both biological and stepchildren). In the analysis, I used data on types of relations with children at T1 rather than on changes in the relationship type between waves because the number of fathers who experienced changes in types of relations with children between T1 and T2 was too small for statistical analysis. Types of relations with children were measured with a categorical variable: only biological/adopted child (N=813), only stepchild (N=99), and both biological and stepchildren (N=97).

Marital status was assessed with the information on changes in marital status between T1 and T2. Respondents were asked to report their marital status (i.e. married, separated because of marital problem, divorced, widowed or never-married) at T2, and reported their union history between waves. Based on that information, I categorized changes in marital status between T1 and T2 with a categorical variable: continuously married (N=849), transition from married to single (separated, divorced, or widowed) (N=118), and transitions from married to single to a new union (N=42; 19 remarried and 23 cohabiting).

Residential status with children was assessed with information on the existence of non-resident minor children between T1 and T2. Respondents were asked to answer dichotomously whether they had any biological children age 18 or younger living elsewhere at T1 (Yes = 1, No = 0). At T2, respondents were asked whether they had any biological children living elsewhere and to report ages of eligible children. The residential status in terms of having non-resident minor children between T1 and T2 was measured with a categorical variable which has four groups: continuously only resident father (CR) (omitted variable), becoming a non-resident father (NR), becoming only a resident father (R), and continuously both resident and non-resident father (CNR). I defined 'non-resident fathers' at T2 as fathers who had children 18 years old or younger living elsewhere. I regarded children who resided with their fathers at T1 but lived elsewhere when they became 19 years old as the continuity rather than change in residential status with children in

terms of non-resident children. In other words, continuously resident fathers (CR) included fathers who had only resident minor children at T1 and did not reside with any children at T2 as children became adults. Also, continuously non-resident fathers (CNR) included fathers who had both resident and non-resident minor children at T1 and did not reside with any children but still had non-resident minor children at T2.

Control Variables To control the initial status of psychological wellness, T1 self esteem was included as a baseline measure of Ryff's psychological wellness scale. T2 psychological wellness was the most closely associated with T1 self esteem ($r=.31$) compared to the other psychological well-being outcomes, such as life satisfaction, happiness, depression. Self-esteem was assessed with three items of the self-esteem scale by Rosenberg (1965), with Cronbach's alphas of .62 at Time 1. Respondents were asked to indicate how strongly agree with the following three statements on a five point scale (1-strongly agree to 5-strongly disagree): "I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others", "I am able to do things as well as other people", and "On the whole, I am satisfied with myself". Responses were reversely coded and a higher score reflected the higher self esteem.

Demographic and socio-economic characteristics Previous studies have shown relationships of demographic characteristics with father role meanings and with psychological well-being (Palkovitz, 2002). Accordingly, I controlled for demographic and socio-economic characteristics (i.e. age, race, income, and education) in all analyses in order to prevent spurious correlations between the father role meanings and men's psychological well-being. Father's age was measured as chronological age at T1. Race was measured with a categorical variable with three categories: White American (N=897), African American (N=204), and Mexican American (N=130). The rest of racial minority was only 15 and the number was too small for statistical analysis. Therefore, I recoded 15 racial minority respondents and 3 non-response cases into missing. Income was

measured with logged household income at T2. Education was coded with four dummy variables: less than high school education, high school diploma (omitted variable), some college experiences, and college degree or more at T2.

Family characteristics I controlled for the age of children and timing of fatherhood as family characteristics in all analyses. Age of the children was measured by a chronological age of youngest and oldest child, because children's ages have been shown to be related to parent's psychological well-being (Hugh, 1989; Umberson & Gove, 1989). Timing of fatherhood was controlled because the timing of parenthood is associated with attitudes toward parenthood as well as men's psychological well-being. The later men became fathers, the more positive role meaning men showed (Coltrane & Ishij-Kuntz, 1992; Daniel & Weingarten, 1982; Heuvel, 1988). The timing of fatherhood was measured by a man's chronological age at the first birth or for step fathers, the age at which men married their current wives.

Analytic Sequence To explore men's perceived role meanings attached to the father role across the structure of the fatherhood, I conducted t-tests and ANOVAs. To assess the long-term effects of the father role meanings at T1 on men's psychological well-being at T2, I estimated hierarchical Ordinary Least Square regression model between two waves. Specifically, in the first step, I examined the effect of the previous psychological well-being at T1 (1988-1989) on men's psychological well-being about 5 years later at T2 (1992-1993). Next, I added control variables in model 2. In model 3, I included the father role meanings. Lastly, in a full model, structures of fatherhood in terms of types of relations with children, marital status, and residential status with children between T1 and T2 were included (model 4).

RESULTS

Father Role Meanings Across Structures of Fatherhood

Table 2 presents frequency distributions for the

Table 2. Frequency of the father role meanings (N (%))

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Boring	7 (.6)	11 (.9)	48 (3.8)	145 (11.6)	205 (16.4)	293 (21.5)	411 (32.9)	Interesting
Unappreciated	14 (1.1)	32 (2.6)	77 (6.2)	158 (12.7)	211 (16.9)	268 (21.5)	363 (29.1)	Appreciated
Overwhelming	61 (4.9)	113 (9.1)	168 (13.5)	290 (23.2)	166 (12.3)	133 (10.7)	180 (14.4)	Manageable
Lonely	13 (1.0)	16 (1.3)	45 (3.6)	139 (11.1)	195 (15.6)	343 (27.5)	362 (29.0)	Sociable
Poorly-done	7 (0.6)	11 (0.9)	36 (2.9)	104 (8.3)	245 (19.6)	393 (31.5)	317 (25.4)	Well-done

Table 3. Mean Scores of the Father Role Meanings Across Types of Relations with Children at T1

	Only Bio (T1) (N=904)		Only Step(T1) (N=102)		Bio&Step (T1) (N=114)		F
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Interesting/Boring	5.79 ^a	1.25	5.17 ^b	1.46	5.68 ^a	1.41	10.91 ^{***}
Appreciated/Unappreciated	5.54 ^a	1.44	4.87 ^b	1.60	5.49 ^a	1.54	9.43 ^{***}
Manageable/Overwhelming	4.38	1.76	4.18	1.69	4.29	1.62	0.71
Sociable/Lonely	5.70 ^a	1.33	5.28 ^b	1.39	5.69 ^{ab}	1.21	4.58 ^{**}
Well-done/Poorly-done	5.75 ^a	1.18	5.31 ^b	1.24	5.72 ^a	1.09	6.39 ^{***}

Note: Means in the same row that do not share superscripts differ

* $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$

Table 4. Mean Scores of the Father Role Meanings Across Residential Status With Children at T1

	Only Resident (N=996)		Resid&Non-res (N=124)		T-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Interesting/Boring	5.73	1.29	5.69	1.37	.29
Appreciated/Unappreciated	5.47	1.47	5.50	1.55	-.26
Manageable/Overwhelming	4.32	1.74	4.61	1.71	-1.72 [†]
Sociable/Lonely	5.66	1.32	5.66	1.40	.06
Well-done/Poorly-done	5.71	1.18	5.71	1.19	-.03

father role meanings. Father role meanings tended to be skewed positively except manageable/overwhelming. On the seven-point bipolar scales, about 30% of respondents thought the father role mostly interesting (32.9%), appreciated (29.1%), and sociable (29.0%) (point 7) and one fourth of respondents thought the father role mostly well-done (25.4%). By contrast, less than one percent of respondents reported the father role mostly boring (0.6%), unappreciated (1.1%), lonely (1.0%) or poorly done (0.6%) (point 1). Likewise, the majority of fathers reported their father roles were interesting, appreciated, sociable, and well-done. On the semantic differential

scale of manageable vs. overwhelming; however, fathers' responses were normally distributed. Almost one fourth fathers fall in-between feelings of manageable and overwhelming (23.2%).

The mean scores of father role meanings significantly differed across types of relations with children at T1. Fathers having biological children (i.e., either having only biological children or having both biological and stepchildren) reported significantly higher mean scores of interesting, appreciated, and well-done semantic pairs than those having only stepchildren ($F=10.91$; $F= 9.43$; $F= 6.39$, $p<.001$, respectively). Also, fathers having only biological

Table 5. Estimated Unstandardized Regression Coefficients for the Associations Between Father Role Meanings at T1 and Men's Psychological Well-being at T2

	T2 Psychological Wellness (N=820)			
	M1	M2	M3	M4
T1 Esteem	2.29***	1.97***	1.55***	1.51***
Age		.13	.15*	.16*
Black		1.65	1.08	1.06
Hispanic		.19	-.33	-.50
T1 Age of Youngest		.08	.12	.10
T1 Age of Oldest		-.10	-.10	-.04
Timing of Father		-.09	-.13	-.15
T2 Income (log)		1.12**	1.20**	1.12*
T2 Education (ref: high school diploma)				
Less than high school		-4.29***	-5.13***	-5.10***
Some college experience		2.18*	1.62	1.62
College graduate or more		3.54***	2.85**	2.84**
T1 Father Role Meanings				
Interesting vs. Boring			.83*	.91*
Appreciated vs. Unappreciated			.06	.06
Manageable vs. Overwhelming			.17	.21
Sociable vs. Lonely			.41	.41
Well-done vs. Poorly-done			1.32***	1.31***
Types of fathers (T1) (vs. Only biological children)				
Only stepchild				2.28
Both bio & step				-2.54
Marr status (T1 → T2)(vs. continuously married)				
Marr → Divorced				-1.76
Marr → Div → Remarr				.33
Resid Status (T1 → T2) (vs. continuously resident)				
Resid → Non resid				-.59
Nonresid → Resid				1.91
Nonresid → Nonresid				-.15
Constant	55.80***	44.11***	33.15***	34.37***
R ²	.10	.18	.22	.23
Change in R ²		.08	.04	.01

* $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$

children showed that they were more likely to feel the father role would be sociable than lonely compared to those having both biological and stepchildren or having only stepchildren. Fathers having only stepchildren showed significantly the lowest score of the role meaning of social/lonely. Father role meaning in terms of manageable/overwhelming did not show any difference across types of relations with children.

Father role meanings did not significantly differ across residential status with children (Table 4).

Fathers having both resident and non-resident children reported only marginally significantly higher mean score of role meaning in terms of manageable/overwhelming than those having only resident children ($t=-1.72, p<.10$).

Effects of the Father Role on Men's Psychological Well-being

Findings from the hierarchical Ordinary Least Square (OLS) regression models which estimated the associations between T1 father role meanings and

psychological wellness at T2 are shown in Table 5. Model 1 tested the association of the previous psychological well-being with psychological wellness over 5 years. Model 1 shows that men with higher self esteem at T1 were more likely to show the higher psychological wellness at T2 ($b=2.29$, $p\leq.001$). Model 1 including T1 self esteem as a baseline variable explained 9.9% of the variance in psychological wellness at T2. In model 2, I added demographic and family characteristics as control variables. Findings from model 2 show that men's age and income, and educational attainment were statistically significantly associated with men's psychological well-being. Model 2 explained 17.6% of the variance in psychological wellness at T2, and by taking into account control variables, the explained variance in T2 psychological wellness was increased by 7.7% over model 1 ($F=7.30$, $p<.001$).

Model 3 included five semantic differential items attached to the father role. Among five semantic differential scales, two pairs – interesting/boring and well-done/poorly-done - were significantly associated with psychological wellness at T2. Men who regarded the father role as interesting at T1 were significantly more likely to show a higher psychological wellness at T2 than those who felt the father role boring at T1 ($b=.83$, $p\leq.01$). Also, men who felt his father role well-done at T1 were significantly more likely to show a higher psychological wellness at T2 than those who felt the father role poorly-done at T1 ($b=1.32$, $p\leq.001$). This model explained 22.0% of the variance in psychological wellness at T2 and an increase in R^2 of 4.4% over model 2 was significant in model 3 ($F=8.4$, $p<.001$).

In a Model 4, structures of fatherhood over 5 years were added to model 3. Holding structures of fatherhood (i.e., types of relations with children, changes in marital status and changes in residential status with children) fixed, the effects of the father role meanings on men's psychological well-being maintained. Specifically, a pleasant and competent role meanings attached to the father role were significantly associated with psychological wellness over time. Men having interesting or well-done role meaning at T1 were more likely to report higher psychological well-being at T2 than those having

boring or poorly-done role meanings ($b=.91$, $p\leq.01$; $b=1.31$, $p\leq.001$, respectively). By taking into account structures of fatherhood, the explained variance in T2 psychological wellness was increased by 1.1% over model 3 ($F=1.86$, $p\leq.10$).

DISCUSSION

Although attention to fatherhood has increased and various configurations of fathers have emerged, little has been known about the long-term effects of the father role meanings on men's own psychological well-being. This study took advantage of national longitudinal data. I explored men's perception of the father role and examined the long-term effects of meanings of the father role on men's psychological well-being. Based on role-identity theory, I expected positive role meanings attached to the father role would affect men's multidimensional psychological well-being prospectively.

Previous empirical studies regarding the association between father role identity and men's psychological well-being have not provided the strong evidence (Reitzes & Mutran, 1994; Simon, 1992; Thoits, 1992, 1995) in spite of the theoretical expectation based on role identity theory (Burke, 1991; Stryker, 2002; Stryker & Burke, 2000). This limitation may be in part caused by the fact that the salience or the importance of the father role was primarily considered in the previous literature. Since most men think the father role is the most important role among multiple roles that they hold (Thoits, 1992), few variance in the father role salience would exist. Furthermore, role identity theory assumes that perceived meanings of the particular role make a greater impact on psychological well-being than the role per se given from social structure (e.g., the father role per se) (Higgins, 1987). Thus, in this study, I expected that positive role meanings in terms of individual responses and identification to the father role would affect men's psychological well-being over time.

Findings showed that the majority of fathers regarded the father roles interesting, appreciated, sociable, and well-done rather than boring,

unappreciated, lonely, and poorly-done. However, there is a significant difference in father role meanings across types of relations with children. Fathers having only stepchildren felt the father role more boring, unappreciated, lonely, and poorly-done than those having biological children. This finding is consistent with assumption of the role identity theory. According to the role identity theory, external events which conflict with existing role identity, such as being divorced, living apart from children, and being a stepfather, assume to lead men to adopt a new identity instead of maintaining the old one (Stryker, 2002). Accordingly, stepfathers may not receive clear signals or expectations about the appropriate identity and role behaviors as a father. In practice, social expectations for stepfathers have been relatively absent. That is, stepfathers are invisible in social policy, the interface between families and schools (Crosbie-Burnett, 1994) and laws (Fine & Fine, 1992). Under these circumstances, fathers have only stepchildren may tend to grapple with uncertainty about the father role and to show negative father role meanings. Regarding residential status with children, father role meanings did not significantly differ across residential status with children. Because this study compared fathers having only resident child with those having both resident and non-resident children rather than having only non-resident child, the result may be different in the comparison between only resident fathers and only non-resident fathers.

The associations between role meanings and psychological well-being varied across specific role meanings (i.e., five semantic pairs). Overall, this study provided the more consistent evidence than previous studies regarding the positive association between father role meanings and men's psychological well-being over 5 years. Specifically, positive role meanings attached to the father role in terms of interesting/boring and well-done/poorly-done were related with psychological well-being of men. This study has strength in a sense that various specific meanings attached to the father role were taken into account beyond the importance of the father role and empirically provide consistent findings regarding the effects of the father role meanings on men's

psychological well-being over time. In particular, this study provides the evidence supporting for the theoretical hypothesis by looking at its long-term effects of father role meanings on men's psychological well-being. Role identity theory posits that a person tends to achieve and maintain positive meanings of the social role and, therefore, the positive feedback toward the specific role (i.e., interesting, well-done) is expected to influence positively the self in which individual psychological well-being embedded (Stryker, 2002). This finding has an implication for policy makers and fatherhood practitioners in a sense that the positive attitude toward the father role are beneficial for men's well-being in a long run.

National Survey and Family Households (NSFH) dataset that I used in this study is one of the best currently available datasets that provides a rich resource about parenthood and psychological well-being. In particular, NSFH dataset provides nationally representative self-report information on fatherhood experiences. Many data regarding parenting collected information from mothers rather than fathers and, furthermore, a few data collected information from fathers recruited informants through mothers rather than directly (Hernandez & Coley, 2007). Therefore, a considerable amount of research about father involvement has been conducted with mother-report data. Although some recent studies have shown no significant discrepancy in reported father involvement across informants (i.e., mothers vs. fathers) insofar as mother and father did not live together or had serious marital conflicts (Coley & Morris, 2002; Hernandez & Coley, 2007), concerns about mother informants toward the fatherhood experiences still exist mainly because mothers for information on fathers' parenting behaviors may lead to a gender deficit model, where a father's experiences or his point of views are nullified as a result of being excluded from the research (Pasley & Braver, 2004). In particular, this study regarding the effects of the father role and men's psychological well-being instead of children or mother's well-being, men's perspective on their role meanings is more meaningful because role meanings are emerged from the self structure of men and psychological well-being is also embedded in the self structure of men. In a sense,

this study has an advantage in exploring the association between meanings of the father role and their psychological well-being from men's perspectives by using NSFH dataset, including fathers as main respondents directly and collecting information about fatherhood experiences from their points of view.

Moreover, contrary to previous studies that examined the associations between the fatherhood and men's psychological well-being with cross-sectional data (Reitzes & Mutran, 1994; Thoits, 1992, 1995; Umberson, 1989; 1992), NSFH dataset allowed testing long-term effects of the father role meanings on men's psychological well-being in this study. Specifically, two waves of data from NSFH dataset over 5 years allowed me to investigate the effects of the father role meanings at the first wave (T1) on men's psychological well-being at the second wave (T2).

In spite of the strength owing to NSFH data, this study has also limitations in measurements and a sample selection caused by a longitudinal secondary survey data analysis. Some of measurements employed in this study have drawbacks because questionnaires were not designed for examining only the father role. Five semantic differential scales measuring father role meaning have a limitation in terms of the secondary data analysis. Semantic differential set should be determined by 'strictly purposive and empirical considerations' scales (Belson, 1986). However, these five meaning pairs (originally six pairs including simple/complicated) were not selected and labeled through the exploratory factor analysis on my analytic sample – i.e., fathers. By contrast, for instance, Reitzes & Mutran (1994) directly organized various role meanings with semantic differential scales. Since even tone of wording is very important in attitude surveys (Schuman & Presser, 1996), this study would be improved if semantic differential scales were selected and organized to tap more relevant and essential meanings that would describe the father role. For example, a dimension of role meaning in terms of burdensome or responsible may be more crucial than other role meanings. If additional dimensions of meanings attached to the father role were included in semantic differential scales, this

study would be strengthened in examining the associations between father role meanings and multidimensional psychological well-being of men. Hence, future research should direct to investigations of various role meanings attached the parent roles of men.

Along with limitation in the measurement, a drawback in the sample selection by using a secondary data analysis exists. My analytic sample was fathers who were married and had at least one resident child aged 5 to 18. So, unmarried fathers and/or fathers who initially had only non-resident children without resident children were excluded. The restricted sample selection prevents the study from examining the long-term effects of fatherhood experiences and men's psychological well-being for unmarried stepfathers, divorced custodial fathers, or fathers having only non-resident minor child. In particular, previous studies show that divorce does not necessarily affect father-child relationship quality negatively insofar long as men hold the custodial status (Aquilino, 1994; Shapiro & Lambert, 1999). In a sense, the father role meanings for divorced custodial fathers may differ from married fathers and their effects on men's psychological well-being also may differ. Therefore, this study has a limitation by excluding unmarried fathers at T1, although I took into account changes and continuity in marital status over time and examined whether divorce/separation/widowhood or remarriage/cohabiting affected men's psychological well-being. Hence, future research should extend the investigation regarding long-term effects of fatherhood experiences on men's psychological well-being to the culturally disadvantaged minor groups of fathers: unmarried stepfathers, divorced custodial fathers, and/or non-resident fathers who do not have resident minor children.

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