Gender and Family Relations

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Introduction

This chapter, *Gender and Family Relations*, provides a forum to conduct a systematic review of empirical and theoretical works published over the past decade (i.e., 1999–2009) on this topic. The focus is on scholarship that has examined gender-related issues to explain how and why displays of gender are being manifested in the everyday life patterns of contemporary families. We begin our chapter by describing two formulations of the use of gender in studies of family relations. One formulation reflects the merging of role theory and structural functionalism and conceptualizes gender as separable, often complementary roles that women and men enact to fulfill family tasks and responsibilities (Parsons & Bales, 1955). The other approach views gender as socially constructed and embodies cultural

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meanings of masculinity and femininity and focuses on women and men in social interactions. Consideration is also given to overt and covert processes that differentiate and subsequently assign power and privileges on the basis of physical characteristics of femaleness and maleness (Feree, 1990; Fox & Murry, 2000). This approach has been labeled "doing gender" as oppose to engaging in tasks and responsibilities as a consequence of "being a gender" (Fox & Murry, p. 1165).

These two approaches will be highlighted as we evaluate extant studies of gender-related issues in family relations over the last decade. We pose the following questions: over the past decade (1) to what extent have family scholars continued to conceptualize gender as roles that women and men enact to "be a gender?"; (2) to what extent have family scholars who study gender and family relations moved beyond the traditional conceptualization of women and men to examine the processes by which women and men "do gender?"; and (3) finally, when gender distinctions are found, what theoretical explanations are offered by family scholars to explain variability in gendered patterns? In the following section, we provide a brief historical overview of various theoretical perspectives used to frame studies of gender and family relations. This section is followed by a summary of substantive areas of research investigations of gender in everyday family life.

Theoretical Perspectives: "Be a Gender or Do Gender"

For many decades, the structural functional theoretical framework served as a guide to describe how family roles were to be performed (McIntyre, 1966; Parsons, 1965; Pitts, 1964) to foster positive outcomes for parents and children. Women were considered good wives/mothers when they performed expressive leadership in the family, nurturing husband and children and taking care of the home. Men's principal roles were to be instrumental task leaders of their families by financially providing for their wives and children. Consequently, who does what in families is a product of the structural processes that are embedded in our society. Role competence is therefore evaluated by examining the extent to which women and men perform family roles to effectively and efficiently foster positive outcomes for parents and children, and in turn maintain order and stability in society. Although this theory has become less formally accepted in the field of family studies, the fact that a chapter continues to be devoted to understanding gender and family relations suggests that the potency of this theoretical perspective continues to survive (Popenoe, 1996).

Functionalist role theory acknowledged the idea that men and women were better suited for different tasks, identified as "instrumental" for men and "expressive" for women (Parsons & Bales, 1955). While this conceptualization has since been criticized for maintaining and reinforcing structures of gender inequality (Carroll & Campbell, 2008; Osmond & Thorne, 1993), its implications may still shape the everyday processes of American families. This is particularly evident in the research on household division of labor, which finds that women still do significantly more housework even when they work more hours outside of the home than their male partner (Coltrane, 2000; Erikson, 2005).

Similarly, relative resources theory suggests that because men have higher education and income, they do less work in the home (Stevens, Minnotte, Mannon, & Kiger, 2007), yet women's gains in these areas are not associated with reductions in household labor. Perceptions of "men's work" vs. "women's work" still permeate the way American families make decisions about who provides care for family members, including elderly family members (Gerstel & Gallagher, 2001). These three theoretical frameworks, structural functionalism, functionalist role theory, and relative resource theories, have traditionally been used to guide studies of family functioning and family process. Substantive areas commonly associated with these frameworks include household division of labor, childrearing, caregiving, and balancing work and family.

In recent years, there has been an exciting shift in the literature from structural functionalism and role theories towards critical social constructionist perspectives on the gendering of family processes. The critical social constructionist theory of gender maintains that gender is socially defined and replicated as a mechanism for organizing the distribution of resources and power (Fox & Murry, 2000). In this regard, hierarchical gender theories emerged as an alternative framework to explain why women and men fulfill various tasks and responsibilities in families. According to these theories, gender is "a complex set of social relations enacted across a range of social interactions" (Acker, 1990). Early socialization includes cultural scripts for gender that transmit social expectations and values about the meaning of femaleness and maleness. It is through these socialization processes that females and males learn not only that there are different roles for men and women but that there are unequal values assigned to them.

The extent to which one internalizes these scripts, defines oneself as gendered, and in turn adopts roles that society prescribes for females and males, influences what goes on inside and outside of families. Thus, variability in women and men's skills, attitudes, ways of thinking and understanding life is not innate but socially constructed and socially reinforced. Roles associated with caregiving and household tasks in families are assigned to women because family roles are "socially guided perceptual, interactional, and micropolitical activities that cast particular pursuits as expressions of masculine and feminine natures" (Zimmerman, 1987, p. 125).

Ruddick's (1989) work illustrated that who does what in families is learned by examining the association between role demands of mothers and maternal thinking. The conclusions of this work indicated that maternal instinct is actually a set of attitudes and behaviors that emerge from women's frequent location in domestic, caregiving roles. Being assigned to provide caregiving tasks promotes values, priorities, and understanding of relationships. Men who are primary parents were just as likely as women to exhibit nurturing, attentive, and emotionally expressive behaviors (Downey, Ainsworth-Darnell, & Dufur, 1998). A few studies have applied life course theory to studies of gender and family relations, linking shifts in men's involvement in everyday family life management across the life span (Becker & Moen, 1999; Dellmann-Jenkins, Blankemeyer, & Pinkard, 2000; Han & Moen, 1999). Consideration is given to exploring who makes sacrifices at what points in the family cycle, and the implications of those decisions on women and men's career and family satisfaction.

The goal of revisiting the status of research on gender and family relations is timely particularly in light of recent drastic changes in family structure (e.g., increases in single-parent families and same-gender parent families), dramatic increases in the number of women in the workforce, the preponderance of dual-earning families, and devastating economic vulnerability of families as a consequence of high unemployment due to economic downturn. This review provides an opportunity to determine how or whether family scholars have captured the multiple changes occurring in the modern families.

Modern Families

There is evidence that the changing structure of modern families may challenge gender role norms, allowing new opportunities for researchers to understand the role of gender in family processes. The prevalence of women pursuing postsecondary education has necessarily altered the structure of the American family. As more and more American women are pursuing postsecondary

education, they are delaying having children. Since the 1970s, there has been a 3.6-year increase, from 21.4 to 25.0 years, in the average age of first-time motherhood (Matthews & Hamilton, 2009). A second important effect of increased postsecondary education among American mothers is the desire to remain in the workforce and thus seek childcare. Many families, of varying structure, are paying for full-time childcare. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2010), there has been an increase in less traditional family structures, indicated by increases in single parents, stepparents, grandparents, and adoptive parents raising children. As of 2008, fewer children than ever lived with both biological parents (67%; U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). Although stay-at-home mothers are still more common than stay-at-home dads, stay-at-home mothers are becoming less common whereas stay-at-home dads are an increasing phenomenon (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). Increases in stay-at-home fathers may be indicative of a relaxation of the gendered nature of the historically male role of "breadwinner," as more women than men are completing college and graduate degrees (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). Political commentators have labeled our current economic crisis as a "man-cession," because it appears to be affecting men more so than women.

Women's "Decision" to Work

Not surprisingly, the processes through which individuals in families negotiate career and family responsibilities remain gendered, despite social advances in career equality. While women are earning more professional degrees and pursuing high-powered careers as frequently as their male counterparts, the burden of negotiating the work/family balance falls most frequently to women. Female partners are more likely to make sacrifices in their professional lives to meet the needs and demands of their family, including taking on the role as primary caretaker of their children (Becker & Moen, 1999; Han & Moen, 1999; Stone & Lovejoy, 2004). This pervasive and perpetual trend highlights the freedom, or lack

thereof, that women have in making decisions to leave work to meet the demands associated with family management, caring for children, hiring childcare help from outside the family, or changing their work trajectories to accommodate both career and family.

One of the most impassioned debates over the past decade, appearing repeatedly on women's pop-culture outlets such as *Oprah* and *The View*, is concerned with women's decisions to work or stay at home when they have young children. The underlying assumption is that women have a *choice* to make in regards to maintaining employment or taking on full-time parenting in the home. This assumption is rooted in the belief that a woman's income is supplementary to her male partner's and that her career is more for her own self-advancement and fulfillment than for the good of her family (Stone & Lovejoy, 2004). Upon the birth of a child therefore, she is free to *choose* whether she would prefer to forgo her career to spend time with her child, maintain her career and pursue other child care options, or attempt to work part-time and pursue both goals (Pungello & Kurtz-Costes, 2000). Williams (2000) characterized this assumption as "choice rhetoric," which acknowledges that the constraints and tensions placed on women's contribution to the labor force are often ignored. The premise of this debate is the extent to which a mother's decision to work is detrimental to her child's well-being. The increased patterns of women leaving the workforce upon birth of child led Stone and Lovejoy (2004) to provide empirical evidence to explain why this pattern was emerging. The term, "New Traditionalists" was coined to describe the reasons employed professional women were leaving the workforce to focus on family. "New Traditionalists" were thought to reflect a pattern of professional women returning to traditional, gendered family values.

Who Are the New Traditionalists?

Efforts to understand this pattern of New Traditionalism and to also offer clarity to the debate about whether "to work" or "not work" is a choice for women, Stone and Lovejoy (2004) conducted in-depth interviews with women, who had been previously employed in the professional workforce and decided to quit their jobs when they had children. The guiding question for their study was what factors influenced professional women's decisions to leave the workforce in order to focus on family roles. Findings from their study revealed that indeed some professional women had planned to leave the workforce when they had children, believing that a mother's care is the best option, but they represented a small percentage of the sample. More often, the tension and conflict in their decision was related to a desire to maintain their career in an employment context that rendered their ability to continue working difficult, if not impossible. In fact, 86% of Stone and Lovejoy's sample of White professional women cited workplace stress as the main reason precipitating their decision to leave the workforce. Inflexibility of their jobs was a major obstacle, with many reporting that their positions required nearly 60-h workweeks to remain competitive and valuable within their company. Several women reported attempting to compromise work/family demands by working part-time or participating in job-sharing, but found the professional environment to be at odds with these sorts of arrangements. Specifically, women who worked part-time or job-shared reported that they felt like they were failing in all areas of their lives—that they were not succeeding at their job nor successfully being present at home—and quit soon thereafter. Child related reasons also were cited by 72% of the sample who expressed feeling conflicted about wanting to be present for their children's development, but were also concerned about the need to socialize their children about the importance of women's roles in the workforce. Two-thirds of the sample cited husband related reasons for making these decisions. Recognizing their husband's reluctance to make career shifts to accommodate the demands of their family, the women decided to make the necessary changes. Importantly, these findings reflect a consistent trend in the literature on family and career that notes that professional women, even those achieving more

professional and financial success than their partners, still view their own career as supplementary and their husband's as essential (Brighouse & Wright, 2008; Stone & Lovejoy, 2004).

Despite the education and career successes of these professional women, indicating a deviation from traditional gender values, they were still forced to take on traditional gender roles due to demands of the workplace, childcare, and/or husbands who expected to maintain their own gendered roles. Thus, it is not surprising that women continue to report feeling less successful in balancing work and family (Keene & Quadagno, 2004; Milkie & Peltola, 1999; Tenbrunsel, Brette, Maoz, Stroh, & Reilly, 1995). These observed gendered patterns raise questions about the assumption that women are more likely to leave employment to raise children because they have returned to traditional gender role values and prefer being at home. Labor statistics indicate that the brief increase in professional women leaving the workforce was mirrored by a similar trend for men, suggesting that both may have actually been leaving as the result of economic factors associated with the current recession (Twenge, 2006). Further, as a result of the recession's impact, many affluent women who left work to stay at home with their children are returning to the workforce because their husbands are now unemployed (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010).

Men and Choice

By focusing on the decisions that women make regarding childcare and employment, an unspoken reality is that men do not have the same "choice" to make when they become new fathers. Now, more than ever, some men are choosing to take time off from their career paths to care for children in the home; however, such a decision is still quite rare compared to stay-at-home moms. According to a 2006 United States Bureau of the Census Report, there were 143,000 stay-at-home dads as compared to 5.6 million stay-at-home moms. In 2009 the number of fathers who stay home with children rose to 158,000 (10.4% increase in 3 years; U.S. Census Bureau, 2009).

Recent research on unemployment and gender reveals that employment is more strongly linked to perceptions of successfulness (Forret, Sullivan, & Mainiero, 2010), self-esteem (Waters & Moore, 2002), mental health (Artazcoz, Benach, Borrell & Cortes, 2004), and gender identity (i.e., perceiving oneself as more masculine or more feminine) (Schindler & Coley, 2007) for men than for women. However, men that do adopt more flexible gender roles and refocus their conceptualizations of success and masculinity on parenting may experience less distress and more satisfaction when experiencing unemployment, as compared with men in families who have more traditional breadwinner/homemaker gender roles (Sherman, 2009).

The recent economic downturn provides a natural experiment for family scholars to document the pathways through which role reversals influence how men and women "do gender" or "be a gender," as unemployed males are increasingly becoming the stay-at-home partner. In particular, the flexibility of men's gender roles with regards to employment may be increasingly important as the market experiences shifts and transitions that lead to periods of unemployment for many men. Nonetheless, when a man does choose to stay home with children, he frequently experiences misunderstanding by other family members and friends, who perceive him as failing in his responsibilities as provider. While mothers' decisions about working and childcare are a hot topic met with much debate, the absence of debate over men's decisions implies there is no decision to be made. Women's burden then, of being judged for these decisions, can also be perceived as an option that is not as easily awarded to males.

The Role of Privilege

One of the most pivotal, yet frequently overlooked issues in choice rhetoric is that of financial privilege as an aspect of persisting gender divisions in family life. Collins (2005) highlights the absence of a work/family balance debate among minority women, in particular, who are more

often raising families on their own, and frequently in conditions of poverty. The concept of work/family balance, involving decisions to leave the workforce and consider alternative childcare options, are grounded in assumptions of having a two-adult family and middle class lifestyle. Moreover, the notion of privilege is further perpetuated in the literature on this topic, which focuses primarily on married couples with middle to upper class incomes. Work/family balance issues regarding the challenges experienced by single parents and parents rearing children in poverty have been understudied.

Further, opportunities available to some families are the product of power differentials in our society that leave other families without choice. Although dual-career professionals do include both White and ethnic minority women, individuals in professional positions often employ immigrant or minority women to provide affordable child care so that they may increase their earning potential at work (Zinn, 2000). Little is known about how domestic workers, who provide care for the families of professional women, balance their work/family demands.

Pungello and Kurtz-Costes (2000) examined the role of privilege and choice rhetoric in the area of family and work by testing the moderating effects of economic constraints on working women's childcare decisions. Results from their longitudinal prospective research design revealed that women of privilege, those for whom economic constraints were minimally important, were more likely to follow their preferences for childcare. In contrast, for women experiencing economic constraints, the relationship between preferred childcare and chosen childcare was less direct. Based on these findings, the researchers concluded that women are not making career decisions in a vacuum based on personal preference alone; decisions are influenced by and occur within the context of gender expectations, couple relationships, family responsibilities, work environment, and numerous economic realities. While Pungello and Kurtz-Costes (2000) only studied women, and therefore cannot contrast the factors influencing their decisions with their male counterparts, the absence of men from these studies is evidence of the gendered nature of work/family balance, as these decisions still fall to women in families.

Household Division of Labor

It stands to reason that when one partner is out of the workplace, this individual would take on more responsibility in the home. However, given that most families require two incomes to make ends meet, who becomes responsible for the family and home management work? As more women enter the workplace and the percentage of dual-income families increases (Torr & Short, 2004), we would expect to see the distribution of household labor equalize between partners, or perhaps be proportional to the number of hours worked outside the home. However, the research on the division of labor in nuclear families in the United States shows that there is a somewhat delayed gender revolution in terms of household responsibilities (Coltrane, 2000; Gazso-Windle & McMullin, 2003). Women who are employed still participate in more household chores, including responsibility for childcare, management of family member's schedules, and administration of the family's finances. This pattern persists even if the wife works as many hours and/or makes as much money as the husband (Coltrane, 2000). Husbands are beginning to participate more in household chores, however inequity persists as women contribute at least twice as much as men (Coltrane, 2000; Gazso-Windle & McMullin, 2003).

Several theories have been advanced to explain why women continue to fill the role as primary caretaker of the home. Time availability and respond/demand perspectives would contend that, based on the gendered nature of the work environment, women are often employed in positions with greater flexibility than men and can take time off work to attend to family matters, including household chores. Power theoretical perspective suggests that levels of resources, such as salary and economic resources, that one brings to the family serve as bargaining power, and increase one's leverage to opt out of family work. Salary differentials between husbands and wives

place men in a more powerful position so they can serve a "helping role" in housework. Further, men consistently under-report the number of hours their wives spend doing housework, indicating a devaluation or lack of understanding about what it takes to manage a household (Coltrane, 2000; Moore, 2008).

Understanding how gender roles can affect the nature of family responsibilities requires research on how fathers are involved in household responsibilities and the role of men's gender-related identities, yet research with male caregivers remains surprisingly sparse. Recently, the men's movement has been gaining in general popularity. The men's movement is a social movement in which men have deemphasized the traditional breadwinning role in favor of a caregiving role with greater responsibilities for the rearing of children (Gatrell, 2007; Magnuson, 2008). Members of this movement, which predominantly include middle class White men, report dissatisfaction, despite having achieved material success in accordance with their traditionally defined gender roles. In contrast to previous generations of men, whose involvement with children was limited to playtime, members of the men's movement now take on feeding, bathing, and caregiving activities, because they recognize the foundation it will provide for their long-term relationships with their children (Gatrell, 2007). Some of the fathers in this study reported feeling jealous of breastfeeding time, but found ways to compensate by engaging with the older children during the baby's feeding time. Research inspired by the men's movement focused on fathers of children in Early Head Start. (Hayes, Jones, Silverstein, & Auerbach, 2010), and found low-income fathers of racial or ethnic minority backgrounds felt caregiving interactions with their children to be more personally gratifying, especially if they were unable to always achieve success through the traditional breadwining role.

Research in the past decade has begun to illuminate differences between fathers who adhere to traditional gender role assignments and fathers who are more involved in taking care of children and families. Studies have demonstrated that several factors predict father involvement in caregiving, including: fathers' mental health status, marital status, experiences with their own fathers, residential status, relationship quality with the mother, and mothers' support for fathers' caregiving (c.f., Cabrera, Fagan & Farrie, 2008; Isacco, Garfield, & Rogers, 2010; Shannon, Tamis-LeMonda, & Margolin, 2005).

It may be particularly important to consider the relevance of gender roles in understanding men's caretaking responsibilities. There is some evidence that gender role beliefs influence fathers' caregiving. For example, in a multiracial/ethnic sample, equalitarian gender role beliefs held by Latinos explained why they engaged in more monitoring of children than White, non-Latino fathers (Hofferth, 2003). On the other hand, among married fathers in the national Fragile Families study, which includes low income and ethnically diverse fathers, fathers' gender role attitudes were not associated with their involvement with children (Isacco et al., 2010). However, father involvement was positively associated with mothers' support for fathers' adoption of the caregiving role. Maurer and colleagues have conducted a program of research to inform the Gender Congruence Theory, based on Identity Control Theory and Social Cognitive Theory (Maurer & Pleck, 2006; Maurer, Pleck, & Rane, 2001). Gender Congruence Theory posits that fathers' gender-traditional (i.e., breadwinning) identity, which has been informed by years of socialization by the media and other elements of the gender-traditional society, will be fully formed and will predict their actual breadwinning behavior. However, they will have had fewer experiences informing a gender-nontraditional (i.e., caregiving) identity as models of men in caregiving roles are to a large extent absent in US society (Anderson & Hamilton, 2005; Fleming & Tobin, 2005). As a result, this identity is not fully developed and their behavior will be influenced to a greater extent by their partners' feedback to them related to their caregiver identity, as well as the caregiving behavior of other fathers. Interestingly, studies comparing the predictive utility of expectations and identities across fathers and mothers have found stronger relations for

fathers (Cook, Jones, Dick, & Singh, 2005; Maurer et al., 2001; Maurer & Pleck, 2006).

Despite the fact that they have attempted to gain equal footing with mothers as primary caregivers, there are no indications that a request for more housework will emerge from this social movement (Magnuson, 2008). Supporting this perspective, Stevens et al. (2007) found that fathers' egalitarian gender roles were associated with more time with children, but not more time on housework. Taken together, the results of these studies point to power differences attached to gender and gender roles. Mothers do appear to have the ability to influence fathers' engagement in caregiving activities through their support of taking on this nontraditional gender role. However, this is a role from which fathers derive personal satisfaction, and fathers' caregiving and housework roles still appear to be more of a voluntary choice than an obligation (Fleming & Tobin, 2005; Riggs, 2005).

The men's movement provides evidence of need to revise previous paradigms that frame studies of gender and family relations. In addition, research on racial/ethnic minority families offer support for the need to move the field towards considering whether the distribution of family labor follows the gender distribution of power. This new way of thinking has been prompted by the fact that African American women are more likely to have a consistent employment history; and African American heterosexual couples are more likely to maintain separate bank accounts that are controlled by the woman compared to Caucasian heterosexual couples (Moore, 2008). Further, African American mothers have a somewhat more elevated status in African American culture and are given more power in familial settings such as the home and church (Moore, 2008), compared to their White counterparts. In addition, African American male partners do more housework than their Caucasian counterparts, yet still perform only half as much housework as their female partners (Coltrane, 2000). Thus, greater gender equality in African American homes does not map directly onto more egalitarian household labor allocation, as feminist writings might hypothesize.

The racism experienced by African Americans has implications for the couple's bond and possible inequities in men's participation in domestic labor as well (Cowdery et al., 2009). Based on findings from their qualitative study Cowdery and associates reported that, as African American wives and husbands are both breadwinners, they pull together and do the work that needs to get done. On the other hand, as women feel the need to protect their partners because of the discrimination they face outside of the home, their own power in the relationship diminishes in favor of supporting their husband to elevate his sense of empowerment. Religion also influences gender and family relations among African American couples, as some couples cited their Christian faith as important in their decision to follow traditional gender roles. Adapting traditional gender roles appeared to be comforting and provide structure. However, for most, the pragmatics of daily life dictated which chores were completed by whom.

Mexican American families, on the other hand, are thought to be more strongly governed by traditional gender roles than mainstream US families (Knight et al., 2010). US-born fathers of Mexican origin had housework contributions that were roughly equal to Anglo fathers, whereas Mexican-born fathers' performed even less domestic work (Pinto & Coltrane, 2009). Interestingly, fathers' attitudes about gender roles were predictive of their time spent on housework, yet mothers' gender role attitudes were not, highlighting the lack of power that women have in changing the situation despite variability in gender role expectations. Taking on these gender roles may explain observed patterns in which men allow women to perform the majority of the housework, even if they are unemployed and their wives are working (Barajas & Ramirez, 2007). Moreover, while Mexican origin women are gaining decision-making power in households as compared to older generations, this is not translating to men participating in housework. Regardless of race/ethnicity or social class, men and women continue to face gendered expectations regarding what tasks they will complete, in which areas they will excel, and what their priorities should be on the basis of their gender. Despite

advances in conceptualizations of gender roles in other areas, the division of household labor remains one of the areas that is most resistant to change in the modern American family.

However, a recent critical review of nationally representative studies in the United States and Great Britain indicates that women, who have higher earning potential than their husbands *and* do not maintain traditional gender roles, actually do less housework (Sullivan, 2011). Sullivan reviewed qualitative and quantitative studies and determined that gender-deviance neutralization occurred when women who held the breadwinner role compensated in their heterosexual relationships by performing more household tasks, thereby increasing their feminine roles to de-emphasize the masculine role of breadwinner. Sullivan (2011) reviewed the qualitative and quantitative literature on household division of labor and income and found that this phenomenon existed only in families in lower absolute income categories, where traditional gender values were more likely to be held by both partners. These findings indicate a possible breakthrough in the division of labor along gender lines, and future work in this area will be valuable.

Gendering and Caregiving

Beyond the common stressors associated with managing childrearing and housework, many families will also be confronted with a decision about providing care to an adult family member or friend, which also provides an opportunity for illustrating the gendered nature of family life. Recent estimates suggest that 50% of American women will care for a sick or disabled loved one at some point during their lives (Pavalko & Woodbury, 2000) and this number is likely to increase. The combination of the aging baby-boomer population, the steadily increasing life expectancy, and the trend of deinstitutionalizing care means that the provision of care in the home will be an important topic for years to come. Women shoulder the burden of care provision almost exclusively, comprising nearly three-quarters of caregivers. Interestingly, Gerstel and

Gallagher (2001) found that even when men are willing to help with household chores and complete childcare tasks, caring for an adult relative is considered "women's work."

The literature on caregiving has provided an support this argument by furthering the notion that care is gendered. This logic follows tenets of gender roles perspectives, which assume that men and women naturally excel in different areas and thus take on responsibilities in the areas for which they are best suited (Parson & Bales, 1955), including the provision of care. Researchers have studied caregiving through interviewing individuals about their care experiences (Gerstel & Gallagher, 2001; Marks, Lambert, & Choi, 2002; Piercy & Chapman, 2001), exploring the impact of caregiving on employment and work satisfaction (Chesley & Moen, 2006), examining the relationship between caregiving and health and mental health (Delmann-Jenkins, Blankemeyer, & Pinkard, 2000; Pavalko & Woodbury, 2000), and contrasting the types of care tasks men and women perform most often (Engers & Stern, 2002; Marks et al., 2002; Navaie-Waliser, Spriggs, & Feldman, 2002; Pezzin & Schone, 1999). This work suffers from two major limitations. First, and most glaringly, is that researchers tend to either assume care is gendered (by choosing to examine only female caregivers or use only feminine pronouns to describe their sample), or ignore the gendered nature of care altogether by simply including the gender of participants as a covariate for which to control. Neither of these assumptions about gender is helpful, and both replicates gender inequality by inferring that care naturally falls to a female family member or that being female has the same effect on the decision to provide care as being male. Second, researchers still either assume or fail to challenge the assumption that women's care is relational and men's care is instrumental (Parsons & Bales, 1995). Relational care has a nurturing quality and includes intimate activities such as feeding, bathing, and clothing whereas instrumental care has a managerial quality and includes financial management, transportation, and other activities that make daily life possible. The problem here is that the lingering assumption that women offer better relational

care helps to perpetuate the notion that care should be "women's work." The activities involved in relational care, that fall to women, are more time consuming and time-contingent, thereby making it difficult for women to maintain employment or pursue an ambitious career trajectory. Women who provide care for an elder in earlier life are at an increased risk of poverty later in life as a result of having to stop or reduce their out-of-home work and/or experiencing declining health or mental health (Wakabayashi & Donato, 2006). Therefore, beliefs about gendered aptitudes for certain types of care reproduce inequalities by keeping women out of the labor force thereby maintaining their economic subordinance and dependency.

Balancing Strategies

Given the increasing and conflicting demands on time for men and women from work and family, what strategies have they used to cope? How do they balance? Some researchers have attempted to understand the work/family-balancing act from a couples' perspective. When researchers include both the men's and women's perspectives (in heterosexual partnerships), the gendered patterns in negotiating work and family becomes clearer. Moen and colleagues (Becker & Moen, 1999; Han & Moen, 1999) employed a mixed methods approach, using interviews, focus groups, and national survey data, to identify the strategies couples employ to balance work and family, and the gendered patterns of these strategies across couples. Nested in a life course perspective, Han and Moen (1999) developed a coupled-careers model that accounts for the "interlocking nature of trajectories and transitions, within and across life stages, between men and women" (p. 101). In conceptualizing this coupled-careers model, they identified five different pathway typologies: delayed entry career, orderly career, fast-track career, steady part-time career, and intermittent career. These pathway typologies can be used to understand gendered styles of coping with work and family, and highlight some of the gendered consequences of each

track. It is critical to note that Han and Moen's (1999) sample included couples, aged 50–72 and retired at the time of the interviews. While this purposeful sampling design provided a comprehensive view of the couples' career trajectories over the life course, the patterns noted in this study may not be reflective of pathways for men and women at different developmental and life course stages. These findings also reflect cohort effects in relation to adherence to "traditional" gender identities overall. Nonetheless, Han and Moen found that women in couple relationships are more likely to take the delayed entry career, steady part-time career, or intermittent career pathways than their husband. These findings are still relevant to understanding career and gender today as Cinamon and Rich (2002) found similar patterns among employees at a computer company. Even though Cinamon and Rich (2002) did not use paired-couple data, gender differences persist in the type of career pathway professionals reported.

According to Becker and Moen (1999), middle-income, dual-earning couples (with or without children) appear to adapt certain strategies at different life stages to manage career and marriage. When dual-career couples attempt to navigate career pathways, they participate in various attempts to adjust career goals and demands to meet the needs of the family. The majority of the couples included in their sample reported "scaling back," a work/family balance strategy that can take three different forms: placing limits, job vs. career, and trading off. Interestingly, the authors found that, although work/family balance has historically been framed as a "woman's problem," the presence of egalitarian and companionate paradigms of marriage led to both the husband and wife participating in scaling back behaviors. However, scaling back is gendered and women tend to make more sacrifices, or more impactful sacrifices within the workplace, even when they prefer to remain employed.

The first scaling back strategy, placing limits, is a strategy in which the couple limits the ways that work can interrupt family life by turning down opportunities that involve increased travel, relocation, or unreasonable hours (Becker &

Moen, 1999). Both men and women used this strategy; however, women used it in all life stages whereas men were more likely to place limits once they experience fatherhood. The second scaling back strategy, job vs. career, is used when the couple recognizes that one member's employment takes precedence as a career, whereas the other's is more flexible and less personally rewarding. The job vs. career strategy gave greater emphasis to gender; in two-thirds of the sample that used this strategy, the woman was the one with the "job" while the man pursued a "career." In the third scaling back strategy, trading off, the couple takes turns pursuing one person's career while the other has a job. This approach is the most egalitarian, if the couple continues to be able to trade off at regular intervals, but they are likely to sacrifice a certain degree of financial or professional success by continuous interruptions of the career trajectory. In fact, absences from the workforce for life course events (e.g., having children) account for one-third of the gender earnings gap between men and women, and somewhat explains the absence of women in upper management. Scaling back strategies, which put women out of the workforce, or off a continuous career trajectory, place women at a disadvantage economically. Thus, if a woman scales her career back early, to have children, she may never regain the ground lost during this time, while men are more likely to establish a successful career and scale back at later life stages, when their careers are less vulnerable. And yet, even women who have met professional and financial success in the workplace still view their employment as secondary to their husband's, regardless of comparable earnings (Stone & Lovejoy, 2004). This pattern confirms that, in principle, women continue to view their primary role in families as caretaker, even if their salary is the major source of financial support for their families. Reasons why these traditional gendered patterns remain in modern families continue to be an area of inquiry that warrants further investigation. In the following section, we offer a plausible explanations by examining the relative contributions and perceptions of men and women in marital relationships, as they balance family and work responsibilities.

Outcomes on Marital Stability and Satisfaction with Work/Family Balance

Do scaling back strategies work to reduce the impact of work-family stress on marital relations, and if so, for whom, and in what circumstances? And what is the role of gender in determining levels of satisfaction with work/family balance? Several studies have focused on how satisfied working parents feel about their attempts to achieve work/family balance (Keene & Quadagno, 2004; Martins, Eddleston, & Veiga, 2002; Milkie & Peltola, 1999). An important issue addressed in these studies is whether the increasingly egalitarian gender attitudes in families have increased or decreased women's reported satisfaction with their work/family balance.

Studies using hierarchical gender theories to assess work-family stress have considered ways in which power manifests in decisions about who does what in families. Based on this approach, because women have relatively less power than men, they are more likely to be confronted with having to balance work and family demands (Keene & Quadagno, 2004; Milkie & Peltola, 1999; Tenbrunsel et al., 1995). To the extent that women are exposed to and internalize gendered cultural scripts they are likely to place emphasis on relationships, and are more likely to take on family roles that are time-contingent with less flexibility than traditional men's household responsibilities (e.g., women prepare food at meal times, whereas men can choose a convenient time of day to mow the lawn). Although men's housework contributions have increased dramatically over the past few decades, women who work outside the home continue to maintain primary responsibility for household roles (Kroska, 2004).

The "second shift" is a clear example of the predominance of traditional gender ideals in the modern family. Women continue to work a considerable number of hours in the home, on top of a full-time job, a phenomenon termed the "second shift." As women are facing more demands and expectations in the home, the corporate model compounds their stress. Most professional jobs require more than 40-h per week, while employers operate (consciously or not) on the assumption

that employees have a non-working spouse that can manage family life, take clothes to the dry-cleaner, and perform other general tasks of life. Not only is this assumption sometimes untrue for men, it may be especially difficult for women whose spouses also expect them to take care of family life in addition to participating in the paid workforce (Stone & Lovejoy, 2004). Further, gender roles inherently place women at a disadvantage when it comes to feeling successful in balancing work and family (Milkie & Peltola, 1999). Persistent cultural expectations regarding gender roles tend to measure women's success in terms of the extent to which she fulfills the roles of mother and wife, which require her continued presence in the home or with loved ones. And if she is employed in the paid workforce, family work has to be balanced with workplace issues. Conversely, being a "good" father or husband is contingent on the extent to which a man works hard, is committed to employment, and provides financial resources for his family.

In light of the increased presence of women in the workplace, have hierarchical gendered structures become a less influential force in shaping men and women's experiences with work/family balance? If so, we would expect to learn that women feel less distressed by the competing demands of the home and the workplace. There is some evidence that women are as satisfied with their work/family balance as men. American men and women do feel that they are handling work/family balances successfully, with 75% of both men and women reporting feeling "somewhat" or "very successful" in managing work and family (Milkie & Peltola, 1999). However, the mechanisms through which men and women achieve success in balancing work/family, and the variables that moderate their feelings of success are gendered. For instance, both men and women experience "work/family spillover" which occurs when the demands of work interfere with the demands of a family or vice versa. However, perceptions and responses to spillover are gendered. Women are more likely to report negative job satisfaction when they encounter work/family spillover than are men (Martins et al., 2002), possibly explaining why women are more likely

to leave their job, identifying it as the source of stress and difficulty. Also, work and family conflict is significantly related to feelings of satisfaction for women at all life stages, whereas men are only likely to report that such conflict has influence in later life stages when they choose to put family life first (Martins et al., 2002). Perhaps because men expect work to conflict with family demands, they exhibit greater tolerance of the work/family struggle than women. For both men and women, flexibility in balancing work and family is of great importance. Greater flexibility for rescheduling and unexpected events, in both work conditions and household responsibilities, are associated with higher reported marital quality and perceived successfulness in balancing work/family demands (Keene & Quadagno, 2004; Martins et al., 2002; Milkie & Peltola, 1999).

Many of the challenges that both spouses confront as they attempt to balance family and work may be addressed through the adoption of family-friendly policies by employers. However, some "family-friendly" policies serve to perpetuate the gender gap in wages. For instance, allowing women to receive paid maternity leave, but not providing the same access for male employees keeps men at work and women at home to care for children. Gender neutral policies, such as those outlined by Brighouse and Wright (2008), have potential for allowing both men and women to balance work and family without perpetuating inequalities in the workplace and at home.

Han and Moen (1999) posed the question "What is the contribution of career pathways in predicting marital stability through the life course?" Results from their study revealed that the relationship between career pathways and marital stability was very weak for men but strongly linked for women. This gendered pattern finding is interesting for several reasons. First, the fact that men's career choices had very little impact on their marital stability is striking. However, given the age cohort of the sample, middle to later life stage, this finding may be attributed to a cohort effect of more traditional gender roles (Han & Moen, 1999). Thus, as men today choose different careers, there may be an

emergence of stronger linkages among work and marital relations for men. Second, women who chose a fast-track career pathway or an orderly career pathway, with a relatively uninterrupted upward trajectory, were very likely to have experienced marital instability. In contrast, those women who maintained more flexible career pathway types (such as delayed entry career, or steady part-time career) had high levels of marital stability. Absent from these findings is the consideration of potential moderation effects, such as gender role attitudes among the sample, suggesting the need for future research to determine the extent to which these findings can be generalized to contemporary couples, whose attitudes about gender roles are in some ways different, but in some ways similar to previous decades.

Studies have shown that women are more likely than men to report feeling that housework is fairly divided, even when hour logs show that they are working substantially more hours (paid and unpaid combined) than their husbands (Coltrane, 2000; Milkie & Peltola, 1999; Stone & Lovejoy, 2004). In addition, studies have shown that women are likely to overlook inequality in their marriage, or report equality where none exists (Coltrane, 2000; Milkie & Peltola, 1999; Stone & Lovejoy, 2004). This response may be protective since recognition of marital inequality can lead to depression and marital discord (Milkie & Peltola, 1999). Stevens et al. (2007) found that wives gave husbands equal credit for assisting with household tasks when husbands noticed and praised their wives' efforts in household labor. Important research has shown that children's early experiences explain variability in their own division of household labor as adults (Cunningham, 2001; Gupta, 2006). This relationship was only partially mediated by the development of children's gender role attitudes, suggesting that seeing their fathers' participate in household management had enduring effects on men's participation later in life, over and above the effect of the children's own gender role attitudes and beliefs. Thus, the study of gender socialization may be the key to understanding the perpetuation of inequality within households.

Gay and Lesbian Families: What Can They Teach us About Gender?

The changing American family structure (discussed in more detail in the next section of this chapter) forces researchers to adapt and stretch their conceptualizations of the role of gender in family roles and responsibilities. Gay and lesbian families who are raising children offer a challenge to conceptualizations of tasks as naturally falling to one gender or another, and create a unique opportunity to understand how couples negotiate roles when they share a gender. Moreover, understanding alternative models of family life helps us understand how we can expand our conceptualization of "family" to include extended kin networks, older children, and friends. This area is ripe with information on gender in families; however, the research over the last 10 years has been limited to lesbian families.

Among African American lesbian families with children, the partner bearing the role of biological mother takes on both more responsibility and more power within the home (Moore, 2008). This power discrepancy may be attributed to the legal statutes that acknowledge only the biological mother's rights in lesbian families, removing all legal parental rights from the non-biological mother (Dalton & Bielby, 2000). An interesting finding among lesbian mothers, in general, was that they might elect to take greater responsibility for household management and tasks because that role allowed them to have a stronger voice than their partner over childrearing or money management (Dalton & Bielby, 2000; Moore, 2008). Thus, the choice to perform traditional gender roles empowers women in lesbian relationships by allowing them to take on "mothering" roles that are respected and legitimized in society and the court systems.

Available studies on power and household labor distributions in lesbian relationships primarily focused on White, well-educated lesbian couples that intentionally studied feminist theory and actively employed egalitarian norms in their relationships. In these relationships, researchers hypothesized and identified more egalitarian

distributions of household tasks and childrearing (Dalton & Bielby, 2000; Moore, 2008). If social constructionist perspectives of gender, which state that we are reinforced by our environment to "do gender," are accurate, then these couples may choose to "un-do" gender (Butler, 1990). Same-sex couples who are *not* actively and consciously engaged in efforts to break down gender stereotypes and norms may provide unique insights into the gendering processes in all families. Understanding their choices can clarify the conditions and social structures that maintain gendered patterns even in same-gendered partnerships (Childs, 2008).

Conclusions, Recommendations, and Summary

This chapter has summarized a decade of research studies that have examined gender-related issues to explain how and why displays of gender are being manifested in the everyday life patterns of contemporary families. Based on our review, there is little doubt that many of the complex challenges highlighted in Alexis Walker's review of gender related studies published 1989–1999 remain. In the following section, we offer promising strategies and directions for moving beyond traditional conceptual and methodological approaches for studying gender in family relations. We also identify several gaps in this area of research that need to be explored in future investigations. It is our hope that our recommendations will guide the next generation of research to address and resolve the many complex challenges that have hindered advancement in the field of gender and family relations.

Who Does This Body of Research Represent?

While it is intuitive that family relationships and roles may be modified by family structure, ethnicity, and culture, efforts to understand how these social structural and contextual processes affect what goes on inside families have not been undertaken. Non-nuclear families and families of diverse cultural backgrounds, despite their high prevalence in our society, have been primarily ignored in the area of gender research. If research focuses on the tensions that two-parent families experience and negotiate to balance career and family, where does this leave single mothers and single fathers? How do single parents (who most likely perform both expressive and instrumental roles) negotiate gender roles? While it is reasonable that a single parent may not have anyone with whom to divide household responsibilities, they inevitably must have help either from extended family members, kin networks, or older children. Is the assignment of tasks to members outside the immediate family "gendered?" What does housework mean for a single parent? What role does the involvement of extended kin networks play in the navigation of household demands and childcare, especially among racial and ethnic minority families with a more collectivistic attitude towards raising children? Do families that have a mother, father, stepmother, and/or stepfather feel relieved by more adults to share the work of raising a family or are they more burdened by the complex negotiations their family lives may require? Do economically privileged African American or Latina women have similar experiences to those of economically privileged White women? These questions have not been asked in previous research. Consequently, the continued absence of certain subpopulations raises concerns regarding the application and generalizability of this body of research for today's family.

In addition to grappling with ways to tease out the unique contributions of race and social class, few studies were designed to consider how gender is manifested in same-gender couple families. How do gay and lesbian couples decide who does what in their families? Are their negotiations as fraught with issues of power? Studies of same-gender couple families are glaringly absent from this literature, as are studies of gender in single parent families and families of other racial and ethnic groups. If literature on families, and gender is to remain relevant to modern families, these groups can no longer be excluded.

Conceptual and Methodological Clarity

While Walker (1999) encouraged investigators to refine research designs to more adequately assess gender-related issues at couple and family levels, this methodological gap continues. With the exception of the work of Moen and colleagues (Becker & Moen, 1999; Han & Moen, 1999), the body of research on gender and the family continues to suffer from the absence of paired-couple data. Lack of couple-data compromises our understanding of the inter-connections between partners' responses. The extent to which one spouse's level of reported relationship satisfaction, or family-work stress, or division of household labor is related to the other's remains unclear. In other words, reporting that both men and women who work outside the home report increased relationship satisfaction, fails to ask the more gendered question: Do men who report high levels of work/family balance do so at the expense of their wives' sense of balance? Further, studies of household division of labor are often conducted without acknowledging that this body of research and accompanying theories are based on decades of work with nuclear middle class Caucasian heterosexual coupled families.

Further, this field of research continues to be plagued by the absence of measures that adequately assess gender-related issues in families. While researchers often acknowledge discrepancies in self-report and partner-report data, there is limited evidence that efforts have been undertaken to refine methodological approaches to capture who does what and when in family management. Hour logs are commonly used to measure women and men's weekly hours on various domestic tasks and time spent in the labor market. Often the type of "work" that women do is associated with a sense of responsibility that cannot be isolated to a specific amount of time — thinking about and planning the family's meals all day (*because if you don't, they won't eat*) is considered emotional work and is not captured by the number of hours it takes to prepare and serve a meal (Erikson, 2005). Perceptions of fairness and equity in household division of labor are often assessed by asking respondents, "How fair do you feel the division of work around the house

is in your household?" Responses are shaped by gendered expectations and therefore do not adequately capture satisfaction, fairness, or equality.

In addition to the notion of emotional work and responsibility, an implied concept for assessing family management, household labor in particular, is the concept of "standards" for housework (Walker, 1999). Many studies cite participant comments that imply that women tend to do more housework because men's standards for a "clean house" or a "good meal" were lower than women's. To ensure that standards are upheld, women felt that they would save time and energy by doing the work themselves. The extent to which "standards" for housework perpetuate gendered patterns in families is an area that warrants further investigation. The tasks associated with household chores not only increase management and order, but these tasks also facilitate opportunities for "doing gender." Standards of work may offer a plausible answer to a question that Walker (1999) asked in the previous edition of this handbook, 10 years ago: "why [are] gendered patterns so stubbornly resistant to change?" (p. 466). Unfortunately, the question has been abandoned with limited exceptions since it was mentioned. The continued imbalance of home management tasks along gendered lines suggests that this is an important issue, especially when it comes to power in relationships. We encourage researchers to continue to explore the mechanisms through which household work perpetuates gender-defined relationships and the symbolism and purpose of gendered behaviors in families.

Finally, more theoretical and empirical work is needed to explicate the causal mechanisms through which gender influences caregiving and role assignments in families. The work of Carroll and Campbell (2008) approaches these issues using paired-couple data to explore the gendered nature of caregiving. Carroll and Campbell (2008) hypothesized that people have been socialized to *discuss* care in a gendered way, more so than to *provide* care in a gendered way. In order to explore this further, they interviewed male caregivers about their caregiving, and then interviewed their wives about the men's caregiving. This new methodological approach allowed researchers to examine the same care behaviors

from two perspectives. The perspectives, and not necessarily the care behaviors, were influenced by gender. For instance, when a wife was asked to discuss her care and then her husband's care, she typically highlighted the relational aspects of each partner's care. In contrast, her partner was likely to discuss both her care and his own care in terms of administrative or instrumental tasks. People, it seems, are prone to discuss care in gendered ways regardless of the type of care or the gender of the caregiver. Thus, by asking caregivers about their own caregiving behaviors, researchers elicit a gendered phenomenological description that may be misaligned with observable care behaviors. This suggests that methodological approaches undertaken to examine caregiving in families may elicit responses that perpetuate vestiges of Parsons and Bales (1955) prescription of gendered patterns in families. The work of Carroll and Campbell (2008) offers an excellent example of what we may be missing by failing to challenge gendered assumptions about caregiving and by neglecting to obtain couple data in other areas of research on gender in families.

Revisiting Gender and Family Relations within the Context of Postmodern Families

Divergence of Standard North American Family. Over the past decade many feminist authors have emphasized the assumptions underlying conceptualizations of the American family and inequalities that are replicated in research on divorce, children of divorce, and division of labor. Research on family problems, such as work/family balance and division of household labor, focuses on holding together the family unit, which is defined most frequently as a legally married couple with the male partner providing the economic backbone of the family, and the wife primarily managing the household. This model has been called the *Standard North American Family* (Smith, 1993), an icon that has governed most policy and research on families. As families in postmodern America diverge from this model, public figures blame changing values and gender roles for the

deinstitutionalization of marriage, and cite economic instability, mental illness, and moral deviance as products of the marriage breakdown (Adams & Coltrane, 2007; Coltrane & Adams, 2003; Zinn, 2000). In fact, feminism has been viewed as a threat to the family structure, and women pursuing careers and financial independence as representing a decline in family values and an increase in self-indulgence (Zinn, 2000). This trajectory of thought stems from early conceptualizations of the family as a functional unit. Structural functionalism assumes that a whole is the result of interdependent parts, and thus family members were each assigned a domain based on gender. A family without a part was perceived to be dysfunctional, and less than whole. Research literature on the negative ramifications of divorce or single-headed households on children stemmed from these assumptions, and became wildly popular as it emphasized the necessity for adults, and women in particular, to weather the storms of their marriage for the sake of the children (Coltrane & Adams, 2003). However, feminist scholars frequently agree that the changing family structures in America are the product of larger economic conditions in postindustrial society rather than gains in gender equality. The nuclear family model is increasingly less viable economically, and these trends surface in postindustrial societies all over the world (Zinn, 2000).

Family structure and marriage. Marriage initiatives that highlight the importance of beginning and maintaining marital unions as the most functional way to raise a family still flourish, and divorce is still viewed as a social problem. As scholars and therapists, we must be aware of the implicit and explicit messages around marriage and divorce and be cognizant of the historical contexts of these issues. We must pay special attention to how these issues are influenced by gender ideology and influence gender roles. For instance, marriage rhetoric is hetero-centric and often emphasizes the differences between the sexes as explanations for people's need to put up with power inequality (Heath, 2009), including the continued propagation of women's roles in families as primary caregivers and managers of families.

Perhaps the most overlooked (and most detrimental) assumption of policies aimed at marriage promotion is that the corruption of marriage is perpetuated by African American families with limited economic resources. Heath (2009) examined marriage promotion initiatives, and highlighted the covert racial messages which compared African American single mothers on welfare and White middle class married couples. By focusing on race in this juxtaposition, these initiatives fuel the fear that the breakdown of African American families is somehow contagious and spreading to White families in America. *Broken families*, it has been argued, shift the burden of childcare from the family to the state, and so marriage is the answer to national problems. This assumption is not without academic support: families headed by single mothers are indeed poorer and formerly married mothers have more need than their incomes can support (Bianchi, Subaiya, & Kahn, 1999). However, one primary cause of this discrepancy is the relative financial advantage of fathers, due to the continued gender gap in wages, and the tendency of mothers to forgo career opportunities during childbearing years, while fathers continue to work despite having and raising their children. Thus, answering the issue of single women's disproportionate poverty-which is partially caused by gender gaps in income-with advice to marry or stay married seems to miss the point. According to feminist theorists, this argument can no longer hold due to economic demands and barriers in our society. Initiatives to prevent divorce and promote marriage are band-aids to cover up the festering problem of market inflexibility for women in the childbearing years and the continuing injustices that exist on the basis of gender (see Jordan, 2006; Mandel & Semyonov, 2005).

The assumption that single-parenthood is one of the most pressing social problems, that is responsible for (rather than another symptom of) society's ills, may also be outdated and unhelpful (Murry, Bynum, Brody, Willert, & Stephens, 2001). Implicit in society's focus on divorce is the belief that a family that does not resemble a nuclear family is deficient, and preventing divorce is our last chance to hold the ideal family together.

Divorce rhetoric not only targets divorcees but all single parents and cohabiting families, including most gay and lesbian families, who are not legally married.

Noted marriage and family scholar Stephanie Coontz argues that history is replete with diverse family structures, high divorce rates, and children born outside of marriage (2004), both in the United States and internationally. Moreover, the idealization of the 1950's American family as the exemplar of values and functionality is little more than a myth (Coontz, 2000). From this perspective, the decline in the percentage of Americans who marry is representative of numerous factors, over and above economic forces, that have changed the landscape of marriage from a familial business arrangement to a choice based on affection and love (Coontz, 2004). This relatively recent shift has created a space for the acceptance of same-sex marriage and no-fault divorce in which the presence or loss of love is enough of a reason for a marital union to form or be dissolved (Adams & Coltrane 2007; Coontz, 2004, 2007). Consequently, there is a call in the literature on marriage, divorce, and family change to begin valuing families of any form. The most common recommendation is to enrich our research by examining the variable ways they solve the problems of daily living, rather than to focus only on the ways they deviate from nuclear families.

Couples of the twenty-first century. We encourage the new generation of scholars to conduct investigations to determine how emerging adults are affected by the demands associated with balancing work/family, caregiving, and division of labor. Readdressing these issues is important because historical context matters. Much of the literature on gender and family relations is based on theories that emerged in the 1950s and early 1970s. During the 1970s, for example, emerging adults' attitudes towards work and family were labeled New Individualism, characterized by greater personal freedom, a retreat from institutions (e.g., marriage, companies, government), and expanded lifestyle options (Orrange, 2003). This included a push for women to pursue careers

that satisfied them personally, without thought for their future family-related responsibilities.

A subsequent outcome was that the idealism of New Individualism was blamed for many things, including perceived increases in divorce (Coltrane & Adams, 2003). Consequently, we encourage new generations of family scholars to explore whether emerging adults of the twenty-first century have attitudes towards work/family commitments and gender roles that are reflective of New Individualism. Or has the changing eco-political, and social environment affected them differently? In other words, how do emerging adults of the twenty-first century negotiate gender roles in the context of career and family demands?

We pose these questions based on recent findings of Orrange (2003) who sought to understand how modern, young, privileged, professional law and business students in prestigious universities predicted they would handle work and family life. Results from this study, reflecting a sample of mostly White young professionals in their twenties, revealed that young adults still hold New Individualism values about personal freedoms while simultaneously desiring a commitment to institutions such as marriage. However, they are attempting a return to institutions that are decidedly less stable and reliable. Young professionals expect almost no job stability, which is an accurate assessment of the professional milieu, especially in the light of the recent economic uncertainty. Their lack of reliance on stable employment leads to uncertainty about how to manage family life while having to relocate to keep a job or change jobs. Job instability, and the changing family relationships and processes that follow from it, should be considered in future research on family and gender. These young professionals, with a more reflective sense of identity, may be less likely to follow gendered roles for family life. They may be more open to couple relations in which women have careers and men are stay-at-home parents. However, institutional instability in their environment could stifle their egalitarianism as they search for a secure paradigm of family life to counterbalance their insecure work environment.

Accommodating Family/Work Demands of Couples of the Twenty-First Century

It is in the best interest of employers to be cognizant of the importance of work/family balance for the incoming generation of workers. Becker and Moen (1999) point out that the absence of family-friendly policies has been historically beneficial for employers, leaving the burden of balance within the families. However, Orrange (2003) found that a group of new young professionals voiced plans to leave any employer that does not allow job flexibility that is sensitive to their family needs and demands. Recent economic crises likely made it difficult for the young professionals that Orrange (2003) studied to choose employers with flexible policies, as they planned. However, these findings indicate a change in both men and women's priorities and expectations about the relationship between work and family. In times of national economic success, these young professionals may begin to search for employers with more flexible policies, disadvantaging employers who do not provide such policies.

Renewed attention to flexible work schedules and family-friendly policies is critical. It appears that families faced with work/family incompatibility feel that they are forced to choose between having fewer children and abandoning the workforce. Employers must begin to allow workers to use the benefits of technology to work from home and travel less, while also creating positions for talented people to job-share or work part-time. One of the most frequently desired benefits is on-site childcare, which employers could use to competitively vie for the attention of young parents. If parents are allowed the opportunity to remain valued employees while also being valuable to their family, the wage gap that has been so constant may begin to close as it has in countries with more family-friendly work policies (Mandel & Semyonov, 2005).

Further, some researchers voice beliefs that the only mechanism through which we can achieve complete gender egalitarianism is through employer policies that allow men and women the

freedom to behave in ways that do not reinforce gendered norms and stereotypes (Brighouse & Wright, 2008). To that end, gender specialists prefer equality-promoting leave policies, which encourage men to take off equal amounts of time as their wives upon the birth of a child; the more time the men take off to provide care, the more leave time allotted to the woman. However, it must be noted that while policy initiatives like this one encourage gender equality, they also continue to perpetuate the predominance of the nuclear heterosexual marriage and penalize single parents or gay and lesbian couples in states that do not honor legal unions.

For policy makers, this research should also emphasize the importance of affordable childcare. The work/family dilemma arises for most families primarily because one parent's (usually the mother's) income must be compared to the rising cost of childcare. It is a problem in this country that some individuals' yearly salary cannot accommodate the cost of competent childcare. The productivity of the country may be inextricably linked to our ability to care for our children effectively. Doing so can address the concern that many mothers have regarding having to choose *either/or* rather than *both/and* regarding meeting the demands of childrearing and having fulfilling careers.

Conclusion

Our decade review of studies of examining gender in family relations confirms that research scholars continued to design investigations to understand and explain how families "do gender" in everyday life. While a few researchers attempted to move the field forward by "addressing fundamental questions about the experiences of women and men in families" (Walker, 1999, p. 466), major gaps in this field of study remain. Unfortunately, none of the studies specifically focused on identifying structures or mechanisms that perpetuate gendered patterns in contemporary families. In essence, we found no evidence that researchers are "thinking about gender in new ways" (Thompson, 1993, p. 567). Thus, despite over a

decade of research in this area of study, the need to revolutionize our conceptualizations of gender and its role in families remains (Walker, 1999).

For example, much of the work continues to focus on traditional substantive areas that describe how women and men enact their roles, "be a gender," to manage work/family demands, division of labor, and family caregiving needs. The bodies of literature on family caregiving, work/family balance, and division of labor need to be expanded to address the implications of the role of gender in the changing environment. Also addressed in reference to these topics should be the changing attitudes of young professionals who may be confronting the challenge of tackling the delicate balance between professional and family success.

The changes emerging in our country provide an opportunity to document and examine some important research questions regarding gender and family life. If more men and women are out of work, how are families negotiating their new roles? Will we see more stay-at-home dads? According to the 2010 Census (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010), there were approximately 150,000 stay-at-home dads, and this number has been increasing since 2003. How will this trend impact who does what in providing for the needs of families? Will families relocate for the best jobs by following the careers of women as often as or more frequently than for the careers of men? If women have numerous roles that can be fulfilled without employment, it may be time for a renewed emphasis on the role identities of men that exist separate from the work environment. As men lose jobs, researchers and clinicians alike must be prepared for the ensuing depression, anxiety, and uncertainty that may occur for men who can no longer fulfill their gender roles through employment (Paul & Moser, 2009).

In sum, based on our decade review of gender and family relations, our conclusions are similar to what has been reported over the past 35 years. While there has been some evidence of increased role flexibility among men, household work continues to be reflective of gender-defined roles. Women continue to have less privilege and power in marriages and families, and therefore bear the

primary responsibility for organizing and managing family life. Studies of gender and families continue to operationalize gender as a sex category, using tenets of traditional structural functional theory. Thus, limited consideration was given to ways in which gender is perpetuated by institutions or interactional processes. We continue to know little about the connection between gender and family because there remains a need to "think about gender in new ways" (Thompson, 1993, p. 567). Finally, the fact that results of studies on gender and family relations continue to reflect the life patterns of Caucasian heterosexual couples raises questions about the generalizability of this field of research to other families. The continued prevalence of sample bias in much of this work documents the need for more representation of families who are representative of greater racial/ethnic, social, economic, and structural variety.

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Handbook of Marriage and the Family

Third Edition

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