

Gary W. Peterson
Kevin R. Bush *Editors*

Handbook of Marriage and the Family

Third Edition

 Springer

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Gary W. Peterson
Department of Family Studies
and Social Work
Miami University
Oxford, OH, USA

Kevin R. Bush
Department of Family Studies
and Social Work
Miami University
Oxford, OH, USA

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Projects like this Handbook coincide with many life course transitions experienced by the many talented chapter contributors who made this book possible. During the progress of this work, chapter authors changed their employment, experienced family transitions, were victimized by serious illness, and made great contributions to our knowledge about families, to name only a few things. We especially would like to recognize two of our colleagues, Dr. Alfred L. Joseph of Miami University and Dr. Alexis Walker of Oregon State University, who passed away during the final stages of this project. Both were talented scholars and wonderful people who wrote about families and human relationships with great creativity and understanding. Both believed passionately in human equality and social justice and sought to make the world a better place in their daily lives. Alexis and Alfred taught us much, touched our hearts, and left us with remarkable legacies to remember them by.

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Contributors

Alan C. Acock, PhD Department of Human Development and Family Sciences, College of Health and Human Sciences, Oregon State University, Corvallis, OR, USA

Katherine R. Allen, PhD Department of Human Development, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, VA, USA

Elaine A. Anderson, PhD Department of Family Science, School of Public Health, University of Maryland, College Park, College Park, MD, USA

Stephen A. Anderson, PhD Department of Human Development and Family Studies, University of Connecticut, Mansfield, CT, USA

Sandra J. Bailey, PhD Montana State University, Bozeman, MT, USA

Suzanne Bartle-Haring, PhD Department of Human Development and Family Science, The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH, USA

Cady Berkel, PhD Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ, USA

Sampson Lee Blair, PhD Department of Sociology, The State University of New York, Buffalo, NY, USA

Jill M. Boelter, MA Department of Human Development and Family Science, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX, USA

Gary L. Bowen, PhD, ACSW School of Social Work, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC, USA

Sanford L. Braver, PhD Department of Psychology, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ, USA

Kevin R. Bush, PhD Department of Family Studies and Social Work, Miami University, Oxford, OH, USA

Mia A. Smith-Bynum, PhD Department of Family Science, School of Public Health, University of Maryland at College Park, College Park, MD, USA

Marie Cornwall, PhD Department of Sociology, College of Family, Home, and Social Science, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT, USA

Adam Davey, PhD Department of Public Health, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA, USA

Kieu Anh Do Department of Child, Youth, and Family Studies, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln, NE, USA

Brad Eeden-Moorefield van, MSW, PhD Department of Human Development and Family Studies, Central Michigan University, Mount Pleasant, MI, USA

Dr. Stephen Gavazzi, PhD Department of Human Development and Family Science, Center for Family Research, Ohio State University, Columbus, OH, USA

Deborah B. Gentry, EdD Instructional Development Center, Heartland Community College, Normal, IL, USA

Jane Gilgun, PhD, LICSW School of Social Work, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, MN, USA

Fiona Rose-Greenland, PhD Department of Sociology, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI, USA

Heather M. Helms, PhD Department of Human Development and Family Studies, The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Greensboro, NC, USA

Charles B. Hennon, PhD Department of Family Studies and Social Work, Miami University, Oxford, OH, USA

Alfred L. Joseph, PhD Department of Family Studies and Social Work, Miami University, Oxford, OH, USA

Gina Kim Seattle Children's Hospital, Seattle, WA, USA

Iva Kosutic, PhD Marriage and Family Therapy Programs, University of Connecticut, Mansfield, CT, USA

Kathrine A. Kovalanka, PhD Department of Family Studies and Social Work, Miami University, Oxford, OH, USA

Michael E. Lamb Department of Psychology, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK

Yoav Lavee, PhD School of Social Work, University of Haifa, Mount Carmel, Haifa, Israel

Bethany L. Letiecq, PhD Department of Health and Human Development, Montana State University, Bozeman, MT, USA

Sally A. Lloyd, PhD Department of Educational Leadership and Women's Studies, Miami University, Oxford, OH, USA

Jay A. Mancini, PhD Department of Human and Family Science, University of Georgia, Athens, GA, USA

William Marsiglio, PhD Department of Sociology, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL, USA

Lindsay Satterwhite Mayberry, PhD Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN, USA

Brandy Renee McCann, PhD Department of Gerontology, Sociology and Political Science, University of Louisiana, Monroe, LA, USA

Susan M. McHale, PhD Department of Human Development and Family Studies, College of Health and Human Development, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA, USA

Velma McBride Murry, PhD Department of Human and Organizational Development, Vanderbilt University, Peabody College, Nashville, TN, USA

B. Kay Pasley, PhD Department of Family and Child Sciences, 0225H SAN, Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL, USA

Charlotte Patterson, PhD Department of Psychology, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA, USA

Maureen Perry-Jenkins, PhD University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA, USA

Gary W. Peterson, PhD Department of Family Studies and Social Work, Miami University, Oxford, OH, USA

M. Elise Radina, PhD Department of Family Studies and Social Work, Miami University, Oxford, OH, USA

Kevin Roy, PhD Department of Family Science, School of Public Health, University of Maryland, College Park, MD, USA

Stephen T. Russell, PhD Department of Family Studies and Human Development, Frances McClelland Institute for Children, Youth, and Families, The University of Arizona, Tuscon, AZ, USA

Ronald M. Sabatelli, PhD Department of Human Development & Family Studies, University of Connecticut, Mansfield, CT, USA

Natasha Slesnick, PhD Department of Human Development and Family Science, Ohio State University, Columbus, OH, USA

Pamela J. Smock, PhD Department of Sociology and Population Studies Center, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI, USA

Catherine A. Surra, PhD School of Behavioral Sciences and Education, Penn State University Harrisburg, Middletown, PA, USA

Emiko Takagi, PhD Gerontology Program, Department of Health Science, Towson University, Towson, MD, USA

Jay Teachman, PhD Department of Sociology, AH 505, Western Washington University, Bellingham, WA, USA

Lucky Tedrow, PhD Center for Social Science Instruction, Demographic Research Laboratory, Sociology Department, Western Washington University, Bellingham, WA, USA

Adriana J. Umaña-Taylor, PhD School of Social and Family Dynamics, Program in Family and Human Development, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ, USA

Kimberly A. Updegraff, PhD School of Social Dynamics, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ, USA

Shelley M. MacDermid Wadsworth, PhD Department of Child Development and Family Studies, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN, USA

Alexis J. Walker, PhD College of Health and Human Sciences, Oregon State University, Corvallis, OR, USA

Isaac Washburn, PhD Oregon Social Learning Center, Eugene, OR, USA

Judith L. Weiner, PhD Department of Communication, Miami University, Oxford, OH, USA

James M. White, PhD Department of Sociology, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC, Canada

Shawn D. Whiteman, PhD Department of Human Development and Family Studies, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN, USA

Stephan M. Wilson, Dean College of Human Environmental Sciences, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK, USA

Yan Ruth Xia, PhD Department of Child, Youth, and Family Studies, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln, NE, USA

Jing Jian Xiao, PhD University of Rhode Island, Kingston, RI, USA

Xiaolin Xie, PhD Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL, USA

Introduction: Balancing Connectedness and Autonomy in Diverse Families

1

Gary W. Peterson and Kevin R. Bush

Balancing Connectedness and Autonomy in Diverse Families

Before describing the history, purpose, and structure of this book, it seems appropriate to identify an unintentional and latent theme in this *Handbook of Marriage and the Family, 3rd Edition*. As we edited these excellent chapters, a covert theme seemed to emerge in this immense amount of knowledge that explains why people seek to live in the diversity of family forms and close relationships described in this book. An essential theme that courses through these pages is that families, in their various forms, may be the primary means to address two fundamental interpersonal relationship needs: connection and autonomy. Reduced to their essence, family members, following the human inclination for social bonding, seek to address the elemental relationship question: “How to balance one’s needs for connections with others while, at the same time, affirming one’s individuality within their interpersonal relationships?” In a metaphorical sense, therefore, like birds, humans may need both a “nest” for secure *connections* as well as “wings” to soar freely and affirm their individuality within their everyday relationships.

Much like birds, who build a great variety of nests for secure togetherness and have greatly varied flight capabilities, family members must manage this dynamic between togetherness and individuality in ways that fit their unique ecological and cultural circumstances (Raef, 2006; Rothbaum & Trommsdorf, 2007). The result is a great profusion of family and close relationships such as ethnic/cultural variations, cohabitation, dual earner families, nuclear families, as well as lesbian and gay families, to name only a few. Moreover, the failure to find a satisfactory balance for connection and autonomy within diverse family or close relationships may result in relationship/marital conflict, relationship dissolution, emotional divorce, family violence, family stress, disrupted parent–child relationships, delinquency, and sexual dysfunction (Peterson, 1995, 2009).

The increasingly diverse forms of family relationships demonstrated in these chapters may be a primary means through which most of the humanity seeks to address these basic social needs. This analogy underscores the importance of balancing both the need to be secure or *connected* with others, while simultaneously gaining *autonomy* within marital, premarital, partnership, heterosexual, same sex, parent–child, and close family relationships of all varieties (Peterson, 1995, 2009). Given the great diversity of human circumstances and almost infinite individual uniqueness, many family forms or close interpersonal relations are needed for family members to both seek and realize the desired balance between being connected to

G.W. Peterson, PhD (✉) • K.R. Bush, PhD
Department of Family Studies and Social Work,
Miami University, McGuffey Hall 101,
Oxford, OH 45056, USA
e-mail: petersgw@muohio.edu

others and autonomous enough to affirm one's individuality. As these chapters will illustrate in a multitude of ways, families continue to develop novel structures and processes so they can satisfy needs for establishing connections with each other while, at the same time, practicing autonomy in creative ways so they can adapt to changing social, cultural, historical, and economic circumstances.

An initial understanding of the importance of finding an acceptable balance in autonomy and connectedness in family relationships first requires clear descriptions of what is meant by these two concepts. The first of these dimensions, connectedness in family relationships, is an aspect of intimate relationships that is shaped by a complex of general social values and qualities frequently referred to as *collectivism* (Kagitcibasi, 1996; Rothbaum & Trommsdorf, 2007; Triandis, 2001). This concept refers to cohesiveness in relationships and is closely allied with such ideas as attachment, caregiver sensitiveness, affection, intimacy, supportiveness, loyalty, emotional closeness, interpersonal harmony, conformity to authority, and giving priority to group/familial interests. Collectivistic qualities such as these are commonly but not exclusively believed to be prominent within Asian-American, African-American, and Hispanic American ethnicities. Cultural traditions in collectivistic contexts are believed to give precedence to interpersonal closeness, group interests, and to viewing the self as a product of relating to others (Bush, 2000; Kagitcibasi, 1996; Rothbaum & Trommsdorf, 2007; Triandis, 2001). Anthropologists frequently propose that our capacity to connect with others, form social bonds, cooperate for common protection, and collaborate for productive efficiencies propelled homo sapiens to evolutionary dominance over more physically capable species (Aronson, 2007).

The second of these concepts, autonomy, is an aspect of intimate human relationships that is closely allied with a complex of general social values and qualities often referred to as *individualism*. As an aspect of individualism, autonomy has been the most prominent theme among American immigrant groups from Western Europe

and has been the dominant theme throughout the United States history (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985; McDougall, 2004). Autonomous aspects of family relationships often are reflective of broad cultural patterns found more commonly within the United States and Western Europe than other societies. This concept is associated with ideas about a person's independent or private sense of self, individual rights, inner personal experiences, psychological independence, emotional distinctiveness, freedom of choice, and self-control. Despite being an aspect of one's individuality, however, a fundamental error is to equate the concept of autonomy with psychological *separateness* or total independence instead of viewing it as the particular degree of individual self-control and freedom of choice within the context of continuing connections with others (Kagitcibasi, 1996; Rothbaum & Trommsdorf, 2007). Diverse family forms and close relationships vary extensively in the degree of autonomy that is encouraged or tolerated. In short, having sufficient autonomy within diverse families allows their members the flexibility to make choices about whether or not to cooperate with group expectations, chart a unique response that affirms one's individuality, or choose some pathway in-between these options. The result is that family and relationship diversity provides an increasing degree of choice about how to achieve the desired balance between the goals of expressing one's individuality and being connected to others.

Some initial caution is necessary, however, when characterizing family systems and their encompassing cultures as either collectivistic or individualistic, when most, in fact, are neither exclusively one or the other (Kagitcibasi, 1996; Peterson, 1995, 2009; Rothbaum & Trommsdorf, 2007). Instead, both of these general values probably coexist in varied degrees of balance across virtually all cultures/ethnic groups and family systems. In addition, despite the shared relationship themes of autonomy and connectedness across cultures/ethnicities, these aspects of relationships often are expressed differently across ethnic/cultural communities, even within those that share an overall emphasis on either

individualism or collectivism (Bush, Bohon, & Kim, 2009; Raef, 2006). Thus, for example, expressions of family connection may differ both across two predominantly collectivistic ethnicities as well as between collectivistic and individualistic communities. An illustration is the tendency of “collectivistic” Chinese American family members to use physical affection (e.g., hugging, kissing, etc.—an aspect of connection) less often than is common for the “collectivistic” practices of Hispanic American family members.

Despite the centrality of this dynamic between autonomy and connectedness in family relationships, disparate views exist about whether states of tension or compatibility are most often prevalent between autonomy and connectedness. The initial, and until recently, the most prominent viewpoint was to portray the relationship between autonomy and connectedness as one of conflict or “tension.” A *tension* viewpoint portrays the quest for autonomy as a set of psychological attributes and behaviors aimed at guiding a person to separate or disengage from primary social connections in favor of pursuing one’s own self-exploration and self-interest. Such a conception almost inevitably means that relationship connectedness, which emphasizes affiliation, nurturance, responsibility, conformity and engagement, must be at odds with autonomy. From this “tension” perspective, autonomy and connectedness often are viewed as opposing forces in which any increases in one will inherently lead to decreases in the other, much like a zero sum game (Peterson, 1995, 2009).

Such conceptions of tension are evident, for example, in popular conceptions of adolescent development in families where this dichotomy is presumed to exist and prevent continued conformity to their parents’ expectations while the young are gaining independence from them (Peterson, 2005). This tension perspective is most fully developed in classical and recent versions of psychoanalytic theory in which autonomy is viewed as being achieved during early childhood and adolescence through a process of “separation” from early bonds with parents (Peterson, 1995, 2009). From this view, a separation process of this kind is viewed as a normal feature of

growing up and is proposed to have positive consequences for the progress of youth toward adulthood. During adolescence, for example, the young are supposed to gain autonomy by separating from or becoming less connected to parents as they spend more time with peers, begin to date, experiment with sexuality, and become committed to their own values. They also learn to make more of their own life-style choices about such things as entertainment, music, and styles of dress (Peterson, 2005).

A tension viewpoint portrays adolescents as achieving autonomy through a distancing process as they spend less time with and reduce the quality of ties they have with parents. Gaining autonomy through separation provides the young with greater freedom from the physical and emotional controls of parents so they can make their own life decisions and engage in intimate relationships with people outside their families (Blos, 1979; Freud, 1969). A common feature of parent-adolescent relationships that fosters this separation process is the increased level of tension, conflict, and turmoil that is supposed to be common during this developmental period. Conflict and turmoil contributes to increased adolescent separation, which creates the conditions for greater youthful autonomy at the expense of connections with parents (Arnett, 1999). Young children and adolescents, for example, are viewed as making important developmental progress during early childhood and adolescence by separating psychologically from parents and focusing their energies on (or becoming connected to) social objects outside the family, a process that results in greater independence and less dependency by the young on their elders. This separation or individuation process is viewed as essential for the young to make developmental progress toward adulthood by separating from their families of origin and forming stronger bonds of connection within newly formed families of procreation. A key point here is that increases in autonomy come at the expense of proportional decreases in connectedness (Blos, 1979; Freud, 1969).

More recent interpretations of this “tension” or “separation” process, however, view it either as a declining perspective or one where mounting

separation is not a developmental asset but a liability leading to growing delinquency, relationship dissatisfaction, dysfunction, social rejection, conflict, and dissolution of family relationships (Peterson, 1995, 2009; Peterson, Bush, & Supple, 1999). For example, despite the increased prevalence and importance of peer relationships during adolescence, parents remain an important source of support and guidance for most youth (Wang, Peterson, & Morpheu, 2007). That is, parent–child relationships change in how autonomy and connectedness are expressed across the life course, but balance is still achievable when a secure base exists.

Contrasting with the tension perspective is the more recent view that autonomy and connectedness develop *simultaneously* as either universal or highly generalized aspects of human and family relationships. Some degree of balance between autonomy and connectedness is necessary because humans are believed, almost universally, to both assert their individuality at the same time they seek social connections with others instead of being at odds with each other. Autonomy and connectedness are multi-faceted aspects of family relationships that are compatible in ways that are virtually essential. Although the meaning of autonomy and connectedness may vary across particular relationship circumstances and cultures, both are thought to be present in interrelated fashion, in most, if not all cultural and family circumstances (Kagitcibasi, 1996; Rothbaum & Trommsdorf, 2007).

An important example of this compatibility viewpoint is provided by attachment theory, which can be used to explain how people develop and experience connectedness and autonomy within families and other relationships during the entire lifespan (Ainsworth, 1989; Bowlby, 1988). The emergence of attachment behavior by infants, an early form of connectedness, contributes to close ties between infants and attachment figures (e.g., parents) or people who serve as sources of security and protection. Infant-to-parent attachment involves such behaviors as crawling and eye contact to maintain close proximity, clinging responses for protection, and affectionate behaviors (e.g., cuddling, snuggling, and smiling) for

emotional support (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991). Attachment relationships also may provide the young with an internal working model or a set of beliefs about what to expect from relationships and how they will work in the future (Bretherton & Munholland, 2008; Cassidy, 2008). Early parent–child relationships, therefore, provide children and youth with an understanding of how reliable and trustworthy other people are in relationships. As the social world of the young expands, these views of others are carried into new relationships and may provide basic models for later life. Aspects of these relationship templates may be predispositions about how to balance connectedness and autonomy within dating, marriage, partnership, friendship, and other intimate associations.

Concerning the compatibility issue, attachment theory offers the idea that most people who have experienced secure attachment relationships are less likely to experience conflict between autonomy and connectedness in either their early or later relationships. Instead, autonomy is not only portrayed as being compatible with connectedness but also as springing from the close ties that a person has experienced in secure attachments with others. Autonomy begins early in development, as infants gradually expand how far they crawl away from their parents to explore objects at a distance in the environment. During childhood, adolescence, and adulthood, the process of gaining autonomy retains this common theme of constantly expanding explorations through increasingly more complicated behaviors. Individuals use parents, friends, dating partners, spouses, and partners as sources of security and springboards for more elaborate excursions into the social world (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991; Bowlby, 1988). For example, most teenagers do not simply reject positive relationships with parents as they gain greater freedom from parental connections. Instead, teenagers often expand the number and complexity of their peer relationships, while maintaining close ties with parents. Greater autonomy is not achieved, therefore, as a “zero sum game” in which gains in self-direction necessarily mean losses in connections with parents. Most adolescents report that they value

making more of their own life-style choices and desire to spend more time with peers, but without suffering dramatic declines in the love and respect they feel for parents (Peterson, 1995, 2005, 2009; Wang et al., 2007). Consequently, the development of autonomy and connectedness are not inevitably in conflict but, indeed, are compatible and essential aspects of human relationships that develop together.

These brief comments about the dynamic relationship between autonomy and connectedness within diverse families may illustrate only one of many common themes that are present in these chapters. These comments only begin to scratch the surface of more complex aspects of this balance between asserting one's individuality and being connected to others. However, most, if not all of us, are at least partially shaped by the "security of the nest" and the "freedom of wings." Other readers of this volume will undoubtedly uncover other themes that are either explicit or implied in these pages.

Turning to the specifics of this project, *The Handbook of Marriage and Family* has a long heritage in family sociology, family studies, and related fields based on two previous editions published by Plenum Press (1987 and 1999) and the original edition published by Rand McNally (1964) with Harold Christensen as Editor, one of the founders of family sociology. Over the years, the *Handbook* became one of the most recognized sources of knowledge about families for multiple fields and disciplines. The initial *Handbook* by Christensen was followed by two subsequent editions of the *Handbook of Marriage and the Family* edited by Sussman and Steinmetz (1987) and by Sussman, Steinmetz, & Peterson (1999). The current project was designed to continue, build upon, and elaborate on this very rich tradition of conceptualizing and synthesizing the best social science knowledge about family life embodied in the previous *Handbooks*. Our conception of the current edition is very similar to the aim underscored by Christensen (1964) in the first edition's preface as attempting "to take stock of past accomplishments, present resources, and future potentials. We have wanted to know where we have been, where we are, where we are going, and how to get there (p. 1 of Preface)."

Consistent with Christensen's primary goal, the intent of the *Handbook of Marriage and the Family, 3rd Edition* is to describe, analyze, synthesize, and critique much of the current research and theory about family relationships, family structural variations, and the role of families in society. The goal was to provide the most comprehensive state-of-the-art assessment of the existing knowledge of family life, with particular attention to variations due to gender, socioeconomic, race, ethnic, cultural, and life-style diversity. Our intent was to provide the best synthesis of existing scholarship on families that will be a primary source for scholars and professionals but also serve as a primary text for graduate courses on family relationships and the roles of families in society.

Although we did not enforce "cookie cutter" similarity across chapters, we did send instructions to chapter authors specifying format and content guidelines to encourage them to address a common set of issues within the parameters of a similar chapter format. The intent was to encourage a greater degree of coherence across chapters than was characteristic of previous editions of the *Handbook*. Consequently, many but not all the chapters address the following components in similar ways:

1. An introduction that acquaints the reader with the general importance of the topic being addressed.
2. A review of the literature that summarizes and synthesizes the existing research/scholarship in an area.
3. Some attention to how family theory or theories can be used to provide greater insight into the existing scholarly/research literature on the topic.
4. An evaluation of the current research methodology within a specific area covered by each chapter.
5. A concluding section that summarizes the most important ideas, makes recommendations for future work that is needed, and/or suggests applications of the knowledge provided in the chapter.

The chapters of the book are organized into five parts as follows: (I) Theoretical and

Methodological Issues, (II) Relationships, Processes, and Roles in Families, (III) Families and Other Institutions, (IV) Diversity in Family Life, and (V) Application of Family Social Science. A strongly emphasized feature of this project is its multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary quality through the involvement of chapter authors from a variety of fields including family psychology, family sociology, social work, child development, family science, family life education, and family therapy. Chapters describe and conceptualize internal aspects of family relationships, family theory, family structural variations, and the place of families in the larger society. A particular emphasis of this book will be its focus on the best social science that identifies how the study of family systems and the relationship level of analysis provide fundamental insights into the human experience by expanding beyond an exclusive focus on individual development.

This third edition of the *Handbook of Marriage and the Family* is not only to review the current research literature within a specific area of scholarship, but also to make theoretical contributions to our understanding of families. Specifically, authors were encouraged to integrate concepts from family theory or related theories that can be used to provide meaning to the research literature in a specific area of focus. Selected chapters on family life education, applied family science, and family therapy also provide an analysis of the state of applied social science knowledge that seeks to improve the lives of family members.

Finally, we are well aware that we stand on the shoulders of and have benefitted from insights and achievements of those editors of the *Handbook* who have gone before us, Harold Christensen, Marvin Sussman, and Suzanne Steinmetz. These founding editors have set standards of excellence that we have felt challenged to match. We have done our best to maintain the excellent legacy of the *Handbook of Marriage and the Family* and hope that our editorial predecessors would approve of the final product.

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Part I

Theoretical and Methodological Issues

The Current Status of Theorizing About Families

2

James M. White

Introduction

Lavee and Dollahite (1991) and more recently Hawley and Geske (2000) and Taylor and Bagdi (2005) have provided evidence that theory is seldom used by either researchers or therapists. The oft cited quote “there is nothing so practical as a good theory” suggests that if we had “good” theories about the family, we would find them useful and practical. Furthermore, the 1990s were marked by critiques from various postpositivist schools of thought about the impossibility of knowledge and the relativity of all knowledge claims (White & Mason, 1999). Vargus (1999) has described family theorists as wandering in the wilderness without leadership. Although this chapter covers much of the material framing these claims, it does not directly confront any one of these. Rather, the purpose of this chapter is to provide a description and assessment of the state of our theoretical knowledge.

This chapter covers a diverse range of theoretical material from the philosophy of science to new theoretical methodologies such as “optimal matching.” A general “road map” might assist as we traverse this enormous and varied intellectual

landscape. The chapter is organized into sections introducing the basic notions of the philosophy of social science and social science theory; a brief review of the contemporary literature; an application and demonstration of the way theory provides insights, an evaluation of the methods used to construct theory, and a conclusion. The chapter necessarily begins with some fairly abstract discussions involving aspects of philosophy of science and basic problems confronting all of social science theory. Subsequent sections are increasingly concrete and substantive until the section on methodology returns to relatively abstract material.

There are several goals that we would like to reach in most areas of study including the study of families. Perhaps the two that are most immediately relevant to social science theory are the acquisition of *knowledge* about families and the development of how and why *explanations* of family phenomena. Each of these goals is more complicated than might appear and both are certainly areas for dispute.

Knowledge

There is little agreement about the general nature of knowledge. Although Aristotle had argued for three criteria, over intervening centuries, epistemologists have largely taken these and most other criteria apart as the pendulum swung between idealism and realism, empiricism and rationalism. Wittgenstein in his last work (1969) said

J.M. White, PhD (✉)
Department of Sociology, University of British
Columbia, Anthropology and Sociology Building,
Room 2123, 6303 North West Marine Drive,
Vancouver, BC, Canada V6T 1Z1
e-mail: blanco@interchange.ubc.ca

“Whether a proposition can turn out false after all depends on what I make count as determinants for that proposition” (p. 2e). Indeed, in regard to general public knowledge, there is certainly room to argue about situational constrained knowledge (see Habermas, 1971), partial knowledge, knowledge as practice (pragmatics, see Haack, 1993, 1998), and the connection between understanding and knowing.

With scientific knowledge, these complications may seem both less pervasive and problematic. Scientific knowledge is simply those facts and information acquired by using the scientific method. Certainly, the scientific method of observation, hypothesis formation, and empirical testing would appear to produce scientific knowledge that is less contentious than vernacular knowledge claims. Indeed, we could apply the same methods to any knowledge claim and produce scientific knowledge. However “truth,” one of the oldest criteria for knowledge, would have to be replaced by the tentative nature of scientific claims since scientific knowledge may always be overturned and is regarded as tentative rather than absolute. Probably one of the staunchest proponents of the special status of scientific knowledge claim as less problematic is Popper (1959). Popper argued that ultimately knowledge claims were those that were not falsifiable. The skeptical and tentative nature of science was nicely captured in his idea of *falsifiability*. Contemporary philosophy of science, however, is less sanguine about seeing falsifiability as an essential criterion for scientific knowledge claims. The reason for this is pointed out by Okasha (2002) who describes the dilemma that may occur when scientists encounter data that is inconsistent with their theory. Popper would have us reject the theory, but scientists are even more likely to try to maintain their theory and somehow accommodate the anomaly. Of course, when finding after finding refutes a theory it must be abandoned, but there is no clear point at which we know that we should abandon rather than refine and extend a theory. Kuhn (1962/1996), of course, has given many examples in the history of science of exactly this problem where there is reluctance to abandon a theory that is frequently at odds with empirical results.

Although scientific knowledge is not easily defined by any one trait such as falsifiability, it does represent a particular form of knowledge. It is not defined, however, by only one set of rigorous methods. Science is diverse and the methods of physics and chemistry touted by Kuhn (1962/1996) clearly are less shared by biology, archaeology, and neurology. These disciplines are not less well developed scientifically as Kuhn argued but are simply different according to their object of study and the constraints these objects pose for researchers. Certainly, the study of human families is different than studying star nebulae, but also different than studying aquatic invertebrates. Hellemans and Bunch (1988) in their history of science give a much more complete picture of the diversity in science and method than Kuhn could ever have acknowledged because it would mean sacrificing his central arguments (see White, 2004).

The one element that consistently unites these diverse methods and scientific disciplines is the *community* of scientists. Although this has been discussed as the core of science by philosophers such as Peirce (1877), it has been nicely elaborated by the sociologist Merton (1942/1973). Merton argued that the community of scientists are united by core *epistemic values* (Allchin, 1998) including skepticism, universalism, open communication, and evidence. Allchin (1998) has added “honesty” to this list. So, scientific methods are those methods that conform to these values as interpreted at any given historical period. As a result, scientific knowledge is knowledge indirectly produced by the expression of these epistemic values. It is, therefore, a different form of knowledge than religious knowledge, literary knowledge, or common sense knowledge. In regard to the study of the family, surely we are after scientific knowledge.

Explanation

If we admit that one of the goals for the study of families is scientific knowledge, it might seem a mere corollary that we would seek scientific explanations. At a simple level, explanations are our

attempts to answer “how” and “why” questions. But not all sciences necessarily seek to address these questions. As Hellemans and Bunch (1988) indicate, many sciences are more concerned with observation and description. Indeed, one can make the case that good, detailed description is the *sine qua non* of many sciences such as botany and biology. In the study of the family, however, we also want to know the answer to such questions as “how” and “why” relationships end and how and why we have children. So in relation to the questions family scholars want to be answered, certainly scientific explanation is a goal.

The most well known and popular definition of scientific explanation is the one first proposed by Hempel and Oppenheim (1948). They divide a scientific explanation into two parts: the phenomenon to be explained (*explicandum*) and the propositions that deduce this phenomenon as a special instance of a broader law or set of propositions (*explanans*). This perspective, also known as the covering law model of explanation, posits that explanation is provided when we show that a particular event or dependent variable outcome can be deduced from broad general principles or laws. For example, dropping this book (*explicandum*) is deduced as an outcome from the theory of gravity (*explanans*). Using rational choice theory as an example, we could argue that Bill and Sue got married (*explicandum*) because Bill and Sue are optimizing their rewards and minimizing their costs (*explanans*) relative to any given context and time period.

This perspective has led many scholars such as Homans (1967) to affirm that explanation is deduction from general principles. Subsequent debate and assessment, however, has yielded a somewhat revised picture of scientific explanation. Most notable has been the effect of the problem of symmetry and causality (Okasha, 2002). The problem of symmetry is simply that the specific deduced *explanans* may often be replaced by the *explicandum*. Okasha (2002) uses the example of explaining the shadow of a flag pole (*explicandum*) by the general laws of light and angle of the sun (laws) in conjunction with the specific height of the pole (specific *explanans*). Note that the symmetry problem is that we can

just as easily use the length of the shadow as an *explanans* in conjunction with the laws and predict the height of the flag pole making it the *explicandum*.

This problem is partially resolved by moving to criteria of causality. Indeed, there is a significant argument that scientific explanation should be identical to causal explanation where some action of one unit produces an effect for another unit. Although causality assists with the problem of symmetry, it nonetheless raises other problems that the covering law model did not encounter. Most important among these is the problem that the action or agency cannot be directly observed. Indeed, it can be argued that terms such as “force” and “cause” depend on a metaphysical belief that cannot be physically observed. We cannot see cause but can only see the associated action of entity A followed by the subsequent behavior of entity B. Such nonobservability of “cause” and the positing of nonempirical theoretical entities pose problems for scientific empiricists and rationalists alike due to their avowed antipathy to metaphysical and religious explanations of physical phenomenon.

A problem that has been more tied to the social sciences is the confusion of explanation with understanding (e.g., Daly, 2003). This was only subtly addressed by Hempel in that his major concern was the “logic” of explanation and as a result the “pragmatics” of explanation received much less focus. The pragmatics of explanation would be where we ask about the experience and practice of explanation. Our understanding is a consequence but not a cause of explanation. Indeed, some scientific explanations may only be understood by a few scholars but the lack of understanding of these explanations by the vast majority of us does not keep them from being explanations. In the study of the family, the call by some scholars (e.g., Daly) for everyday and common sense understandings may do more to impede our progress than propel our knowledge. Even Hempel (1966) cautioned us in this regard.

Scientific explanation is not aimed at creating a sense of at-homeness or familiarity with the phenomena of nature...What scientific explanation,

especially theoretical explanation, aims at is not this intuitive and highly subjective kind of understanding, but an objective kind of insight that is achieved by a systematic unification, by exhibiting the phenomena as manifestations of common underlying structures and processes that conform to specific, testable, basic principles (Hempel, 1966, p. 83).

One particular form of familiar explanation is the “just so” or *ex post facto* explanation. This form is not really an explanation so much as an interpretation of events. After the event has occurred or the data has been analyzed, we can make up any number of theoretical stories that would fit the data. None of these would have the credibility of prediction and none can be eliminated as possibilities because of the after the fact nature of such claims. Much of social science is plagued by such stories. These *ex post facto* stories are most in evidence when the individual’s motivation is used to explain behavior. Hempel and Oppenheim warned that “A potential danger of explanation by motives lies in the fact that the method lends itself to the facile construction of *ex post facto* accounts without predictive force (1948, p. 143).” Indeed, when we ask “Why did Bob and Sally get divorced?”, there are an infinite number of “just so” stories to provide less than credible answers.

In the final analysis, even though Hempel’s portrayal of scientific explanation has received ample critical discussion, it remains as the standard approach to the logic of explanation. Okasha (2002) remarks that even the arguments about causation have met with difficulties. For example, lakes commonly “turn over” in the fall and again in the spring. But it would be inappropriate to say that this is caused by water. Indeed, one could argue that water is just being water at different temperatures and that explains the turn over. The idea of cause as a force outside of the properties of water at different temperatures may be a stretch and clearly temperature is not the cause because only water expands upon freezing. The explanation involves water and temperature, but neither is an exogenous causal force. As such Hempel’s basic notion of explanation remains relevant to today’s researchers and theorists.

Theory

In many ways the definition of theory is simply that which would supply scientific explanation. However, theory is not responsible for all of the statements in scientific explanation, but is responsible for most. We can enlarge upon Rudner’s (1966) definition of a scientific theory as a set of propositions, at least one of which is a law-like statement, and at least one deduced proposition is empirically testable. This definition supposes that even a modest theory should provide us with an empirical regularity (law-like statement) such as “people seek to maximize rewards and minimize costs” or “the probability of a transition out of any family stage is determined as the quadratic of duration in the stage.” Furthermore, the theory must be conjoined with a specific proposition (SP) to deduce an hypothesized outcome (H). For example:

P1: People seek rewards and minimize costs.

SP2: People in group A have no rewards in situation X_i .

SP3: People in group A have cost Q in situation X_i .

H: People in group A will minimize Q in situation X_i .

Now we seldom if ever see arguments like the above in our empirical work. In reality, situations are usually more complicated and the example above fails to take into consideration the necessary extensive discussion of what would count as “minimizing Q” for group A. On the other hand, if we tested this hypothesis, we would find that either “H” is false or that we have no reason to reject “H” at this time. Every time we fail to reject similar hypotheses about rewards and costs, the theory gains credibility to some degree.

The example above might inadvertently lead readers to assume that the ultimate goal of theory is prediction but prediction (and historical retrodiction) is just a condition for explanation. After all, some would say, a set of propositions that can’t predict are hardly going to suffice for adequate explanation. Certainly, this is true but many theories have rather humble beginnings. Although we can always assess whether or not a theory adequately explains a phenomena, we can also accept that theories progress and develop over time.

Theories may be developed inductively, deductively, or both inductively and deductively (see C.S. Peirce's *abduction*, Buchler, 1955). Although there are expectations from theory construction about the clarity of concepts and the production of testable propositions, there exists no magical set of rules about constructing theory. The *genetic fallacy* is when we judge ideas by where or how they were developed rather than by their logical and empirical adequacy. This has led many philosophers of science such as (Kaplan, 1964) to propose that when ideas are being put together in the *context of discovery*, it is not appropriate to judge them by where or how they came into being. On the other hand, once a theory is sufficiently well developed to offer knowledge claims and propositions, we should be able to test these in the crucible of the *context of justification*. This distinction proves useful when examining theory construction approaches such as grounded theory and qualitative methods because these would be firmly in the context of discovery rather than the context of justification.

In the context of discovery, we find that inductive and deductive (and combinations of these two) represent the approaches used to produce propositions. Since there are no special rules that tell us how to construct theory (genetic fallacy), we are only guided by our desire for conceptual clarity and logic in the production of propositions. Although most philosophers of science admit that there are creative inductive leaps where a researcher observes complex reality and is able to see a general process or set of categories that explain the phenomena, there is no way to capture or teach this leap of insight. Despite the perception that deduction is a mechanical operation, deductive theory construction may be just as insightful and creative as inductive approaches. From any large but finite set of existing propositions, there are many possible deductions. Selecting the most productive propositions in a deductive argument is a skill in itself. In reality many researchers work dynamically between induction and deduction to produce theory. Certainly, data requires summarizing (induction) and then those general propositions might link with existing general deductive theory to produce

novel propositions. For example, Stets (1992) seemed to go through both of these processes by observing and collecting data on dating couples and relating these observations to the symbolic interaction formulation of role taking. Certainly, Gilgun (2005) recognizes this interplay between deduction and induction in producing theory in her method of Deductive Qualitative Analysis.

In the context of justification, only deduction from the propositions is used. Here we take a set of propositions, derive one or more as necessary consequences (prospective prediction or historical retrodiction) and then assess the falsity or tentative truth of the prediction and by deduction, the theory. If the deduction is true, then that simply means we cannot reject the theory and we have no reason to revise the theory. If, however, the deduction is false, then at least one proposition in the theory is also false and we need to either change the theory or reject it altogether.

Basic Problems in Social Science Theory

Over the past century, many scholars have criticized science in general and the social sciences in particular. Although the following list is not completely inclusive of all of these criticisms, these represent some of the major problem areas. The section relies heavily on the philosophical discussions in Turner and Risjord (2007).

Winch (1958) raised the issue that studying human's scientifically is neither possible nor desirable. His major point was that a truly nomothetic science of societies was impossible and that all sociology could achieve would be to report the rules people follow. Following Winch, many other scholars such as Habermas (1971) raised questions about similar issues. The prevailing reply by Hempel, Rudner, and others has been that the difference Winch claimed between identifying the rules of rule-governed behavior and nomothetic statements simply doesn't exist. Being able to identify the rules actors use in fact provides nomothetic statements. Furthermore, most of the life sciences such as biology and botany also deal with goal-directed organic behavior, motive, and social functions.

The problem of using the concept of causation rather than association goes back to Hume. Hume argued that all we observe is association, so the idea of “causation” simply adds a needless metaphysical assumption. Even with the emphasis in contemporary sociology on “social mechanisms” (Hedström & Swedberg, 1998), the idea of cause still surfaces. The basic issue remains that we only have associations and to claim “cause” is to switch to a metaphysical claim of unseen force. Certainly empiricists have been uncomfortable with this notion and rationalists more comfortable (see Turner & Risjord, 2007).

Methodological (or sometimes ontological) individualism vs. holism has been an issue since Durkheim’s argument about the existence of “social facts.” In the study of the family this issue surfaces as concern over levels of analysis and reductionism. If the individual unit of analysis is viewed as the only social reality, we have a form of theoretical reductionism and ontological holism. If the individual level of analysis is seen as the only level that affords meaningful explanation because individuals have purpose and motive, then we have a form of methodological individualism. Methodological individualism has been popularized by theorists such as Weber, Parsons, and Coleman. Some of these arguments are captured in discussions of “normative explanations vs. individual rational choice” and in discussions “structure vs. agency.” Strict methodological individualism is often associated with individual meanings, choices, and action as the prime subject matter. On the other hand, methodological holism assumes that social structure and social facts are at least equally efficacious in producing and constraining behavior. Concepts such as community and culture are associated with more holistic approaches. We will have the opportunity to return to this discussion later in this chapter.

Theoretical, cultural, and ethical relativism have remained issues for the social sciences. Although discussions of ethical relativism are best discussed by ethicists and cultural relativism best treated by anthropologists, theoretical relativism is relevant to all the social sciences. At its most extreme, theoretical relativism argues for the incommensurability of knowledge claims

(see Knorr-Cetina, 1999; Kuhn 1962/1996 Longino, 2002). This extreme version argues that all knowledge claims are embedded in particular epistemic cultures and language. There is no possible determination of which of any two competing claims is correct because of the incommensurability of the claims. On the other hand, pragmatists would argue that if you can demonstrate any real difference in consequences from holding one belief over another, then they are not incommensurable, and if you cannot demonstrate any different consequences, then they are the same and no dispute exists (see Haack, 1998).

The issue of reflexivity (e.g., Beck, Giddens, & Lash, 1994; Bourdieu, 2001/2004; Habermas, 1971) in the social sciences has argued that social science and social scientific knowledge interact in the social world so as to change the very knowledge claims initially supplied by the social sciences. Probably no one doubts the reflexive nature of knowledge because that is captured in the aphorism that we learn from our mistakes. More important is the claim that reflexivity in some way makes nomothetic science impossible. Certainly at the most simplistic levels this might raise problems such that studying Goffman (1959) might make one more aware of being “on stage” and might transform some previous behavior. On the other hand, it is doubtful that processes tied to social mechanisms and social institutions will be so easily modified. Furthermore, reflexivity would tend to argue in favor of more dynamic conceptualizations of social phenomena, a trend in social theory that should be lauded (see Tuma & Hannan, 1984).

Basic Concepts in Theory

At an informal level, we all use theory every day. We use theory to formulate expectations (predictions) regarding the behavior of physical objects such as “dropping the glass or dropping the pen” (gravity). We also use theory to predict social behavior such as “she will follow the shorter path” (least costs). This informal use of theory assists us in understanding our world and accurate expectations help to reduce our stress.

For example, once I know how to ride an escalator, that knowledge can be applied to riding escalators in Vancouver or Dallas. Knowledge is simply a general proposition that works across diverse contexts.

A theory is the expression of ideas by means of concepts and relations some of which have empirical content so that those empirical components of the theory can be assessed by evidence. Theories thus have the components of propositions, concepts, and relations.

All theoretical propositions (including causal and social mechanism propositions) may be parsed to a “concept tied by a relation to another concept.” A concept is simply a unitary idea or collection (set). Relations are what do most of the work in theory, but we seldom notice or credit the importance of relations in theory. All relations are from one set to another set (domain and range). Imagine we have two simple concepts such as males and females. We can imagine a number of important relations between males and females such as “likes,” “knows,” or “is married to.” Relations have properties distinguishable by three major properties: reflexive-irreflexive, symmetry-asymmetry, transitivity-intransitivity (see <http://www.abstractmath.org/MM/MMRelationsProps.htm>). When we state that two ideas, sets, or findings are identical, we are arguing that there are specific properties defining the relation such as reflexive, transitive, and symmetric. For example, when we say that two things are “equal” ($a=b$), we are stating a relation that is symmetric, reflexive, and transitive ($a=b, b=c, a=c$). Likewise, more complex statement such as “cause” and “is a relative of” and “is married to” are also characterized by a particular vector of these properties. This may not seem important in regard to some relations such as “equals;” however, theorists need to “unpack” many of their complex statements and analyzing the relations in these statements is critical for meaningful knowledge claims.

When theorists form a knowledge claim, they need to break it into the propositions they wish to assert. In science, we can best use propositions where both concepts are clearly defined and where the relations asserted to be linking the

concepts are consciously analyzed as to the properties. The reason for this is that eventually, we would like to have theories that are logically true and empirically sound. The empirical part of this is best handled by research methodologist; however, it is extremely important that theorists provide statements that are logically connected. When we test a theoretical proposition and find that it is tentatively supported, we have little reason to change, improve, or revise our theory. It is only when our findings suggest that the proposition being tested does not hold or is false that we gain new knowledge and revise our thinking. We gain the most when our propositions are logically connected. Take for example a simple logical set of statements.

P1: All married people are happy.

P2: Judy is a married person.

Therefore: Judy is happy.

The logical form of this argument is known as *modus ponens* and is of the form $P \rightarrow Q$ | P therefore Q . In this form, if P1 is true and P2 is true, the conclusion follows logically. A second form of valid argument is *modus tollens*. It is of the following form:

P1: All married people are happy.

P2: Judy is not happy.

Therefore, Judy is not a married person.

In this argument known as *modus tollens* ($P \rightarrow Q$ | $\sim Q$ therefore $\sim P$), we deny the consequent that Judy is happy and therefore deny that the case is included in the major premise. Now imagine that the major premise is actually composed of an entire set of logically connected theoretical propositions regarding marital happiness. When we find that the consequent is not true, it entails that at least one proposition in our theory is not true. This in turn requires revision and, in drastic cases, abandonment of the theory. In other words, the logical connections of a deductive theory maximize the goals of reaching more accurate knowledge. Even though our research hypotheses are always couched in probabilistic terms, if there is a general uniformity across empirical contexts then this would provide a general statement such as found in the major premise. In social science, we have many theoretical propositions that can supply major premises such as the ratio of rewards

to costs as a motive (rational choice), anticipatory socialization for a role decreases role strain (role theory), and that stage of the family and duration in that stage determine the probability of an event transition (life course). It is the job of theorists to produce logically coherent sets of such propositions and for researchers to determine the empirical adequacy of particular general propositions (and by logical implication the set from which it was derived).

Review of Literature

There are three dominant ways in which scholars review the theoretical literature. Each of these provides an alternative treatment of similar material. Certainly one of the oldest ways of approaching theoretical literature is to review the work of a single author. For example, in philosophy it is not unusual to see entire classes devoted to the works of Plato or Aristotle or Kant. In sociology, we might see classes devoted to Weber, Durkheim, or Simmel. In the area of family theory, this is less likely to be the case. A second approach is to focus on one issue. For example, we find philosophy courses on theories of knowledge (epistemology) or on theories of being (ontology). In sociology and family studies, we are much less likely to find issue-oriented courses in theory such as theories of cohabitation or theories of mate selection. Finally, scholars might review theoretical material by the schools of thought the material represents. For example, in philosophy there could be a course in analytic philosophy or phenomenological thought. In sociology we might find courses in symbolic interaction or rational choice approaches, and in family studies, we might find ecological, family development, and family resilience approaches.

It is this last approach, schools of thought, that has become almost traditional in reviewing theories about families. Early efforts such as Hill and Hansen (1960), Christensen (1964), Nye and Berardo (1966/1981), and Broderick (1971) used a conceptual frameworks approach to capture the various schools of thought. The Burr, Hill, Nye, and Reiss (1979) two-volume work used schools of thought to structure Volume II (deductive theories),

but used issues such as family communication and marital quality to structure Volume I (inductive theories). Holman and Burr (1980) examined only frameworks. The subsequent *Sourcebook of Family Theories and Methods* (Boss, Doherty, LaRossa, Schumm, & Steinmetz, 1993) largely followed a schools or frameworks approach. Winton (1995), Klein and White (1996) and the White and Klein (2002, 2008), Ingoldsby, Smith, and Miller (2003), Smith, Ingoldsby, Miller, and Hamon (2007), Chibucos, Leite, and Weis (2005) have all used theoretical frameworks. The Bengtson, Acock, Allen, Dilworth-Anderson, and Klein (2005) *Sourcebook of Family Theory and Research* used the issue approach exclusively rather than the frameworks approach.

In the area of family theory, there are few if any individual authors with a sufficient body of theoretical work that would justify an authors approach. The issue approach was used in Volume I of Burr et al. (1979) and the 2005 *Sourcebook* (Bengtson et al., 2005). Both of these use similar categories such as family violence and marriage, but only the Burr et al. (1979) actually produced theoretical propositions. Indeed, one of the challenges for issue approaches is to stay focused on producing theoretical generalizations and not get too mired in empirical detail or new methodologies. On the other hand, most of the many framework approaches have produced some exemplary propositions to demonstrate various applications of theories to empirical questions. Indeed, it seems that frameworks approach has been preferred by most scholars in their presentation of family theories.

There are several advantages to the framework approach. The study of the family is an interdisciplinary undertaking. Nursing, home economics, family studies, geography, urban studies, political science, psychiatry, psychology, and sociology are only some of the academic and professional disciplines studying families. As a result of this diversity, we have a certain degree of independence in the production of theories about families. The frameworks approach assists us in unifying these diverse theories under common intellectual assumptions. We might also unify these by issue, but then the intellectual assumptions might be quite diverse. The fact that

multiple theories share common intellectual assumptions further helps us in seeing that a few assumptions and propositions might explain across disciplines and issues (parsimony). With an issue approach, just the opposite would be achieved; we would show how one phenomenon might be explained in a myriad of ways. It would seem that the route of intellectual parsimony afforded by the frameworks approach might better fit with the goals of science.

Another advantage of the framework approach is that it allows us to unite efforts and innovations from diverse areas by using a common intellectual lens. For example, while Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1989, 2004) contributed much to ecological theory of the developing individual, there were many aspects of social institutions and social processes left undeveloped. When we see Bronfenbrenner's work as part of the ecological framework including a sociologist such as Hawley and a biologist such as Emlen (1995), it allows us a more fully developed picture of ecological processes and possible theoretical propositions. Furthermore, when the theoretical framework is used to unite empirical research, it assists us in seeing common processes across a range of family issues. So the framework approach tends to maximize the theoretical components rather than the empirical components focused upon with an issue approach.

The principal weakness of the frameworks approach is that it is abstract and the high level generalizations may seem remote to those with a more problems based or empirical orientation. However, it has been said that nothing is so practical as a good theory and the frameworks approach certainly emphasizes the theory over particular issues to be explained. Readers will get far more intellectual capital from a general proposition about motivation than a particular proposition about the motivation behind family violence.

Theoretical Frameworks

A theoretical framework is distinguished by the fact that a relatively parsimonious set of assumptions and general propositions characterize the more particular theories that are included

under the aegis of the framework. Although individual theoretical formulations such as resilience theory might desire to claim status as a framework, the aim here is to maintain frameworks where several diverse areas of family behavior are explained rather than only one area such as family stress and coping. The frameworks that are reviewed below are also selected because they include some of the most used specific theoretical formulations in the area of family studies.

Rational Choice and Exchange Framework

The rational choice and exchange framework is unified by the common assumption that individual motivation for profit explains choice. Individuals are motivated to choose those outcomes that maximize profit (rewards/costs ratio). In situations where there are only costs, individuals seek to minimize costs. Exchanges are valued as rewarding according to their profitability. So exchanges needn't be always profitable, but relative to other available relationships over the same time frame, the ones chosen should offer the greatest profit (or the least costs where there are only costs).

It could easily be argued that this framework really embodies two distinct frameworks. One body of theoretical literature deals with exchange relationships and the major unit of analysis is the *relationship* (e.g., Cook & Yamaguchi, 1990; Emerson, 1962, 1976; Kelley et al., 1983; Sabatelli, 1988; Sprecher, 2001; Van de Rijt & Macy, 2006). The other body of literature is from the rational choice perspective and is clearly more focused on the *individual* as actor (e.g., Becker, 1981; Coleman, 1990; Donnelly & Burgess, 2008; Friedman, Hechter, & Kreager, 2008; Teachman, Paasch, & Carver, 1997). There are however some major rationales for continuing to treat these two relatively distinct frames as one unitary framework. Most importantly, rational choice has provided the social mechanism for the formation, continuity, and demise of social exchange relationships (see Amato & Hohmann-Marriott, 2007; Coleman, 1990; Donnelly & Burgess, 2008). Furthermore, some of the most popular concepts such as *social capital and networks* cross-cut and are shared by both

perspectives (Teachman et al., 1997). Indeed it is doubtful that questions about *why* we form relationships can be answered without the individual agency approach in rational choice and it is also doubtful that we can understand *how* these choices are made without the constraints of social networks and relationships being added into the equation. Thus, these two approaches are complementary and symbiotic and to split them would be to remove much of the explanatory power in this framework.

This framework clearly traces some of its intellectual heritage to the early Greek *hedonists* and more recently to the *utilitarians* such as Mills and Bentham. There is little doubt that much of the recent impetus for rational choice derives from the microeconomic work of Becker (1981) and the sociological work of Coleman (1990). Indeed, these two men were at the center stage of Faculty Seminar on Rational Choice at the University of Chicago during the decade of the 1980s. In the area of the family, Coleman's (1988) paper on social capital gave rise to its use as a major conceptual tool in family studies (see Coleman, 1988; Teachman et al., 1997). Even though the concept of various *capitals* originates with Bourdieu (1979/1984), it was in the hands of Coleman that it became integrated into rational choice theory. Coleman also provided sociologists and family scholars with one of the most clear formulations regarding the formation of social norms from individual choice (see Coleman, 1988, 1990). Finally, Coleman (1990) laid the foundation for our notions of social institution as rooted in individual rational choice. Indeed, today's scholars cannot even be afforded the pretense of being theorists without having a firm acquaintance with these formulations.

Without a doubt, the majority of research using this framework (choice) has focused on marital relationships and divorce. Levinger (1965, 1966, 1982) and Lewis and Spanier (1979) first developed the idea that even high-quality marriages could end in divorce if these marriages were in contexts that provided for high levels of alternative attractions to the marriage and low levels of barriers to separation and divorce. More recently researchers have sought to integrate the

idea of marital commitment (Johnson, 1985; Rusbult, 1983) to the marital stability equation (Amato & Hohmann-Marriott, 2007). Furthermore, Sabatelli and Ripoll (2004) have argued that barriers and alternative attractors have changed over time and are not stable. On the other hand, Bodenmann et al. (2006) in a retrospective study of barriers and alternative on three countries, report that barriers and alternatives appear to be perceived as stable. The applicability and import of this particular application of choice and exchange theory suggests that it should receive more attention from theorists. As we shall see in a subsequent section of this paper, there are some areas of this application that require intense theoretical development.

Another area of theoretical application has been in regard to the actor's choice to invest in certain relationships. As previously noted, this particular area is critical to the theoretical link between choice and exchange relationships. For example, Friedman et al. (2008) argue that grandparents' differential investment in grandchildren is explained by which children are perceived as most likely to give support to the aging grandparents. Donnelly and Burgess (2008) use costs and rewards to explain why people stay in sexless relationships. Rhatigan and Axsom (2006) use the rational choice investment model to understand battered women's commitment to and staying in abusive relationships.

The concept of social capital has been popular with family and community researchers. Since the original Coleman (1988) paper, there have been both theoretical discussions and research applications of this concept. Most scholars are well aware of Putnam's thesis about the decline of family and social relationships (Putnam, 1995). This perspective has not avoided debate (Boggs, 2001). It has also created theoretical interest in the causes of social capital (Brehm & Rahm, 1997). Bubolz (2001) has provided a theoretical application of the concept to the family. Israel and Beaulieu (2001) examined the influence of family and community social capital on educational achievement, while a significant cluster of scholars have examined social capital and its effect on health (see Kawachi, 1999). One particularly

intriguing application is the explanation of fertility in the developed world by the motivation to acquire family and community social capital (Astone, Nathanson, Schoen, & Kim, 1999; Schoen, Astone, Kim, Nathanson, & Fields, 1999; Schoen, Kim, Nathanson, Fields, & Astone, 1997). For theorists there certainly continues to be a need for conceptual and theoretical clarification of social capital (see Lin, 2001; Portes, 1998) and its relation to human and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1979/1984).

Equity theory is a variant of choice and exchange developed by Walster and Walster (1978). Equity theory proposes that equitable relationships not only follow the “norm of reciprocity,” but are inherently more rewarding as exchanges. Despite the attractiveness of this way of thinking, findings have not supported this contention (see Pina & Bengtson, 1993; Sexton & Perlman, 1989; Sprecher, 2001). Before abandoning this perspective, however, some very central conceptual issues need to be resolved. The difference between some objective rather than perceived equity needs to be elaborated (Braun, Lewin-Epstein, Stier, & Baumgartner, 2008). Furthermore, the conceptualization of equity as fairness may be at odds with measures of equality. Finally, the universality of the norm of reciprocity needs to be addressed. It is interesting that despite the findings and the problems of conceptualization, this theoretical variant remains popular with researchers.

The criticisms of the rational choice and exchange framework can be broadly summarized as focusing on the assumption of the stability of rewards and costs, and the boundary conditions. For example, Sabatelli and Ripoll (2004) raise the issue of the instability of rewards and costs over time. The assumption that rewards for social actors are both relatively stable and general across time is questionable. In the 1950s, the rewards attributed to marriage were more institutional (support, children), whereas today they are more interpersonal (companionate). Even within the life course of any age cohort, rewards might change with age and period. A second and more core criticism is about the boundary condition that exchange and choice only predict “rational”

actors (White, 2004). One problem tied to this assumption is that any time the theory fails to predict proponents can simply say that the actors were obviously being irrational because the theory did not predict. Such tautological logic makes this theory relatively difficult to falsify. The classic case of this is with altruism where either the altruistic act is irrational or the term “altruism” simply conceals rational self-interest such as the Boy Scout helping the elderly across the street in order to get a merit badge. Indeed, it can be argued that the study of what is commonly viewed as an emotional and intimate social group, families, should not be led by a theory that is limited to rational action alone.

Life Course/Family Development

Aldous (1990) argued that neither life course nor family development approaches were theories and that the major distinction between these two was that life course research tended to be at the individual level of analysis, while family development was more focused on the family group. In stark contrast to Aldous (1990), White (1991) argued that family development theory was so advanced as to be formalized as a theory. It is fairly obvious from the 1993 *Sourcebook* chapters (Boss et al., 1993) on these two approaches that Bengtson and Allen (1993) as well as Rodgers and White (1993) believed that these approaches provide theoretical propositions. Indeed, in the Boss et al. (1993) *Sourcebook*, these are the only two chapters that provide such theoretical propositions. Researchers, however, have for the most part ignored the theoretical components of this theory in favor of the similar descriptive approach provided by each.

The theory in both of these approaches is similar so as to be treated as a unified framework. The theory recognizes that there is a complex interaction between individual ontogenetic development and sociogenic sources of development. The theory first seeks to clarify the sources of sociogenic development. The major sources of sociogenic development are age-graded norms and event sequencing norms. An age-graded norm is where a specific event (marriage, pregnancy, etc.) is consistently viewed by a society or

group as more appropriate for some ages but not others. A sequencing norm is usually constructed from age-graded norms so that we are expected to sequence certain events prior to others (marriage before first birth). For any particular age cohort in any particular historical period, there are age-graded and sequencing norms that compose the normative life course. Hogan's (1978) observation that those that followed the normative life course path met with fewer difficulties in life sparked a host of theoretical thinking about the "off time" effects first noted by Neugarten, Moore, and Lowe (1965). Closely related to this line of thinking is concern with the individual and family adjustment to one transition event (transition to adulthood, marriage, first birth, retirement, etc.). As a result, much of the research in this area has focused on the stress and adaptation to such events and has resulted in the rise of "resiliency theory" as a major theoretical variant.

Much of the life course research is correlational and uses the theoretical concepts rather than testing propositions. For example, Bucx, van Wel, Knijn, and Hagendoorn (2008) examine the intergenerational contact with parents over the life course of young adult children. Baxter, Hewitt, and Haynes (2008) studied the distribution and duration of time spent on housework at two stages of family. Following up on the literature on transition to parenthood (see Cowan & Cowan, 1992/2000), Helms-Erikson (2001) examine the quality of the marriage 10 years after the first birth. Macmillan and Copher (2005) studied ethnic variations in timing of transition to parenthood using latent class analysis on the National Longitudinal Study of Youth (1979). The common ground for all of these studies is that the normative, chronological stages of family development are used to structure the research. There has been little effort to test or use theoretical propositions such as those about life course deviance, cross-institutional norms, or even investigating the determinants of event transitions. Fortunately, some of the macrovariables can be identified from work by demographers on events such as cohabitation and first marriage. However, the factors within one stage that determine the transition to an adjacent stage are seldom the focus.

Not only was Hill (see Hill & Rodgers, 1964) one of the progenitors of family development theory, but the study of family stress and resiliency can be traced back to an earlier work by Hill (1949). Hill's original ABCX model was adapted and modified as the "double ABCX model" by McCubbin and Patterson (1983) to more fully account for the pile up of stressor events and time. The linkage between life course events and stress was of course evident in the Holmes and Rahe (1967) stress scale (SRRS) and noted by other theorists (Pearlin, 1980; Pearlin & Schooler, 1978) and was moved over to the resiliency model (e.g., Hawley & de Haan, 2004; Patterson, 2002). The resiliency model as it currently stands is a heuristic conceptual model to assist in identifying some of the variables composing the process of resiliency and focusing on stress adaptation as an outcome. Although this has proved useful for therapists (see Walsh, 2003) and researchers (e.g., Grzywacz & Bass, 2003), it has considerable distance to travel before it offers a coherent set of general theoretical propositions.

The major criticisms of this theory have focused on the normative interpretation of events and event histories. Certainly, life course theory argues that age, timing, and sequencing norms exist and are sufficiently strong to produce behavior. Most but not all critics (Marini, 1984) admit that "first comes love then comes marriage..." is a form of sequencing norm and that the age at which one can get a driver's license is a formalized age-graded norm; however, the idea that deviance from these norms produces effects is more controversial. In part, this controversy is part of a larger debate about the oversocialized conception of actors (Wrong, 1961) and the degree of agency actors might possess. More particular to this theory is the idea that distinguishing the effects of norms from social organization (age-graded schools) and biological constraints (aging, fecundity) is difficult. On the other hand, those studying particular transitions have consistently associated sequencing and timing normative deviance with particular later life events. However, even White (1991) cautions that this effect for normative life course deviance could be a selection effect whereby "deviant" types of

people are drawn into “deviant lifestyles.” It would hence be a mistake to identify the consequent (lifestyle or life course deviance) as the cause rather than the effect.

Symbolic Interaction

Undoubtedly, symbolic interaction theory is firmly rooted in American pragmatism of the early 1900 including Peirce, James, Dewey, and Mead. Most theorists would see Mead as the main progenitor of this approach. Today, it is difficult to assess the symbolic interaction framework’s popularity because so many of the basic theoretical concepts are widely accepted as part of the general sociological vernacular. Concepts like role, role strain, role transitions, self, and identity are commonly used in much of family studies and sociology. In addition, symbolic interaction has supplied the launching framework for many smaller theoretical variants such as role theory (Biddle, 1986) and identity theory (Stryker & Burke, 1994/2000).

Symbolic interaction is a general theory that posits that social behavior can only be understood in relation to the symbols and meanings any behavior has for actors within a context. Although symbols are defined by social agreement, there is also room for negotiating meanings. Indeed, the degree to which symbols are stable and structural (Stryker, 1980) rather than negotiated (Turner, 1980) has provided some heated debate. The structural school tends to emphasize that the difference between signs and symbols is that symbols are abstract and receive their meaning by consensus and convention rather than similarity. So the word “apple” bears no resemblance to an actual apple. It receives its meaning because we agree that this sound will stand for this object. As a result of this perspective, the structural school focuses on how these are symbols learned and transferred intergenerationally. On the other hand, any particular social role such as “husband” or “wife” may not be subject to prescriptive definitions and, hence, these roles allow for negotiated “role making” (see Turner). The rapprochement in identity theory (see Stryker & Burke, 1994/2000) is probably indicative that the arguments between the structuralist and interactionist

schools will increasingly be viewed as “half full, half empty” linguistic debates rather than substantive theoretical problems.

Certainly Goffman’s work (e.g., 1959, 1967, 1974) has provided a unique perspective, the dramaturgical perspective, even within the framework of symbolic interaction. Most every undergraduate is familiar with his use of “front stage” and “back stage.” Recently, however, there has been a surge of interest in Goffman’s (1967) ideas about emotional energy and interaction rituals. This interest has in part been fueled by the academic activity concerned with emotion (e.g., Scheff, 1994, 1999; Stets, 2005; Stets & Turner, 2006; Turner & Stets, 2005). The most recent theoretical expression of this surge of interest in Goffman’s ideas about emotional energy and interaction is contained in *Interaction Ritual Chains* (Collins, 1981, 1987, 2004). Collins argues that all social action is local and situational. Out of the bonding of local cells of emotional energy, we might see aggregate phenomena but the phenomena and our understanding of it are solely available at the local, situational level. Shared emotional energy coalesces groups, but is produced through the enactment of individual level interaction rituals. Even sexual intercourse is seen as an interaction ritual producing emotional bonding. Collins (2004) clearly focuses on the microsocial as producing macrosocial events (see Baehr (2005) review and Collins responses www.cjsonline.ca/reviews/interactionritual.html). To date, few if any family theorists have explored Collin’s perspective and, at present, it does not appear as a major influence on researchers. It would not be surprising, however, to see the 3 decades of work on the sociology of emotion (see Thoits, 1989; Turner & Stets, 2005) cascade into family studies to inform a new generation of theorist and researchers.

This last point is even more poignant in the context of critiques of symbolic interaction. The major foci of criticisms has been the vagueness of concepts and the inability to incorporate emotion. Although some of the concepts in symbolic interaction are vague and abstract such as symbol, other conceptual areas such as role theory are relatively well defined. So this

criticism may not always be relevant. More importantly, symbolic interaction has largely failed to incorporate emotion as much other than an ancillary effect. The current work on emotion (Turner & Stets, 2005) should assist in obviating this criticism.

Ecological Theory and Systems Theories

Ecological and systems theories focus on multiple levels of analysis and the interactions between these levels. For example, an individual is embedded in the family, but also the individual and family are both embedded within a community. Certainly ecological theories have their roots in both biological studies but also in the social ecology of the early Chicago School of social ecology that would include work such as that by Burgess (1925). Systems theory arrived in sociology during the 1940s and 1950s with the systems functionalism of Parsons. Throughout the sciences, systems theory was often viewed as a way to unify all the sciences into one approach because of its high level of abstraction.

In most reviews of theoretical frameworks in family studies, ecological and systems theories are viewed as two distinct bodies of thought (e.g., White & Klein, 2008). From the outset, however, the major distinction between these two has been that most ecological theories emphasize the biological basis of social phenomena and most systems theory is more abstract. In both areas, systems and ecology, this difference is increasingly trivial.

Ecological and systems theories focus on multiple levels of analysis and the interactions between these levels. For example, an individual is embedded in the family, but also the individual and family are both embedded within a community. The complex interactions between levels may include physical and social supports and adaptation.

Many family scholars would see Bronfenbrenner (1979) as the major theoretical source for ecological theory in the family area. Certainly, Bronfenbrenner elaborated ecological levels and interactions between these levels. For the most part, Bronfenbrenner supplied a generation of family scholars with sensitivity to

these levels and interactions. The second generation of scholars, however, provided more substantive theory and application in the areas of marriage (Houston, 2004), child abuse (Garbarino, 1992), parenting (Bornstein, 1995), and daycare (Belsky, 1990, 2001a; Belsky & Eggebeen, 1991). In the area of parenting, attachment theory with its roots in ethology (see White & Klein, 2008) continues to be the dominant model, but not without some important critiques (see Hays, 1998).

Another area of development in this framework is the emerging bioecological model. At a microlevel, there is the perspective that social interaction is in part determined by the endocrine system (see Belsky, 2001b; Booth, Carver, & Granger, 2000). Furthermore, there is specific data on stress hormones and marital conflict (Kiecolt-Glaser, Bane, Glaser, & Malarkey, 2003) and testosterone (Mazur & Michalek, 1998). This microlevel approach is often related to more macrolevel evolutionary theories of families (Emlen, 1995) and general evolutionary theory.

The most abstract area of theoretical development in this area is systems theory. Systems theory (see White & Klein, 2008) is firmly rooted in the perspective that the whole is greater than its parts and those systems have properties above and beyond their components. Much of systems theory of the family has been aimed at producing useful metaphors for therapeutic purposes more than scientific explanation. One exception to this is the recent attempt to revitalize functional systems theory of the family (Swenson, 2004). However, much of the academic enthusiasm for systems theory of the family has waned (see Bengtson, 2001), leaving family systems approaches mainly in the areas of family practice and therapy. This should not be seen as a statement about the overall usefulness of the systems approach because in other academic areas the systems approach appears to be flourishing.

One such area is organizational theory. Organizational theory, for the most part, has found general system theory (GST) a good fit with the study of highly organized and hierarchical

organizations. Kozlowski and Klein (2000) summarize this fit as follows:

Whether one takes a more macro (Parsons, 1950) or micro (Allport, 1954) perspective, the influence of GST on organizational science has been pervasive. Unfortunately, however, that influence has been primarily metaphorical....GST has exhibited heuristic value but has contributed relatively little to the development of testable principles in the organizational sciences (Roberts, Hulin, & Rousseau, 1978) (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000, pp. 6–7).

Kozlowski and Klein's (2000) assessment seems very close to the general conclusion in family studies except that they pinpoint the problem for this lack of progress from metaphor to theory. They argue that much of the problem is that we have not developed successful ways to measure and test the complex multilevel interactions portrayed in systems theory. They suggest that with the advent of multilevel statistical analysis and multilevel methodologies, systems approaches might finally move from metaphorical to scientific theoretical status. It is too soon to establish if their optimism is justified. Furthermore, the theoretical problems with levels of analysis also plague ecological models. We will return to this point in the section on theoretical methods below.

One major problem with the ecological and systems framework is the failure to develop substantive theoretical statements rather than methodological sensitivities. For example, noting that "everything is attached to everything else," that there are hierarchical multilevel effects, and that "holistic perspectives" should be used are all examples of methodological caveats rather than substantive theory. For the most part, ecological and systems theory awaits substantive theoretical development.

Conflict and Feminist Theories

Conflict theories argue that individuals and groups compete for resources or rewards and that the ensuing struggles bring about social change. Feminism, as a form of conflict theory, posits that the most basic source of conflict is between men and women. Over time, men have institutionalized certain forms of female oppression as patriarchy. One major goal of feminism is to challenge

and remove patriarchy as a form of oppression (see White & Klein, 2008).

Farrington and Chertok (1993) suggested that the older versions of social conflict theory applied to the family did not seem to have much future in the study of the family. Since that time there has been little activity in the more traditional socialist and Marxian conflict perspectives. Whether or not their statement was indicative of their prescience or simply a self-fulfilling prophecy remains a mute point. These authors did predict some of the developments in family conflict theory.

...critical and feminist approaches seem to possess something else more traditional conflict theory does not: the kind of ideological passion that, we argued earlier, helped to bring about the emergence of the family conflict perspective in the late 1960's and early 1970's.... (1993, p. 376).

Indeed, most of the vibrant discourse about positivism, patriarchy, power, and sex and gender has been tied to the two joint intellectual movements. The fact that these two, critical theory and feminist theory, are now inseparable is not surprising. The epistemological and social critiques of critical theorists, poststructuralists, and postmodernists are closely aligned with feminist discussions of oppression and gender.

Postmodernists such as Lyotard (1984, 1992) have argued that postmodernism refers to both a social-historical period and an epistemological perspective. The epistemological perspective refers to the idea that, because the truth or falsity of any knowledge claim cannot be unambiguously decided (Derrida, 1976, 1978; Longino, 1990, 2002; Wittgenstein, 1969), all knowledge claims are on an equal footing, with none being more privileged than any other. As a corollary to this epistemological premise, we live in a socio-cultural period marked by a plurality of ways of knowing rather than a period in which one particular form of discourse is more privileged than others and offers its claims as "truth." In other words, knowledge is relative.

Heywood and Drake (1997) divide feminism into three waves. Certainly, first wave suffragettes and second-wave egalitarian feminists might have some concerns about epistemological "relativism." However, the current movement in

feminist theory that parallels postmodern epistemology is third-wave feminism (Heywood & Drake). Third-wave feminism has been identified with anti-essentialism, critical race feminism, and standpoint epistemologies. For example, De Reuss, Few, and Blume (2005) argue that “Poststructuralist feminists have challenged the unified category of ‘woman’ as the basis for a general theory of oppression of *all* women because it obfuscates within-group variation (p. 449).” In this view, explanation does not come about through the use of nomothetic general principles that apply across contexts but by understanding the particular intersections of race, class, and gender as constructing oppression.

Third-wave feminists have argued among themselves regarding standpoint vs. poststructuralist epistemologies (De Reuss et al., 2005, p. 450) and in addition have been assailed by more traditional feminists as not providing any useful general knowledge. Even second-wave feminists, however, have identified the “intersections” of race, class, and gender as important in the exploitation of women by women and patriarchy (Ehrenreich & Hochschild, 2003). Ehrenreich (2000) first identified the “intersectionality” of housework where immigrant women of color were exploited as the house cleaners of the upper middle class. She further explored these same intersections with *Global Nannies* (Ehrenreich & Hochschild, 2003). So regardless of the epistemological arguments, many feminist scholars have found that gender alone is not a sufficient explanatory variable, but is best used in conjunction with other socially ascribed variables such as race and class.

Wills and Risman (2006) report that 25% of the articles in three major family journals have at least some feminist content. Certainly, this represents a major intellectual contribution to the theoretical scholarship in this area (White & Klein, 2008) since all other theoretical frameworks would share the remaining 75%. These two convergent facts seem to attest to the worldwide force that feminism has had and, as well, the fact that feminist theories are making an intellectual contribution to the family literature.

The major criticisms of feminist theory are that it is not a theory but an ideology and that the theory is too narrow to be useful. The first criticism assumes that there is an inherent contradiction between theory and ideology. There should be no problem unless theoretical falsification is blocked by ideological belief. Contrary to this, feminist theories have shown great diversity and innovation through successive waves of ideology. The stronger criticism is that feminist theories tend to be “one trick ponies” where only one major variable (patriarchy) is used to explain all outcomes. Certainly there is some truth to this but there is the extension of third-wave theory to include intersections (or interactions) with other critical variables.

Insights

The purpose of this section is to demonstrate how existing theory supplies insight and understanding about particular family phenomena. This section will simultaneously point out some of the shortcomings of theoretical formulations in this regard. There are many areas that could serve as examples of insightful theory; for example, several theories of the intergenerational transmission of social class, parent-child attachment theory, family resource theory, and family transitions. The largest concentration of research and theoretical work, however, has been in the area of the determinants of marital outcomes: staying married and separating or divorcing.

Marital Relationships and Marital Stability

The attempt to explain why people get divorced has intrigued scholars throughout the twentieth century and into the current century. The original and somewhat common sense explanation of divorce was centered on the assumption that people who got divorced did so because they were not happy or well adjusted to marriage. As a result, much of the literature has had a distinct

bias toward the individual level of analysis rather than the dyad or even the macrolevel of society and culture. It is entirely possible that scholars would still be making the determinants of individual relationship satisfaction the prime predictor of divorce if it were not for the anomaly that even happy marriages end in divorce and unhappy marriages may endure (see Lewis & Spanier, 1979). This anomaly forced scholars to pursue more depth in their theoretical formulations and this process is ongoing.

There are two dominant theories used to explain divorce and both are within the larger choice and exchange framework. One theory focuses on the individual's marital quality (happiness, adjustment, satisfaction) as a major determinant (e.g., Levinger, 1965; Lewis & Spanier, 1979; Previti & Amato, 2003; South & Lloyd, 1995). The second theory focuses on the interdependency in marital exchange sometimes referred to as the "specialization and trading model" (e.g., Becker, 1981; Parsons, 1950; Parsons & Bales, 1955; Scanzoni, 1970, 1972; South, 2001; Teachman, 2003). It would appear that these two theories not only differ in substance, but also in regard to the level of analysis (individual vs. dyad).

Marital Quality and Marital Stability

This theory assumes that low levels of individual satisfaction and happiness with the marital relationship predicts divorce. Of course divorce is a dyadic phenomenon; however, it only takes one disgruntled spouse to file for divorce and when one member of the dyad experiences costs and withdraws rewards, the relationship usually becomes costly for the other. Thus, this theory would argue that it is the individual perceptions of the relationship that should be analyzed. It is further assumed that the individual would desire outcomes that are rewarding and avoid costs. Lewis and Spanier (1979) supplied an extensive set of propositions about the determinants of individual marital quality including premarital factors, lifestyle factors, and interactional factors. Following Levinger, most theorists in this approach have incorporated the alternative attractions outside of the relationship and the barriers

to divorce as moderating the relationship between marital quality and divorce. This perspective allows researchers to explain the two anomalous categories: high-quality marriages ending in divorce and low-quality marriages with high marital stability. High-quality marriages end in divorce because they have a high level of alternative attractors and a low level of barriers. Likewise, the low-quality enduring marriages have few alternative attractors and high levels of barriers (White & Booth, 1991). Hence, this approach can explain why people have high or low marital quality (Lewis & Spanier, 1979) as well as what the factors are that moderate (attractors and barriers) the effect of marital quality on marital stability (Levinger, 1965).

As with most theories, there are a host of unresolved theoretical problems. First, a minor problem with this theory is whether it is entirely an individual level theory or if it is multileveled. Although some scholars treat the alternatives and barriers as only a matter of the individual's perception (Previti & Amato, 2003), other scholars such as Lewis and Spanier (1979) clearly see alternatives and barriers as exogenous to the individual and embedded in the broader context such as the particular sex ratio or norms of a particular religious community. The importance of this is to clarify whether this is totally a social psychological or sociological theory. A second problematic area is pointed out by the debate as to the form (nonlinearity) of the moderating relationship between marital quality and marital stability given various combinations of alternatives and barriers (Thomas & Kleber, 1981) as pointed out by Bartolic, Bulcroft, and White (1997). Most importantly, these authors raise the issue that low alternatives attractors and high barriers might have a distinctly different pattern of moderation than high alternatives and low barriers. Yet another problem is the need for conceptual clarity regarding attractors and barriers and the stability of these across time. For example, being single might well be seen as an alternative when young but much less so in midlife. The definition of attractors and barriers should ensure that attractors are indeed "pulls" throughout the life course.

Despite these problems, this theory represents one of the best explanations of marital stability.

Marital Exchange and Divorce

The “specialization and trading” theory originated with Parsons (1950; Parsons & Bales, 1955) and his assumption that the expressive and instrumental roles in the family were increasingly specialized as families became more isolated and nuclear. Scanzoni (1972) added more of an exchange component focusing on the changing pattern of resource power with wives employment. Over time, scholars argued that the social and economic interdependency that was the foundation of marriage is disrupted by female employment (Becker, 1981). South (2001) reports that the empirical findings are substantial on both sides in regard to the negative effect for wives employment on marital stability. This theory, however, remains the most popular macrolevel theory of marital instability.

There are several major problems confronting this theory. First, there is in general no identification of a social mechanism (Hedström & Swedberg, 1998). What mechanisms are working within the association between wives’ work and marital stability? More precisely, most scholars would like to know how wives’ employment functions in the relationship to increase the probability of divorce. Lowered amounts of couple time, alternative attractions at work, and resource differentials are some of the possibilities. A second problem area is the specification of the exchange or interdependence. Certainly Scanzoni (1972) suggested that the expressive dimension of the exchange might suffer since employed wives would have more instrumental power. However, the exact form of the exchange and how it is linked to divorce remains unclear. Finally, South’s research (2001) points out that the effect of women’s employment is within the context of social norms favoring or disfavoring this behavior. He suggests that the direction of the effects changes across periods of time and is more complex and dependent on gender role attitudes and institutional supports and opportunities.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of South’s comment is the change in levels of analysis from

employment to the individual situation and choices. This seems to point to an opportunity for theorists to unite these two major theories into one more coherent theory. Certainly, phrases such as “adequate institutional supports” and “alternatives to their current husbands” would seem to suggest the language of barriers and alternatives. In addition, the conflicting findings about the effects of wives’ employment may be because some employment provides alternative attractors such as male coworkers and economic freedom while other forms of employment provide only same sex coworkers and marginal economic returns. South (2001) also appears to see that barriers and alternatives might change over historical period and cohort. This observation fits well with the argument made by Sabatelli and Ripoll (2004) that barriers and alternative attractors may not be stable across time. Even though these two theories offer separate insights into marital stability, it seems that theorists clearly have the opportunity to address the shortcomings of each theory while constructing a single multilevel theory of marital stability.

Methodology

Traditionally, theory construction activities have been divided into inductive and deductive theory construction. This seems to be a false and misleading distinction. Recall that theory construction occurs in the *context of discovery*. After the theory is developed, it would then be tested in the *context of justification*. All theory construction activities are aimed at producing general propositions that constitute a knowledge claim. These general propositions can be deduced from a larger set of propositions or they can be produced from inductive observation. Peirce (1878) suggested that scientists actually use *abduction* which is a combination of deduction and induction. During the 1960s and 1970s, a host of books and papers appeared on the rules of theory construction (White, 2004). These seemed to achieve little other than to stifle theory development. It is critical to science and theory that the approach, inductive or deductive or anything else, not be used to

judge the truth or falsity of the proposition. That would be to commit the *genetic fallacy* we discussed in the first section of this chapter. Furthermore, the important point is that there is no magical formula for the production of theoretical propositions. These propositions can come from observation, folk wisdom, intensive qualitative research, or quantitative research. Insight and creativity are what is needed.

Even though there is no formula for producing theory, there are at least four elements that we would like any theoretical statement to have. First, all theoretical statements should endeavor to have concepts that are clear and well defined (*conceptual clarity*). Without this element, we would not know how to devise measures, how to establish validity, and our interpretations would be either vague or ambiguous. A second element is that our statements should be expressly formulated as *propositions*. Surely, researchers have read entire theoretical tomes and come away not being able to identify a specific knowledge claim. Theorists must succinctly state their claims as propositions. A third element is that of *logical coherence*. Certainly we want our theories to be logical so we can understand. How do we gain understanding from illogical and nonsensical theory? Even more importantly, the logical structure of propositions assists researchers and other theorists to deduce novel propositions or contradictory propositions or testable propositions (see White & Klein, 2008). The fourth and last element that theory should have is to identify the *social mechanism* that is producing the effect (see Hedström & Swedberg, 1998). It is useful for theorists to describe the mechanism by which action is produced. Not only does this help us address spuriousness in our theoretical statements, but it also helps us focus on the proper level of analysis. For example, this call for social mechanism would help us identify when an aggregate effect such as employment on marital stability actually reduces to the perception of actors in regard to barriers and attractors. On the other hand, if the attitudes and beliefs about divorce shared by actors in one social system but not other systems are related to marital stability, there may be a claim for

“divorce culture” as a social mechanism (Yodanis, 2005).

These four elements represent guides for theory development. In actual fact, even our most well-developed theories can be faulted on one or more of these criteria. It is important to recognize that theories are always developing and often what we call a “theory” in the social sciences is actually a model. There are several levels of theoretic models: conceptual models, formal models, and measurement models. A well-developed theory contains but is not limited to all three of these. A conceptual model simply identifies the concepts in the theory and some of the relations. In conceptual models, the emphasis is on the specification of concepts affecting other concepts. Specification error in such models is due to missing important concepts or including unimportant concepts or ambiguous definitions. Formal models focus on the logic or relations between concepts. In such models, it is the relations that are being specified. For example, if money becomes less valued by actors at a certain point of accumulation, then the relation would be a linear quadratic equation. A formal theory focuses on the specification of such relations and misspecification is tied to specifying the wrong relation. Most researchers are familiar with measurement models which entail the valid operationalizations of concepts into variables and identification of theoretic relations as statistical models. Specification error occurs when operations are not isomorphic with theoretical concepts or relations. Clearly a complete theory would contain all three types of models.

Methodological/Theoretical Developments

There are several new areas of theoretical development that have been at least partially instigated by methodological advances. We discuss three of these. First, theoretical propositions have largely focused on relations between two conceptual entities (bivariate). Over the last 4 decades, researchers have tended to research increasingly complex sets of relations and few theorists have discussed

how to make our theoretical formulations reflect these changes. Second, in the last 3 decades researchers have increasingly used multilevel modeling to capture processes at different levels of analysis. It is central that theorists accept the challenge of providing multilevel theories and identify mechanisms that transfer effects from one level to another. Third, the observation of event sequences has been used in family development and life course research. One impediment to such research has been the dependence of simple descriptive devices for sequences rather than the identification of theoretical measures.

Multiconceptual Propositions

A major impact of multivariate analysis is the need for theorists to both generalize complex relations captured in such empirical work and to propose multiconceptual propositions for testing. Certainly, early theory constructionists proposed to communicate such complex propositions as either formal models (mathematical) or as conceptual models. The mathematical models, though precise, lack the conceptual meaning while emphasizing the relations. Conceptual models, on the other hand, can be very useful in adding precision to the complex language statements. Language statements always contain some degree of ambiguity and so it is always useful to use conceptual models to further clarify the content of the theory. Shoemaker, Tankard, and Lasorsa (2004) argue that our theories are now “multivariate.” This claim might strike some theorists as humorous since social science theories have always been complex and multiconceptual (e.g., Marx, Weber, Durkheim, etc.). So this complexity is not new. What is new are the increasingly sophisticated methods available to researchers to test complex theoretical propositions.

There are several ways that theorists might make complex ideas containing three or more concepts available for testing (Shoemaker et al., 2004). Aspects of conceptual models and formal models may be usefully summarized as graphic displays. For example, in our previous discussion of marital quality and marital stability, it was noted that there are several distinct arguments about the ways that alternatives and barriers

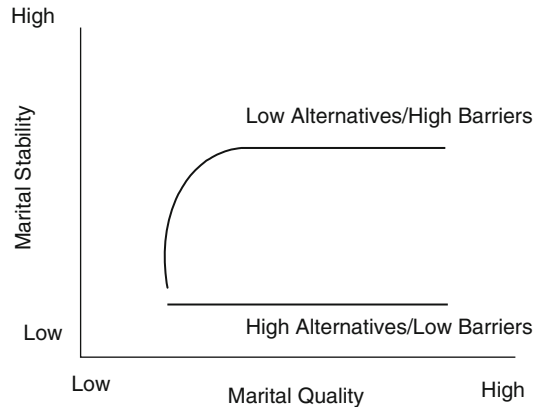


Fig. 2.1 Graph of one possible moderating relationship from Bartolic et al. (1997, Fig. 1.5, p. 32)

function as moderators. We can assert that the combination of low alternatives-high barriers affect those with low levels of marital quality more than those with high levels. This, however, can be more easily envisioned in a graphic presentation such as provided by Bartolic et al. (1997). Such graphics as Fig. 2.1 immediately show the curvilinear relation and suggest its form.

As theorists develop propositions where there are more than three or four active conceptual components, the use of graphic and mathematical equations detailing these relations will become necessary. As statistical techniques continue to improve so that we can test complex theoretical relations, it is incumbent on theorists that they clearly and unambiguously specify concepts and the more complex and nuanced relations in their theoretic models. The most optimal way to achieve such clarity is that theorists would specify the mathematical model and researchers would then face problems of translating these into statistical models. Certainly early family theorists endeavored to present graphic models (see Burr et al., 1979), but this has been less in evidence in more recent theoretical products.

Multilevel Propositions

Family theorists and researchers have long been interested in multilevel analysis (Bulcroft & White, 1997; White & Teachman, 2005). Theoretical and methodological discussions in the last 2 decades regarding levels of analysis

(e.g., Coleman, 1990; Hedström, 2005; Sawyer, 2005) have focused more attention on these issues. Another component that has affected our awareness in regard to levels of analysis is the increasing use of hierarchical linear modeling or more accurately linear mixed models (LMM) among family sociologists (e.g., Sayer & Klute, 2005; Teachman & Crowder, 2002). It seems, however, that awareness of levels of analysis and the methodological and statistical advances we have experienced in the last few decades have “out paced” theoretical developments and our understanding of what is involved in constructing multilevel theories with cross-level interactions. Even in the most obvious case of marriage and families, we seldom find scholars developing multilevel theories or we find multilevel theories that are profoundly vague. This absence of multilevel theory leads scholars to rely on common vernacular understandings and personifications of aggregates rather than well-developed theory (Klein & Kozlowski, 2000; White, 2009).

Although social science theories have often suggested different levels of analysis (e.g., Bronfenbrenner, 1979), these theories most often failed to identify the mechanisms that move effects from one level to another. Furthermore, it has been difficult to meet assumptions of independence when using aggregated scores or scores collected at a different level of analysis. Some of these obstacles are less inhibiting using LMM and particular forms of these such as hierarchical linear models (HLM). These models allow us to simultaneously estimate the effects for individual level variables and higher order variables such as those within the family or community (see Teachman & Crowder, 2002).

The availability of these statistical techniques to researchers puts increased pressure on theorists to provide the mechanisms by which effects traverse levels. For example, if school board funding is reduced and parental investment increases, we have to explain how the reduction in funding is tied to the individual parent’s behavior to become more involved with their child’s school. White (2009) discusses the complexities that confront us in terms of theorizing about “trickle down” linkages (see Yodanis, 2005) as well as emergent phenomena. Although this is a long-awaited

development for researchers and theorists, it does provide new challenges and potential hazards for theory (White & Teachman, 2005).

Optimal Matching

The interplay of deductive and inductive theory is no more apparent than with the methodological approach called “optimal matching” (Abbott, 1995). Optimal matching was first used to describe DNA sequences; however, Abbott (1995) adopted the technique for studying life course events. Briefly, optimal matching examines a finite set of elements and episodes over time and reduces them to one summative, reference sequence. The number of iterations to move a sequence of elements and episodes to the same pattern as the reference allows the creation of a measure of distance between each respondent’s sequence and the reference sequence. In previous research, the mode for each event was often used as a reference point but that introduced error when trying to measure sequences. Optimal Matching Analysis or OMA utilizes the distance measures created to establish clusters (Martin, 2009). This approach has been used in the social sciences with some partial application to family and the study of life course sequences (e.g., Han & Moen, 1999; Pollock, Antcliff, & Ralphs, 2002; Shanahan, 2000). Martin (2009) argue that optimal matching can be used to operationalize some of the processes identified in the theory of family life course developmental. He proposes that sequences can be measured as to their distance from reference sequences and off time and out of sequence states identified. This technique can be used to test theoretical propositions or it can be used inductively to capture empirical patterns of sequences. His proposal has the potential of further refining and developing what continues to be one of the most popular approaches to the study of the family.

Conclusion

Is Vargus (1999) correct to state that family theorists are wandering in the wilderness? At one point in time, family theory could be regarded as one of the most theoretically advanced areas in the social

sciences. Certainly, the publication of the two-volume work by Burr et al. (1979) demonstrated an incredibly sophisticated range of both inductive and deductive propositional family theory. Since that time, theorists have focused less on producing sound propositional theory and more on debates about the nature of knowledge and relativity of knowledge claims. Regardless of the debates among theoreticians, researchers have continued to produce excellent empirical studies, though seldom have any of these studies really tested theoretical propositions. Indeed, there seems a disconnection between empirical researchers and theorists. Although there should be an historical analysis of this situation (see White, 2004), it is even more important to close this rift.

In order to make theoretical work relevant to researchers, theorists must become more sophisticated in the way they state theory. Clearly defined concepts and propositions that pay attention to the complexity of relations are especially important. In addition, theorists might focus on particular areas such as marital quality and stability, parent-child socialization, intergenerational transmission of social class, or family violence so that there is an obvious overlap between researchers in these areas and the theorists in these areas. This does not imply that theorists should give up their ties to more overarching theoretical assumptions. It is this linkage to a larger perspective that is one of the strengths theory offers. Theorists also offer logical skills and there is some need for them to return to the basics of logic and logical formulation to make sure that what we say is formally established. At the same time, researchers need to realize that there is more to producing knowledge than publishing reports and getting cited. In the long run, the research that will be remembered and celebrated is the research that has theoretical import.

Although there are good examples of researchers using theory and refining theory (Amato & Hohmann-Marriott, 2007), there are far fewer examples of researchers deducing and testing theory. There are some examples where relatively difficult theories, such as Giddens' globalization of intimacy, have nonetheless been empirically examined (Gross & Simmons, 2002) and evolutionary

theory vs. rational choice (Bokek-Cohen, Peres, & Kanazawa, 2007). Furthermore, there are a host of areas that are awaiting theoretical refinement. For example, Bourdieu's (1979/1984) notion that the early learning of "habitas" is instrumental to social class transmission needs to be reconciled with Kohn's (1959) theoretic model of social class transmission that emphasizes current conditions of employment as producing social class values. Another area for development is the area of global family change. In particular, the claim by Therborn (2004) that the only major area supporting Goode's (1959) convergence theory of family is the decline of patriarchy.

In the final analysis, I believe we now can be more sanguine about the future of family theory than during the previous decade. Many of the destructive debates about relativism are largely ignored as frivolous by contemporary philosophy of science (see Okasha, 2002; Turner & Risjord, 2007). Opportunities for furthering theory that is relevant to researchers are abundant. Available texts and academic training in family theory have improved and a generation of young scholars now have a specific publication outlet for theoretical work (*Journal of Family Theory and Review*). The confluence of opportunity and training suggests a promising decade ahead for family theory.

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Jay Teachman, Lucky Tedrow, and Gina Kim

The past half-century of changes in marriage, divorce, remarriage, childbearing, cohabitation, and household structure have retooled the American family. Over time, the decline or retreat from marriage has made way for other arrangements of family life. For example, the increase in cohabitation and later age at marriage has resulted in more births to cohabiting couples, leading to what some authors have called the Fragile Family (Carlson, McLanahan & England, 2004). As a consequence, we find more children being raised by their unmarried parents. We also find children and parents experiencing an increasing number of household changes in their lifetime and greater inequality of life chances associated with family type experienced.

These changes in American families have set the context for vigorous debate about their

determinants, consequences, and meaning. Whether you agree with Cherlin's (2004) assessment concerning the deinstitutionalization of marriage or find the evidence for the advantage of marriage worldwide compelling (Coombs, 1991; Waite & Lehrer, 2003) or recent research reporting the minimal benefits of marriage for men (Liu & Umberson, 2008), there seems to be no end to the discussion regarding change in marriage and the family. Citing the loss of functions to other institutions, some researchers argue that the family is in decline (Popenoe, 1988, 1993; Skolnick, 1991) and warn that its demise holds negative consequences for all Americans. Other authors are more sanguine and have noted that change is inevitable and may even be for the best, especially for women (Stacey, 1990, 1993). And, this debate is not new. Interest by scholars, policy makers, and lay people regarding the contours of family life has engendered debate for centuries (Thornton, 2005).

Debates over meaning aside, the empirical evidence indicates that American families have never been static. Families have always changed in response to economic boom, depression, and transformation in gender roles. Our purpose in this chapter is to outline the nature of recent changes in American families. Although our purpose is largely descriptive, we provide data which sets the context within which debate around the nature of family life has revolved. We also provide a summary of some of the main arguments used to explain change in the demography of families over recent years.

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J. Teachman, PhD (✉)

Department of Sociology, AH 505, Western Washington University, Bellingham, WA 98225, USA
e-mail: Jay.Teachman@wwu.edu

G. Kim

Seattle Children's Hospital, Seattle, WA, USA
email: Gina.kim@seattlechildren.org; gmk714@gmail.com

L. Tedrow, PhD

Center for Social Science Instruction, Demographic Research Laboratory, Sociology Department, Western Washington University, Arntzen Hall 501, Bellingham, WA 98225-9081, USA
e-mail: lucky.tedrow@wwu.edu

Defining the Families

More than ever, America is made up of a multiplicity of family types including two-parent families, blended families, one-parent families, cohabiting couples, gay and lesbian families, and extended-family households. Unfortunately, comparable, national-level data are not available to track variation in each of these (and other) family types across time and how they vary according to important social characteristics such as race and social class. As demographers, we are forced by our need for comparable, high-quality data to make use of official statistics (largely from the decennial census, the Current Population Survey, or other large-scale survey efforts) that most often assume a legal definition of marriage and the family. The census defines a family as “a group of two or more persons related by birth, marriage, or adoption and residing together in a household” (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2009a). A married couple is defined as a “husband and wife living in the same household, with or without children or other relatives.” An unmarried-partner household is “a household that includes a householder and an unmarried partner” (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2003). An unmarried-partner household may consist of people of the same or opposite sex. Among the limitations of these definitions is the fact that equating families with households inevitably ignores increasingly common family relationships that extend across households. For example, the census’ definition of families does not allow us to examine the prevalence or nature of nonresidential parenting situations. Similarly, the definition precludes the detailed examination of increasingly common unmarried but cohabiting couples.

Even within the official definition of what constitutes a family, we are limited by the fact that information is often not available for some subgroups of the population. For example, it is difficult to obtain information about Native American or Asian American families (particularly data that allow a perspective across time) simply because the requisite questions have not been asked. A review of limitations and measurement issues

in data for the Hispanic population is provided by Landale and Oropesa (2007). Thus, our ability to register diversity in family form and function and to track subgroup variation in family change is limited. The information we do have about finely grained subgroups of the American population is too often based on anecdote and small, nonrepresentative samples. These data limitations are unfortunate because available research indicates that family change takes different forms and proceeds at different rates across race and ethnic groups (Bennett, Bloom & Craig, 1992; Bumpass & Lu, 2000; Cherlin, 1992; Goldscheider & Bures, 2003; Landale & Oropesa, 2007; Schoen & Cheng, 2006; Tucker & Mitchell-Kernan, 1995; Uecker & Stokes, 2008).

Changes in Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage

Long-term shifts in rates of marriage and divorce from 1960 to 2006 are shown in Fig. 3.1. There has been a reasonably consistent decline in the rate of first marriage since 1960. By the middle of the 1990s, rates of marriage were as low as or lower than those observed during the Great Depression. The rate of divorce has experienced fluctuation over the period covered, increasing relatively rapidly through the early 1980s, after which the rate slowed and began to decline.

The trends in rates of marriage and divorce found in Fig. 3.1 reveal that both are at their lowest point in years. Not since 1970 have divorce rates been lower than in 2006. Likewise, rates of marriage show that the 2006 rate is lower than the 1960 rate. For an even longer term perspective on the changes in marriages and divorce see Teachman, Tedrow and Crowder (2000) and for an historical-economic perspective on these changes see Stevenson and Wolfers (2007).

Using more refined rates between 1940 and 1996, Teachman et al. (2000) show a general decline over time in early marriage and an increase in marital dissolution. Rates of marriage in the United States have decreased since the late 1940s, while rates of divorce have increased (with a flattening of the rate of divorce since the early

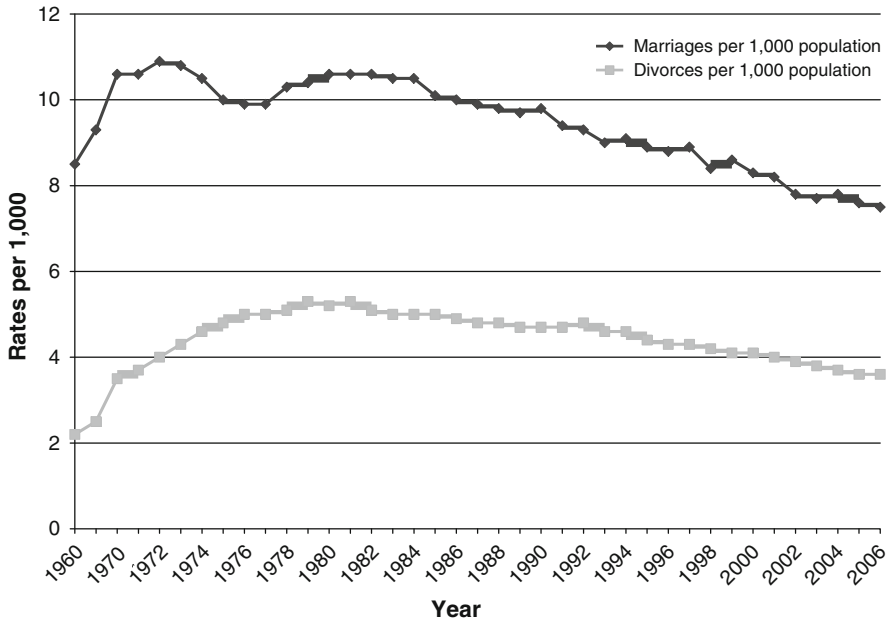


Fig. 3.1 Rates of marriage and divorce in the United States: 1960–2006. *Source:* U.S. Bureau of the Census (2009a) (Table 77)

1980s). These trends imply that as time has passed a smaller proportion of adults marry early and remain married to the same person. For information about recent changes in early marriage as they occur by race/ethnic status see Uecker and Stokes (2008).

Marriage

A more comprehensive account of changes in marriage is presented in Figs. 3.2 and 3.3 for the past 30 plus years. To control for the effects of changes in the age structure in the United States we examine changes in rates for women ages 20–24 in Fig. 3.2 and women ages 35–39 in Fig. 3.3. At least in part, the shifts shown in Fig. 3.1 are due to the shifts in the age structure of the population. This cannot be the case for Figs. 3.2 and 3.3. Other changes that may impact the shifts shown in Figs. 3.2 and 3.3 include changes in educational composition, race/ethnic diversity, and other compositional changes.

For example, some of the upswing in divorce during the 1970s can be attributed to the substantial increase in marriages of short duration (where the risk of divorce is high) associated with the large number of first marriages of members of the baby-boom cohort.

Trends in women age 20–24 ever married by race and ethnicity are presented in Fig. 3.2. Substantial changes are found. For Whites, the percentage ever married for women age 20–24 dropped by 42 percentage points between 1975 and 2008. By 2008, less than one quarter of white women this age had married. The decline among African Americans between 1975 and 2008 was nearly as large, 37 percentage points. However, in 1975, the starting time point, African American women were already far below the marriage prevalence of white women age 20–24. Thus, the end result for African American women is particularly dramatic. By 2008, only 10.5% of African American women age 20–24 had ever married.

The observed prevalence of marriage among Hispanic women has declined by almost

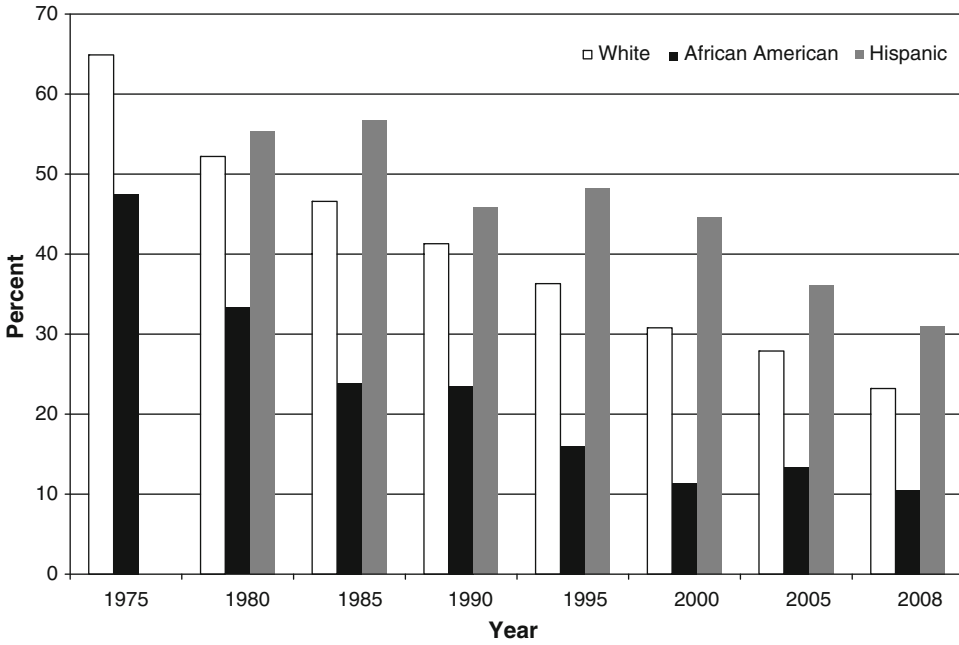


Fig. 3.2 Percent of women 20–24 ever married: 1975–2008. *Source:* U.S. Bureau of the Census (1992), (1996a), (2001), (2006), (2009b)

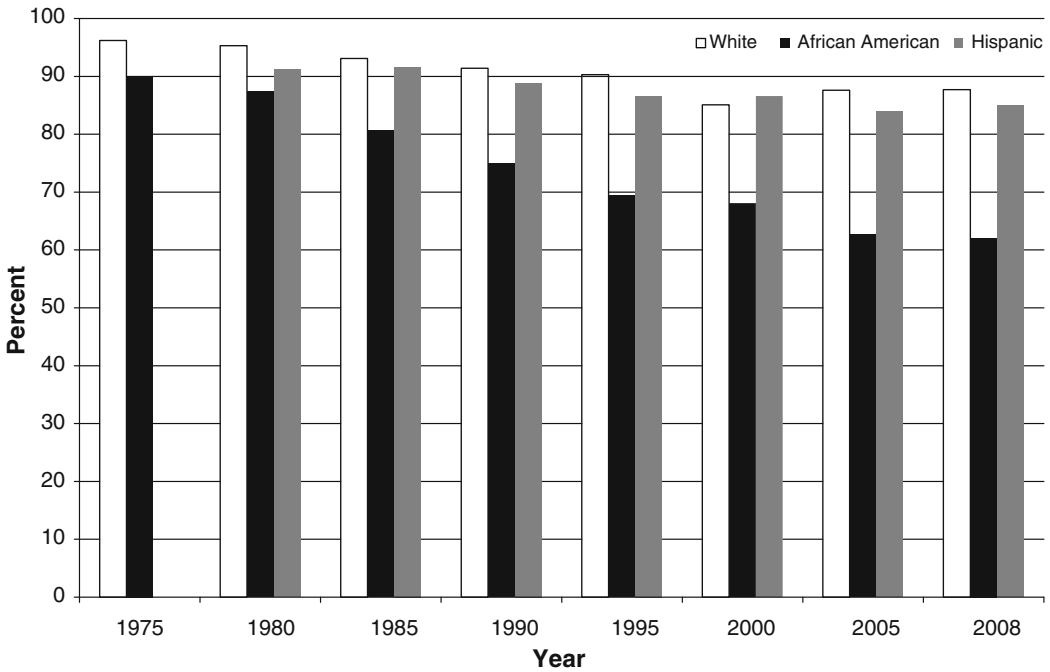


Fig. 3.3 Percent of women 35–39 ever married: 1975–2008. *Source:* U.S. Bureau of the Census (1992), (1996a), (2001), (2006), (2009b)

25 percentage points. The percentage of Hispanic women age 20–24 ever married has tended to vacillate over the last 30 years. Still, Hispanic women during each time period are more likely than either Whites or African Americans to have formed a marriage by age 20–24.

For the period 1975–2008, Fig. 3.3 shows the percentage of women age 35–39 who had ever married, by race/ethnic status. The residual (100 minus the percent ever married by age 35–39), provides implied upper limits to estimates of rates of permanent singlehood by race/ethnic status. We must keep in mind, however, that the implied rates of permanent singlehood include women who are in nonmarital cohabiting unions. The implied rates are upper limit estimates in that a small fraction of women may still marry for the first time after age 35.

White, African American, and Hispanic women all realized some decline in the percentage of women age 35–39 who ever marry over the past 30 years. However, when we look at Whites, there is less than a 10 percentage point change from 1975 to 2008. Hispanic women declined by 6.5 percentage points. But for African Americans, there has been a much greater increase in the likelihood of permanent singlehood. The percent of black women ever married by age 35–39 has declined from nearly 90% in 1975 to just over 62% in 2008. This 28 percentage point decline in African American ever married 35–39 women suggests that as of 2008 about 38% of these women may never marry.

The available evidence is consistent in showing a retreat from early marriage and a decline in ever-marriage, particularly for African American women. What factors might explain these trends? First, some authors have suggested that state welfare benefits are negatively associated with rates of marriage and that the rise of the welfare state has negated the economic role of marriage, particularly for low-income women (Grogger & Bronars, 2001; Hepner & Reed, 2004; Lichter, McLaughlin & Ribar, 2002; Murray, 1984). While this argument would seem to be consistent with the decline in early marriage and the overall retreat from marriage for African American women, supporting evidence for such an effect has been weak.

Few researchers have found consistent evidence that welfare benefits reduced the likelihood of marriage (Moffitt, 1990, 1992; Schultz, 1994). And, those researchers who did find an effect did not find it to be substantively important (Lichter, LeClere & McLaughlin, 1991; McLanahan & Casper, 1995). Despite mixed evidence on the matter, public policy makers emphasized the goals of reducing nonmarital fertility and promoting marriage in the major welfare reform legislation known as the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996 (Blank, 2002).

Although programs under these reforms aimed to increase incentives to marry, recent evaluations of welfare programs continue to provide an unclear picture of the effect welfare benefits have on marriage rates. Several studies have found that welfare reforms have contributed to the stability of existing marriages, but have had no significant effect on entrance into new marriages (Bitler, Gelbach, Hoynes & Zavodny, 2004; Graefe & Lichter, 2008; Hu, 2003; Lichter et al., 2002). Other researchers have noted that the new emphasis placed on labor force participation may lead to greater financial independence among single parents and unintentionally decrease incentives to be married (Bitler et al., 2004; Hepner & Reed, 2004). Preliminary findings do not provide definite conclusions about the effect of recent welfare reforms on family structure; however, some researchers propose that long-run changes could be more substantial (Blank, 2002; Hu, 2003).

Second, it has been proposed that increasing value placed on individualism by Americans has decreased the perceived benefits of marriage (Bellah, Madsen, Swidler, Sullivan, & Tipton, 1985; Cherlin, 2004, 2005; Dixon, 2009; Lichter et al., 2002; South, 1992). That is, the belief that individual goals can be pursued (e.g., self-fulfillment in terms of education and career), at the expense of more communitarian goals, has reduced the value of marriage as a satisfying adult role. In a related vein, Cherlin (1992) provides a compelling discussion of the role that African American culture plays in mediating the effects of larger structural constraints and opportunities on rates of African American marriage.

For example, Cherlin suggests that Blacks and Whites hold different understandings about what a family is supposed to do and who should be counted as a family member, perhaps as a legacy of slavery or West African traditions. While attractive in its power and simplicity, this argument is nonetheless difficult to test empirically because cultural factors are often measured as residuals. Very seldom is it possible to obtain concrete measures of cultural values that allow their use in quantitative models that include measures of concepts such as income, education, and place of residence. Thus, the potential impact of cultural factors is often assumed to be reflected in the inability of more easily measured factors to explain change and differentials in marriage.

Third, growth in the economic independence of women and decline in the economic power of men have been emphasized in two interrelated arguments concerning changes in marriage patterns. Both arguments assume change in the nature of marital bargaining as originally outlined by Becker (1981) where in the gains associated with marriage are greatest when men and women trade on their comparative advantage resulting from specialization in market and home production, respectively. More recently, economists have suggested that the basis of marriage has shifted, resulting in more rewarding alternatives for intimate living (Lundberg & Pollak, 2007; Stevenson & Wolfers, 2007). These changes are the result of advances in modern contraceptive technology, household technologies (i.e., dishwashers), and market services (i.e., prepackaged meals) that reduce the demand for household labor, increasingly less gender-based inequality in labor force participation and wages, and weakening of the legal privileges linked to marriage. These changes have disassociated sex from marriage, reduced the need for gender-based division of labor in the household, increased the ability of women to support themselves outside of marriage, and minimized the unique legal status associated with marriage. As a consequence, living alone or in a cohabiting relationship have become viable alternatives to marriage.

Increasingly, research shows that the marital exchange outlined by Becker is being reworked

by couples. For example, studies of recent cohorts show that highly educated women, who have the most favorable position in the labor market, are more likely to marry than lower-educated women, once school enrollment is taken into consideration (Goldstein & Kenney, 2001). This finding is contrary to the standard economic model outlined by Becker because such women would gain the least from a traditional division of household and market labor. Rising levels of educational homogamy from the 1960s onward suggest that marriage is concentrated among the most educated, a trend that may be a new source of inequality for future generations (Goldstein & Kenney, 2001; Schwartz & Mare, 2005).

At the same time, Wilson (1987; 1996) has argued that the decline in job opportunities for young African American men, particularly in inner cities, has sharply diminished their ability to form and support a family. Gould and Paserman (2003) identify the consequences of growing disparity in wage distributions and its effect on marriage, finding that increasing male inequality explains about 25% of the marriage rate decline for women over the last few decades. In regards to cohabitation patterns, Oppenheimer (2003) has found that recent history of employment instability discourages the formation of marital unions among noncohabitators, yet encourages the formation of cohabiting unions. These findings support the argument that many cohabiting unions may represent an adaptive strategy for young men whose careers have not yet gelled.

The changing economic fortunes of men and women appear to offer a testable explanation of changes in the likelihood of marriage across time, as well as observed marital differences between Whites and African Americans. Early research suggested that employment, high educational levels, and high earnings were positively related to marriage rates for men, but negatively influenced women's likelihood of marriage (Espenshade, 1985; Farley & Bianchi, 1987; Lichter et al., 1991; McLanahan & Casper, 1995; Teachman, Polonko & Leigh, 1987). Based on these findings, some researchers hypothesized that women's increased economic independence reduced their reliance on and taste for marriage;

however, evidence for this hypothesis is weak. Recent research indicates that the opposite effect is actually the case. Among more recent cohorts of women, financial resources may facilitate the transition to marriage by making women more attractive as potential mates or providing the resources to support a marriage. For example, several studies show that educational attainment is strongly linked to eventual marriage for both black and white men and women, although it generally delays entry into first marriage (Goldstein & Kenney, 2001; Schoen & Cheng, 2006; White & Rogers, 2000). Husbands and wives are also becoming increasingly similar in terms of education and other socioeconomic variables, especially among the highly educated (Schoen & Cheng, 2006; Schwartz & Mare, 2005; Sweeney & Cancian, 2004). Women's earnings and labor market position have become similarly associated with the likelihood of marriage, with economically attractive women more likely to marry than economically disadvantaged women (Sassler & Schoen, 1999; Sweeney & Cancian, 2004; White & Rogers, 2000).

These findings have important implications for marriage market theories. Better education, job prospects, and incomes may increase the likelihood of marriage for men and women because these characteristics make individuals more attractive commodities in the marriage market. These findings also highlight the significance of structural factors affecting marriage, which have been used to explain marriage patterns, such as race differentials in marital formation.

For example, the availability of suitable spouses in a local marriage market has been presented as an important determinant of marital behavior (Guzzo, 2006; Lichter et al., 1991; Lichter, McLaughlin, Kephart & Landry, 1992; South & Lloyd, 1992). According to this argument, marriage depends not only on one's personal characteristics but also on the availability of suitable spouses and on the characteristics of others competing for those potential spouses. Thus, even for individuals with the most desirable traits, the likelihood of marriage decreases if there is a shortage of potential spouses with suitable or preferred characteristics.

In the examination of White, Black, and both immigrant and native born Latina women, Catanzarite and Ortiz (2002) found that the relative availability of employed men to be an important factor in explaining differences in single motherhood by race. The poor pools of marriageable men available to native born Latinas and Blacks provide a partial explanation of their higher likelihood of being single mothers. A number of earlier studies have shown that after accounting for individual characteristics the availability of economically attractive men (men with steady employment) is positively linked to rates of marriage for women (Lichter et al., 1991; Lichter et al., 1992; South & Lloyd, 1992). It is possible, therefore, that the source of the African American-White differential in marriage may lie in the character of the marriage markets in which they are located, if not their individual characteristics. For instance, African American women tend to live in areas (often measured at the level of a metropolitan community) in which the deficit of economically attractive potential mates is much more pronounced than it is in areas occupied by white women (Fossett & Kiecolt, 1991; Lichter, et al., 1992). Indeed, the true heart of Wilson's (1987, 1996) argument is that it is the decline in the pool of "marriageable" men in local marriage markets that has led to the retreat from marriage among African Americans.

Lichter et al. (1992) show that differences in local marriage markets do more to explain race differences in marriage than do individual characteristics. About one-fifth of the race differential in rates of marriage can be explained by the more restrictive marriage market conditions faced by African American women in comparison to those faced by Whites. Similar results have been provided by other researchers (Mare & Winship, 1991; McLanahan, 2009; South & Lloyd, 1992; Testa, Astone, Krogh, & Neckerman, 1991). See Harknett and McLanahan (2004) for a study of how poor marriage markets affect the transition to marriage following a premarital birth and Harknett (2008) for inclusion of relationship quality as a mediating variable in the study of marriage markets and marriage transitions. Recent research finds that decline in the pool of

“marriageable” men leads to lower rates of marriage following a nonmarital birth and that this is partially due to lower relationship quality (Harknett, 2008).

An additional issue regarding nonmarital cohabitation complicates efforts to pinpoint race differences in marriage. Seltzer (2004) finds that cohabitation in the United States is becoming increasingly common for women of all ages, educational, and race/ethnic groups. Dixon (2009) reports that African Americans are less likely to marry, marry later and spend less time married than do white Americans, and are less likely to stay married. Earlier research leads to similar conclusions, finding a greater risk of cohabitation among African Americans compared to Whites (Schoen & Owens, 1992). Indeed, considering nonmarital cohabitation along with marital unions, race differences in union formation are substantially reduced (Bumpass & Lu, 2000; Bumpass, Sweet & Cherlin, 1991; Carlson et al., 2004; Phillips & Sweeney, 2005; Qian & Preston, 1993; Raley, 1996). Using the National Survey of Family Growth Cycle 5 (NSFG-5) and the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH), Bumpass and Lu (2000) found cohabitation offsetting much of the decline in marriage in terms of the formation of joint households.

However, nonmarital unions are much less stable than marital unions, and African Americans are less likely than Whites to convert a nonmarital union into marriage (Bumpass & Lu, 2000; Manning & Smock, 1995; Schoen & Owens, 1992; Seltzer, 2004). Thus, the fact that racial differences in union formation are less pronounced when nonmarital unions are considered does not necessarily imply that African Americans and Whites have similar experiences in terms of either the number or the duration of their unions. Nor is it clear that nonmarital unions fulfill the same functions as marital unions (Brown & Booth, 1996; Dixon, 2009; Nock, 1995; Rindfuss & VandenHeuvel, 1990; Sassler & Cunningham, 2008; Seltzer, 2004). Additional research is needed to better understand the nature and role of nonmarital unions for various race and ethnic groups. Overall, these patterns suggest that an understanding of changes in marital formation

and differences that exist across race/ethnic groups is likely to rest on the consideration of a variety of individual and contextual conditions.

Divorce

The discussion of Fig. 3.4 is predicated on the notion that marriage has become less central to the economic stability of women. Earlier we presented data on the dramatic decline in the proportion of women age 20–24 ever married. In Fig. 3.4 we show a similarly important trend by presenting the dramatic increase in the percentage of ever-married women aged 40–44 who have divorced. Figure 3.4 clearly indicates that a decline in marital stability has taken place between 1975 and 2002. The proportion of ever-married women divorced from their first marriage by age 40–44 rose sharply between 1975 and 2002 for all three race/ethnic groups for which we have data.

For each race/ethnic status examined, dramatic increases are found in the proportion of ever-married women who divorced. For Whites, the increase was 29 percentage points (from nearly 20% in 1975 to over 49% in 2002). For African Americans, the percent divorced has risen from slightly less than 30% in 1975 to 54% in 2008. Hispanic women also experienced an increase in the percent of women age 40–44 divorced from their first marriage (from just less than 20% in 1980 to just over 40% in 2002).

We now examine first marriage duration for women by divorce cohort. Figure 3.5 shows the percentage distribution of the duration of first marriage by divorce cohort. For marriages that ended in 1945–1949 and 1950–1954, 47.4% and 40.2% lasted less than 5 years, respectively, which may partly be attributed to war-time marriages with men serving in WWII. Only 7.6% of divorces in the 1945–1949 divorce cohort were comprised of marriages that lasted 15 years or more. In comparison, for divorces that occurred in 1990–1994, 30% were from marriages that lasted less than 5 years, while 24.8% were from marriages that lasted 15 years or more. Based on Fig. 3.5 one can conclude that divorce is becoming

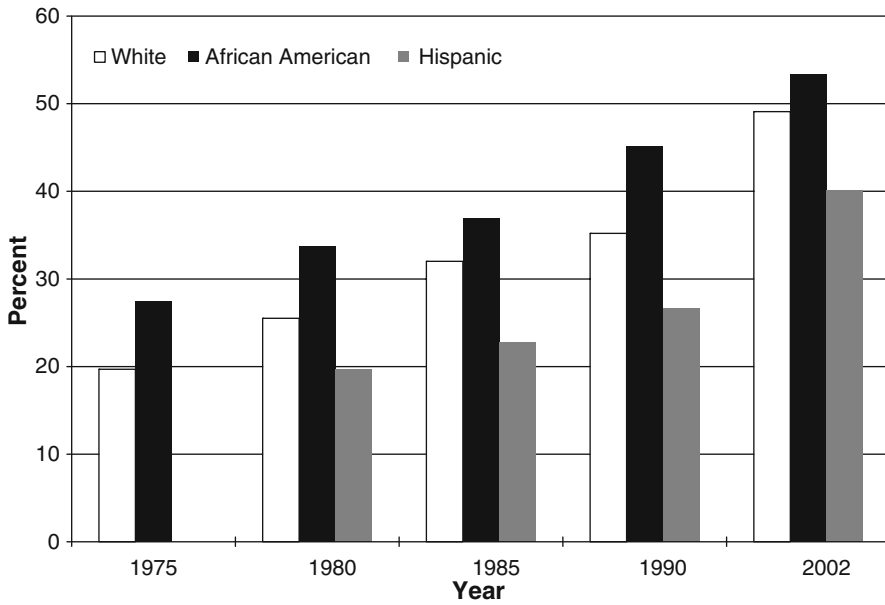


Fig. 3.4 Percent of ever-married women 40–44 divorced: 1975–2002. *Source:* U.S. Bureau of the Census (1992). Author tabulations from the 2002 NSFG

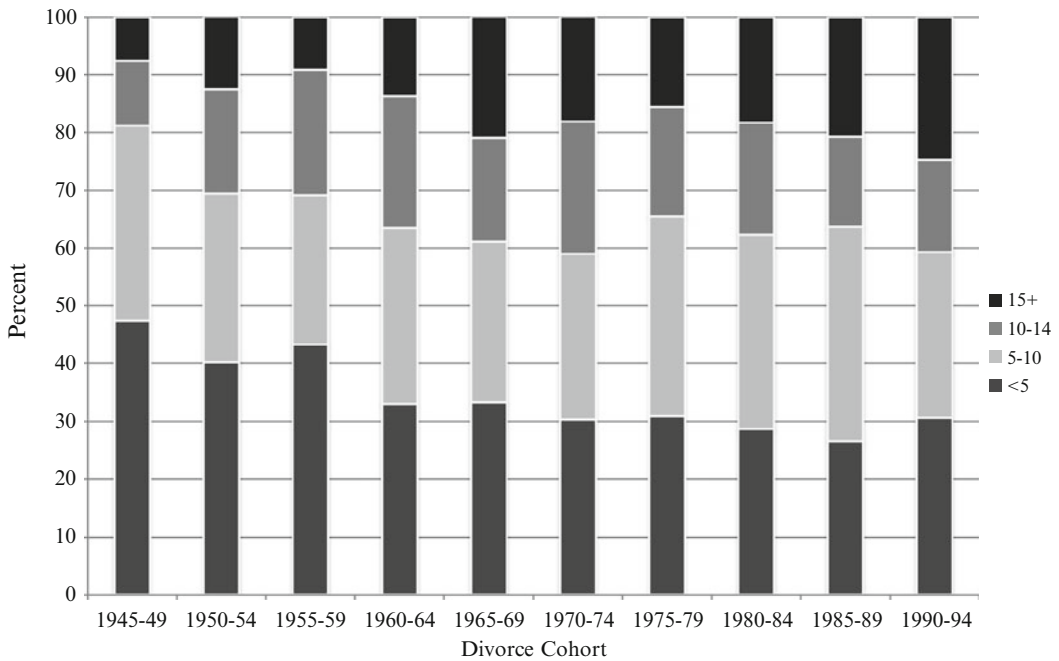


Fig. 3.5 Percent distribution of duration of women’s first marriages by divorce cohort: 2001. *Source:* U.S. Bureau of the Census (2005)

much more acceptable as a way to end a poor union irrespective of marital duration. In the past, women with many years of marriage were generally more reluctant to divorce because of the marital capital that had been accrued. This pattern appears to be changing. Today, women are more integrated into the work-world and have more options than to simply remain in a poor relationship or marriage even if in a marriage of long duration.

An active area of research regarding marital stability is the consideration of the influence of husbands' and wives' economic resources (Cooke, 2006; Greenstein, 1990, 1995; Heckert, Nowak, & Snyder, 1998; Hoffman & Duncan, 1995; Jalovaara, 2003; Liu & Vikat, 2004; Ono, 1998; Poortman & Kalmijn, 2002; Rogers, 2004; Sayer & Bianchi, 2000; Teachman, 2010). Examination of the effect the relative income of wives and husband's on divorce has been investigated for both married and cohabiting couples (Brines & Joyner, 1999; Kalmijn, Loeve, & Manting, 2007). Kalmijn et al., 2007 report that the research results are mixed, with some researchers finding a positive effect of the wife's

income share on divorce; while some find that wives' earnings have a nonlinear, U-shaped relationship with marital dissolution; and still other researchers have reported an inverted U-shaped relationship. Kalmijn et al., 2007 findings suggest that the nature of the nonlinear relationship depends on the type of union. Specifically, movement away from income equality toward a male-dominant pattern lends stability to marriages, while it tends to destabilize cohabiting unions. The opposite is true when the movement away from equality is in the direction of a female-dominant pattern.

Remarriage

Figure 3.6 provides the percent of women age 40–44 who have remarried after divorce for the period 1975–2002 by race/ethnic status. The data are not available for Hispanic women for years prior to 1985. For Whites, the percent of women who were remarried by age 40–44 has remained fairly stable over time, beginning at 72% in 1975 and ending at 70% in 2002. The trend

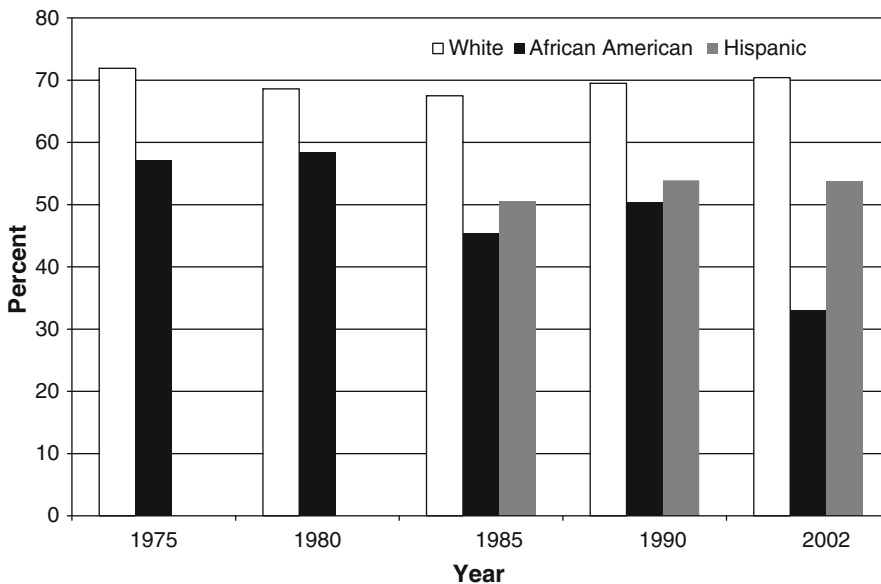


Fig. 3.6 Percent of women 40–44 ever remarried after divorce: 1975–2002. *Source:* U.S. Bureau of the Census (1992). Author tabulations from the 2002 NSFG

for African American women shows dramatic differences from both Whites and Hispanic women. A steeper decline in remarriage is evidenced for African American women between 1975 and 2002. While 57% of divorced black women age 40–44 had remarried in 1975, only one-third had remarried in 2002. Hispanic women experienced little change in remarriage over the 1985–2002 time period.

Bramlett and Mosher (2002) examine the influence of background characteristics on the probability of remarriage in the United States. They find remarriage for women more likely in nonmetropolitan areas and least likely in the central cities of metropolitan areas. Remarriage is more likely for women who divorce young rather than for women aged 25 and over at divorce. Also, women are more likely to remarry in places where men are working and not in poverty. Contrary to the case for first marriages, Teachman (2010) finds that cohabitation prior to a second marriage does not elevate the risk of divorce (see Xu, Hudspeth, and Bartowski (2006) for evidence to the contrary, however).

We will not dwell further on the rationales that have been put forward to explain changes in the likelihood of divorce and remarriage. It is sufficient to note that most of the arguments concerning changes in these demographic behaviors mirror those put forward with respect to the formation of marriages (Becker, 1981; Becker, Landes & Michael, 1977; Espenshade, 1985; Grossbard-Shiechtman, 1993; Heckert et al., 1998; Jalovaara, 2003; South & Spitze, 1986; Teachman, 2010). That is divorce and remarriage, may be examined within the same specialization and trading model whereby marital stability is generated through interdependence of spouses resulting from a traditional division of labor in which husbands specialize in labor market activities and wives specialize in home activities. A more detailed summary of the theoretical concerns that link wives' economic resources to risk of divorce is found in Teachman (2010). In more traditional marriages, wives' income acts as an independence factor, allowing women to leave marriages in which they may have otherwise remained because of economic necessity.

In contrast, in less traditional marriages where joint contributions are expected, wives' income may generate an income effect, reducing economic stress, and stabilizing marriages.

This is not to say that all factors related to marital dissolution and remarriage are identical to those for marital formation. Clearly, aspects of marital interaction and experience that affect the likelihood of marital dissolution have little influence on union formation (Glenn, 1990, 1998; Orbuch, House, Mero, & Webster, 1996). However, there appear to be elements of common influence, especially with respect to the opportunities and constraints imposed by changing social and economic conditions. There is even evidence that characteristics of local marriage markets also affect the likelihood of divorce through variations in the availability of economically attractive marriage partners (South & Lloyd, 1995). The bottom line is that a multitude of factors must be considered in order to explain the general retreat from early, permanent marriage, as well as the fact that this retreat has been more rapid and extensive for African Americans than for other race/ethnic groups.

Changes in the Context of Childbearing and Childrearing

As American women spend a smaller fraction of their childbearing years in marriage, the opportunity for nonmarital childbearing increases. Thus, all else being equal, recent changes in marital behavior alone should lead to concomitant increases in the proportion of children born outside of marriage. As Fig. 3.7 shows, the data indicate that the relative number of births occurring to unmarried mothers has increased in recent decades and racial differences in nonmarital childbearing mirror race differentials in marital behavior.

In 2005, about 32% of white births occurred outside of marriage, compared to 48% of Hispanic births and 69% of African American births. Fifteen years earlier in 1990, about 17% of white births occurred outside of marriage, compared to 37% of Hispanic births and 67% of African American births. In 1970, these figures

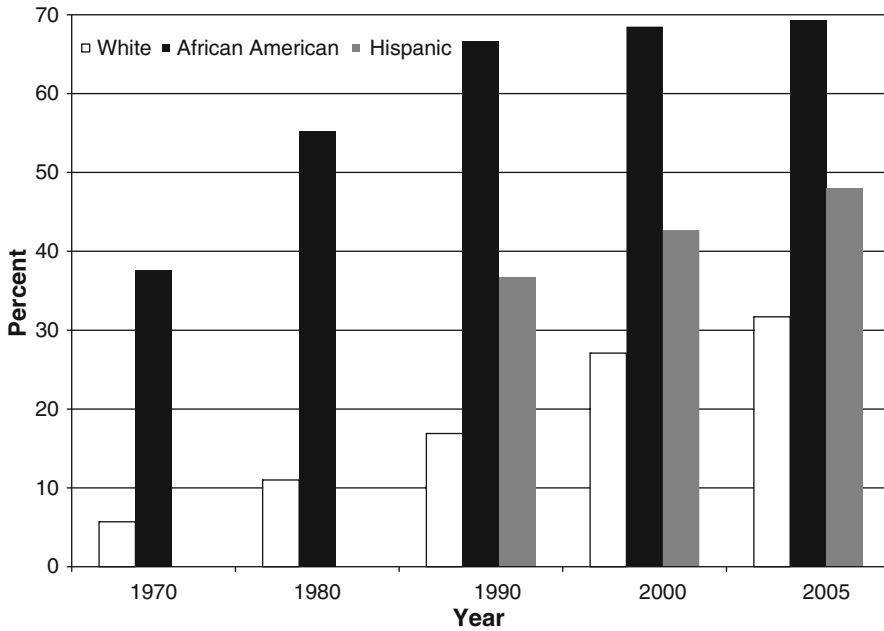


Fig. 3.7 Percentage of births to unmarried women: 1970–2005. *Source:* U.S. Bureau of the Census (2009a) (for 1990–2005 data). Table No. 85; and U.S. Bureau of the Census (1985) (for 1970–1980 data). Table No. 94

were 5.7% for Whites, and 38% for African Americans (no data are available for Hispanics) (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2009a, 1985).

The proportion of births that are nonmarital is determined by the rates of both marital fertility and nonmarital fertility, as well as the proportion of women married and not married. All else being equal, a drop in marital fertility will lead to a greater proportion of births occurring outside of marriage even if the rate of nonmarital fertility remains constant. Gray, Stockard and Stone (2006) using a variety of empirical models conclude that the rise in nonmarital births is caused by changes in marriage behavior. (For more discussion and description of how nonmarital fertility can change over time, see Bumpass and Lu (2000), Gray et al. (2006), Smith and Cutright (1988), and Smith, Morgan and Koropecj-Cox (1996)). McLanahan (2009) shows increases in nonmarital childbearing for all women, Whites, and Blacks during the last half century.

Nonmarital fertility and cohabitation have dramatically changed family life in the United States. Bumpass and Lu (2000) find that 40% of all

children will spend some time in a family that cohabits and this means they are more likely to experience family disruption. Graefe and Lichter (2008) find that nonmarital childbearing is related to both lower marriage rates and lower marriage quality. For African Americans, the increase in the proportion of births that are nonmarital has resulted from the fact that rates of marital fertility have declined more rapidly than rates of nonmarital fertility (National Center for Health Statistics, 1995). For Whites, the rate of nonmarital childbearing has increased consistently across time. While marital fertility has declined for Whites as well, the increase in the rate of nonmarital fertility has played a stronger role in determining the increasing proportion of nonmarital births over time (National Center for Health Statistics, 1995).

What does the increasing proportion of nonmarital births, combined with the retreat from early, stable marriage, imply for the living arrangements of children? Providing part of the answer to this question, Fig. 3.8 indicates that the proportion of children living with a single parent has increased markedly over time. In 1970, nearly

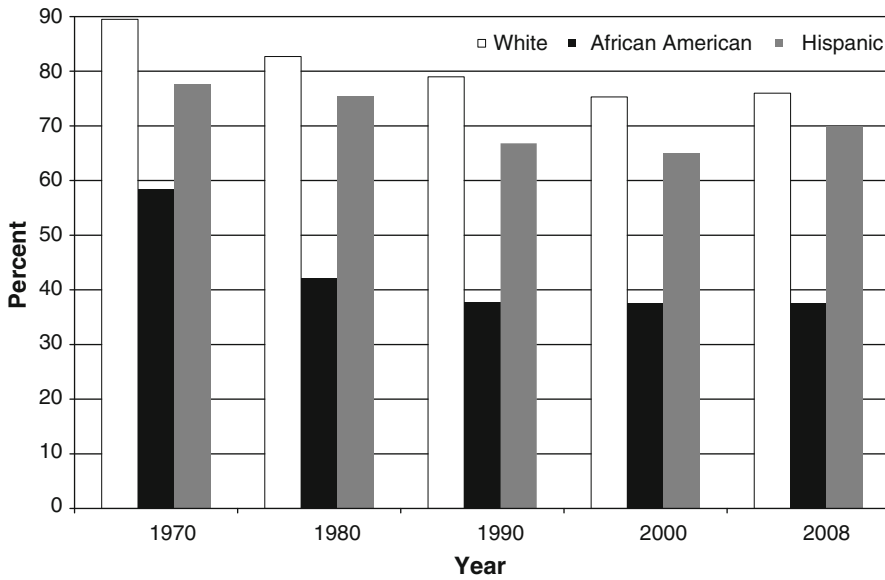


Fig. 3.8 Percent of Children Under 18 Living With Two Parents: 1970–2008. *Source:* U.S. Bureau of the Census (1996b), (2001), (2006), (2009a), (2009b)

90% of white children lived with two parents (biological, adopted, or stepparents). This figure dropped to about 75% in 2000, then rebounded slightly to 76% by 2008. A similar trend has occurred for Hispanic children, with a decline from just under 78% in 1970 to about 65% in 2000. By 2008, this figure had increased slightly to about 70%. The percent of African American children living with two parents fell from 58% in 1970 to just under 38% in 1990 and has remained relatively constant through 2008. These figures reflect the fact that a substantial proportion of American children will spend at least part of their childhood in a single-parent home.

The statistics in Fig. 3.8 reflect the impact of out-of-wedlock childbearing and the formation and dissolution of marriages by parents on the living arrangements of their children at a given point in time. This series of snapshots, however, does not reflect the fact that over time children move into and out of several different family types as a function of these events. Taking these life-course changes into account, nearly 50% of white children and two-thirds of African American children are likely to spend at least part of their childhood in a single-parent family

(Bumpass & Sweet, 1989; Cherlin, 2004; Martin & Bumpass, 1989), often with detrimental consequences (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994; McLanahan & Percheski, 2008; Page & Stevens, 2005). Furthermore, approximately three-fifths of African American children and one-fifth of white children born to unmarried parents will not live in a married couple family throughout their childhood (Bumpass & Lu, 2000).

A growing body of literature indicates that change in childhood living arrangements, beyond any effect associated with experiencing a single-parent family, is also detrimental to the well-being of children (An, Haveman, & Wolfe, 1993; Fomby & Cherlin, 2007; Cherlin et al., 1991; Osborne & McLanahan, 2007; Seltzer, 1994; Wu, 1996). The changes we have outlined in marriage, divorce, and remarriage imply that an increasing percentage of children are experiencing change in their childhood living arrangements. We illustrate this point in Fig. 3.9 using data from the 1995 National Survey of Family Growth. These data provide information on a wide range of different living arrangements experienced by women when they were children, including living with two biological parents, a

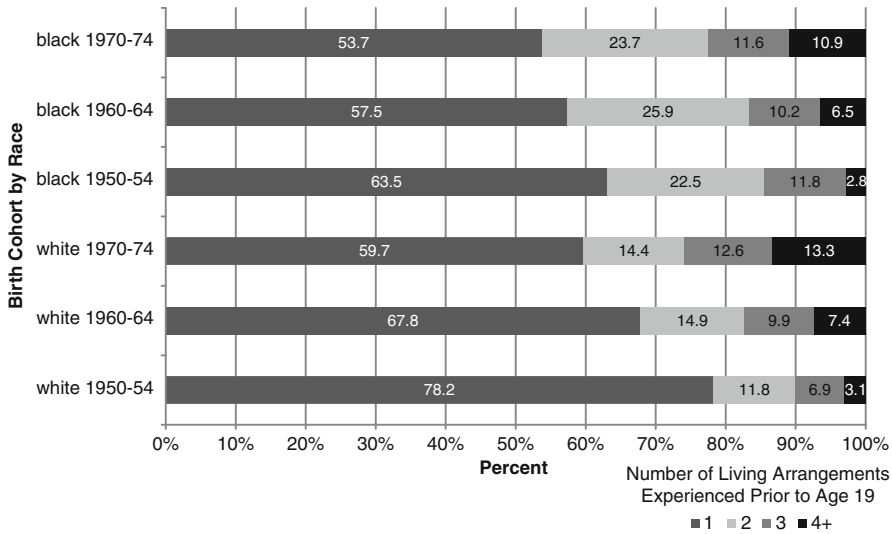


Fig. 3.9 Childhood living arrangements of women: 1950–1954, 1960–1964, and 1970–1974 birth cohorts by race. *Source:* Author tabulations from the 1995 National Survey of Family Growth

parent and stepparent, a single parent of either gender, a parent who cohabited, grandparents, other relatives, and group living quarters.

For women born 1950–1954, about 22% of white women and 36% of African American women experienced more than one living arrangement during their childhood prior to age 19. For women born 1960–1964, these figures were 32% and 42%, respectively. For women born 1970–1974, 40% of white women and 46% African American women had experienced more than one living arrangement while growing up. For the youngest cohort of women, roughly 25% of both Whites and African Americans experienced three or more childhood living arrangements.

The combined impact of the retreat from marriage and the shifting context of childbearing and childrearing on changes in the composition of American households is shown in Fig. 3.10. [Although part of the change in household structure shown in Fig. 3.10 may be attributed to change in the age structure of the American population, this effect is likely to be small (Santi, 1988)]. In 1970, about 40% of all households consisted of a married couple with at least one child living in the household. This share declined to about 22% by 2007. There were substantial

increases in the percent of households made up of persons living alone and other families with children (mainly households headed by a single woman). Other, nonfamily households (nonrelated individuals living together) also witnessed a gain during recent decades.

Married couples have declined as a fraction of all households, from over 70% in 1970 to just 51% in 2007. The percent of nonfamily households has increased along with the relative number of families that do not include a married couple. In sum, the changes in marriage, divorce, remarriage, and childbearing discussed earlier have resulted in increased diversity in the types of households to be found in America. Consideration of the growing number of stepparent families, which is not reflected separately in Fig. 3.10, adds to this diversity even more.

The Changing Economic Fortune of America's Families

We begin the discussion of the economic well-being of America's families by presenting information on their median income from 1970 to 2006 in Fig. 3.11. There has been a general upward

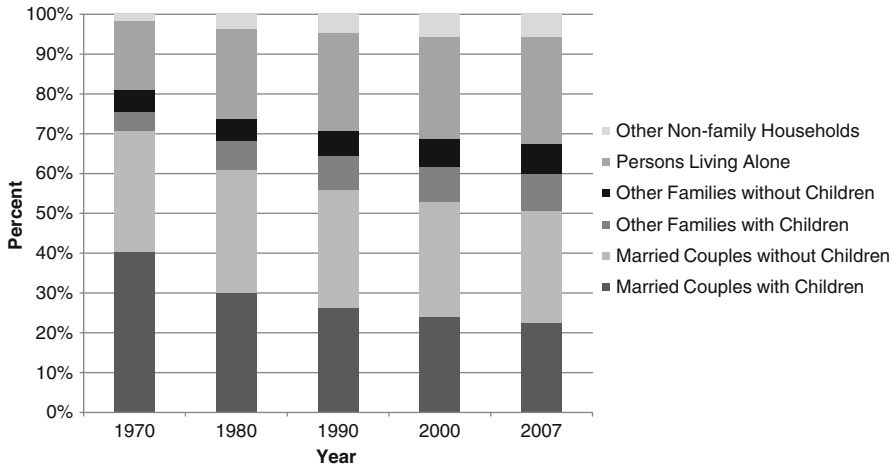


Fig. 3.10 Household composition: 1970–2007. *Source:* U.S. Bureau of the Census (2009a) (for 1980–2007 data). Table No. 58; and U.S. Bureau of the Census (1999) (for 1970 data). Table No. 70

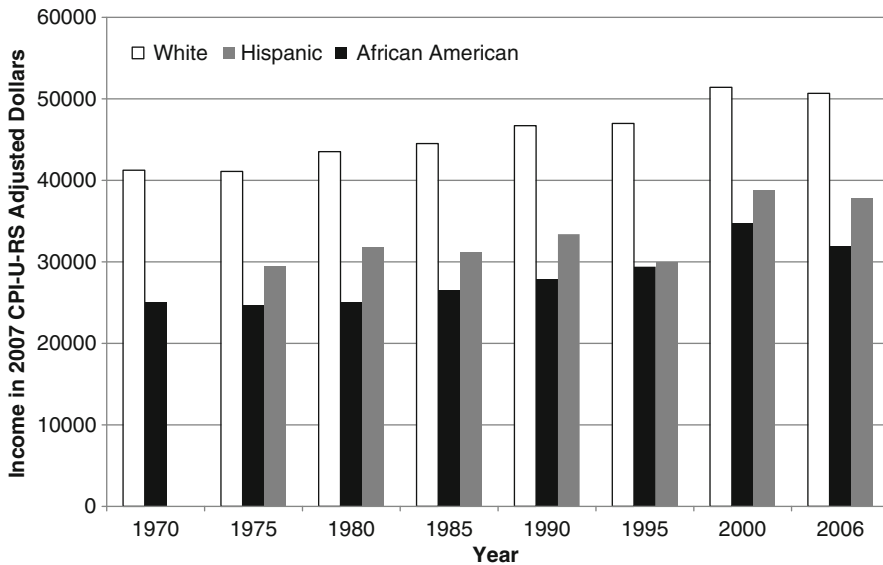


Fig. 3.11 Median income of families: 1970–2006. *Source:* U.S. Bureau of the Census (2007)

shift in median income for each of the three groups depicted in the graph. Between 1970 and 2000, the median income for white families increased from just over \$41,000 (in constant 2006 dollars) to approximately \$51,400. This represents a gain of about 25% over a 30-year period, or about .83% per year. Since 2000, however, white families have experienced a small drop in median income to about \$50,600 in 2006.

For African American families, median income also increased from about \$25,000 in 1970 to nearly \$35,000 in 2000. This change represents a significant increase of about 40% over the 30-year period, or 1.3% annually. Like white families, African Americans have also experienced a decrease in median income in recent years. In 2006, the median income for African American families fell to just under \$32,000,

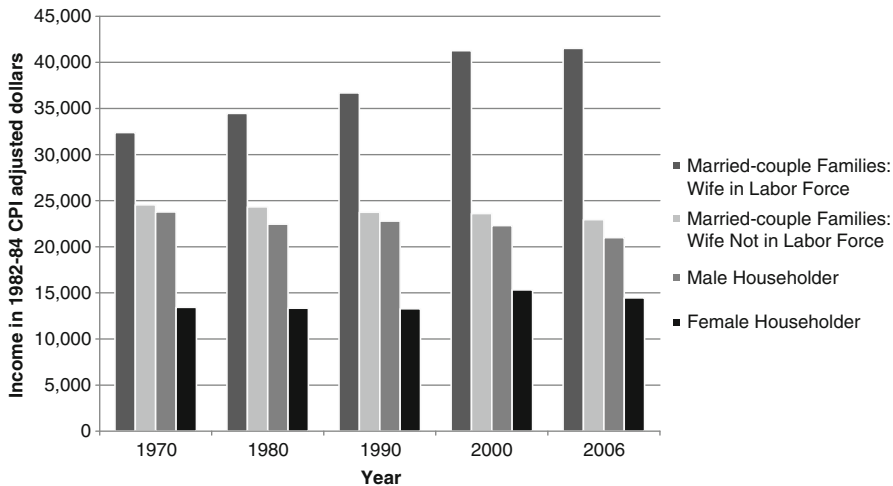


Fig. 3.12 Median family income by family type: 1970–2006. *Source:* U.S. Bureau of the Census (1998), (2002), (2009a)

representing an 8% drop since 2000. Change in median income for Hispanic families was modest between 1975 and 1990, with an overall increase of about 13%. After a slight decline in the early 1990s, median income for Hispanic families increased considerably from about \$30,000 in 1995 to almost \$39,000 in 2000. Similar to African Americans and Whites, median income has also fallen for Hispanic families since 2000, though this recent drop has been less substantial for Hispanics than for African Americans.

Most of the gain in median family income during the last few decades has been constrained to families where the householder has a college education. For example, the 2007 median family income was \$49,737 for families in which the householder's highest level of education was a high school degree (in constant 2007 dollars). In 1970 this figure was actually higher at \$51,755, indicating a 4% decline over the past 37 years in median family income for this educational category. On the other hand, for families in which the householder has a bachelor's degree or more, the 2007 median family income was \$100,000, 33% higher than in 1970.

Income by family type over the period 1970–2006 in 1982–1984 CPI adjusted dollars is presented in Fig. 3.12. Married-couple families in which the wife was in the labor force increased

their income from \$32,391 to \$41,519, or about 33%. In contrast, married couples without the wife in the labor force not only had consistently lower levels of income in comparison to two-earner families, but actually experienced a slight decline in their median income between 1970 and 2006 (from \$24,549 to \$22,947 or –6.5%). In 2000 and 2006, married-couple families in which the husband was the sole income earner earned, respectively 42% and 44% less than two-earner families, a ratio that has been increasing since 1970. These data suggest that the increase in median family income shown in Fig. 3.11 was driven in large part by increases in the income of married-couple families in which the wife is employed.

Single female-headed households evidence the lowest levels of median income—after a virtually constant economic position from 1970 to 1990, income rose slightly to \$15,326 in 2000 but declined to \$14,458 in 2006. While the income of single male-headed families (male householder families) remains higher than for single female-headed families (female householder families), this group also lost ground over the past 36 years (from about \$23,778 to \$20,985, or –11.7%).

The increasing importance of women's income to the family can be traced to differences in the labor-market fortunes of men and women.

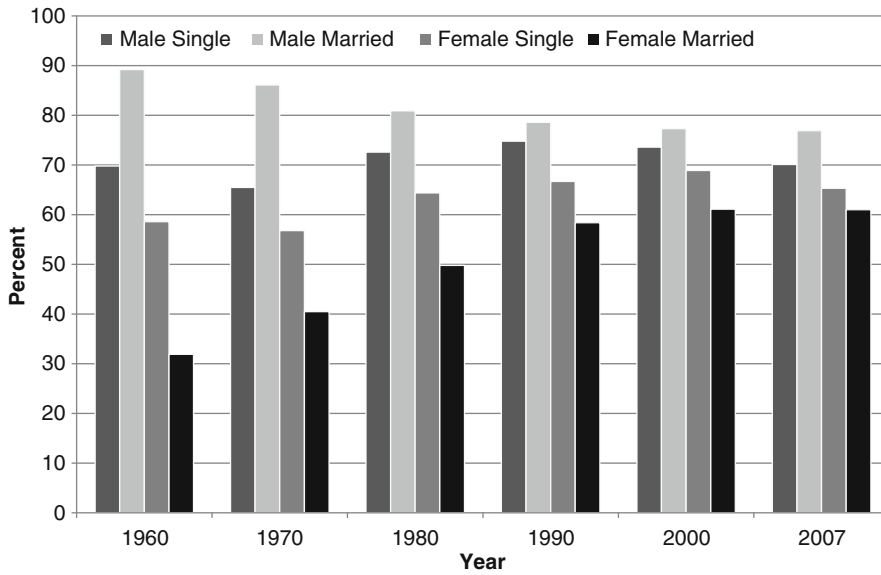


Fig. 3.13 Labor force participation rates of men and women age 16+: 1960–2007. *Source:* U.S. Bureau of the Census (2009a), Table No. 652

We consider two dimensions of labor-market experience—changes in the rate of labor force participation and changes in income among those in the labor force. Figure 3.13 outlines the changes in labor force participation for men and women age 16 and older. The figure indicates a steady decline in the participation of married men in the labor force, from just under 90% in 1960 to about 77% in 2007, reflecting in part the increased coverage of American men by pension plans and social security (Wise, 1997). In contrast, there has been a rush of married women into the labor force. In 1960, about three out of ten married women worked for pay. Since 2000, this figure has remained above six out of ten married women. Compared to married women, married men were 2.8 times more likely to be in the labor force in 1960, but only 1.3 times more likely to be in the labor force in 2007.

Figure 3.13 is interesting because it indicates a decline in the ability to predict labor force participation based on sex and marital status. In 1960, it was clear that men were more likely to work than women and that marriage increased the likelihood of employment for men but depressed it for

women. By 2007, men were still more likely to be employed than women, but the differential had been cut substantially. Married men were also more likely to work for pay than were single men, but only by about 7 percentage points. Married women were less likely to be employed than single women were, but the difference had declined from about 27 percentage points in 1960 to only 4.3 percentage points in 2007.

Figure 3.14 sketches changes in the income of men and women by race and ethnicity over the period 1970–2006 (in 1982–1984 CPI adjusted dollars). In 1970, the median income of white men was \$17,039. In 2006, this figure had declined slightly to \$16,972. Hispanic men experienced a similarly minor decline, from \$11,817 in 1980 to \$11,761 in 2006. The median income for African American men was lower than either White or Hispanic men from 1970 to 1990, but experienced a 30% increase from 1990 to 2000, rising from \$9,651 to \$12,532. The 2006 income of \$12,570 does not reflect similarly high percentages of increasing income, however.

Among women, there has been a steady increase in median earnings since 1970, which is

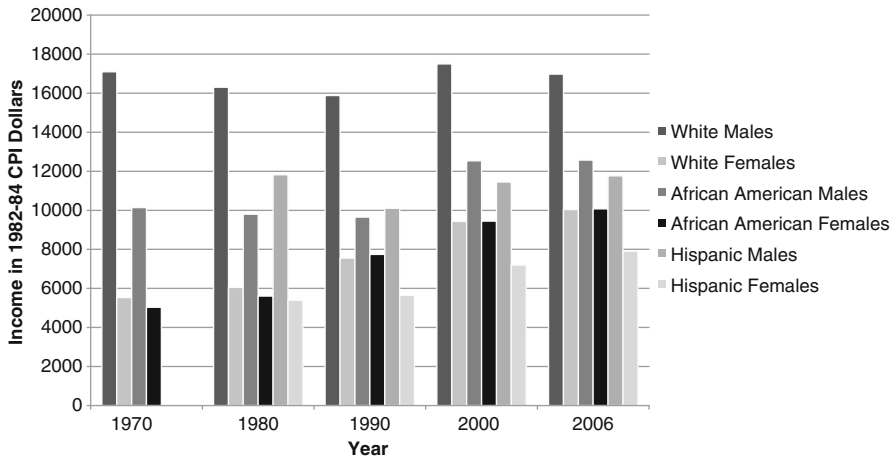


Fig. 3.14 Median income of men and women with earnings: 1970–2006 by race. *Source:* U.S. Bureau of the Census (1998), (2009a)

influenced by increased participation in the labor force and higher levels of full-time participation. White and African American women have seen their income almost double from 1970 to 2006, from \$5,524 to \$10,037 and \$5,029 to \$10,071, respectively. The average median income of Hispanic women also increased substantially (from \$5,390 in 1980 to \$7,903 in 2006), but remains the lowest of all groups. The increased labor force participation and income for women is especially interesting in light of the decline over the past 3 decades in the level of labor force participation of men and their relatively stagnant or declining incomes. The combination of these trends points to the growing importance of wives' income to the economic survival of families. Not only are women more likely to be bringing home needed income but also they are bringing home a greater proportion of a family's total income.

While the changes illustrated in Figs. 3.11, 3.12, 3.13, and 3.14 outline the increasing economic contributions of women to their families, the figures also suggest substantial change in the distribution of family income. These changes in the distribution of family income have corresponded with a more general trend toward greater wage inequality in America (Danziger & Gottschalk, 1993, 1995, 2005; Fischer et al., 1996; Lee, 2008; McFate, Lawson & Wilson,

1995; Neckerman & Torche, 2007; Western, Bloome & Percheski, 2008). In 1980, the poorest fifth of families earned 5.3% of all income. In 2007, this value had fallen to 3.4% (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1998, 2008a). In contrast, in 1980, the richest fifth of families earned 41.1% of all income, a value that grew to 49.7% in 2007. The richest 5% of American families increased their share of all income from 14.6% to 21.2% over the same period.

The escalating income inequality of recent decades has been characterized by differential growth in income for poor and rich families. Wealthy families have experienced rapid rates of income growth, while gains for poor families have been much more modest. For instance, in 1980, the upper income limit for the poorest fifth of families was \$24,916 in constant 2007 dollars (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2008b). By 2007, nearly 30 years later, the upper limit for the poorest families had risen by only 11.8% to \$27,916. The lower income limit for the richest fifth of families, on the other hand, increased at a much higher rate from \$83,372 in 1980 to \$112,638 in 2007, representing a change of 35.1%. Furthermore, the lower income limit for the richest 5% of families rose even more substantially during this time period, increasing by nearly 50% from \$131,766 to \$197,216.

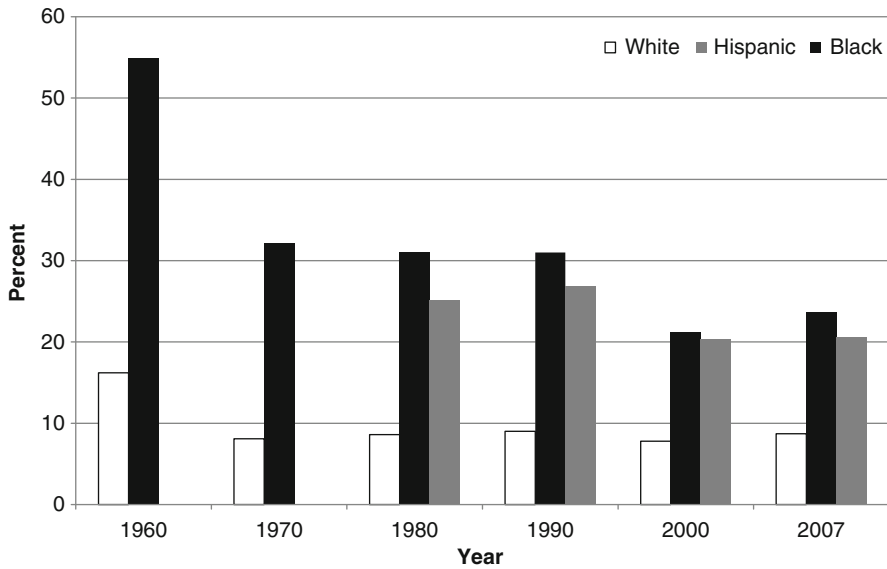


Fig. 3.15 Percent of families below the poverty line: 1960–2007. *Source:* U.S. Bureau of the Census (2008a)

Karoly and Burtless (1995) report that family incomes at the lowest levels have failed to increase substantially for two reasons. First, there has been an increase in single-parent families headed by persons with low skills and low incomes. That is, the number of families at the lowest end of the income scale is growing more rapidly than the number of higher-income families. Second, there has been an increase in income inequality among men, such that men at the lower end of the distribution have seen their wages fall (see Fig. 3.14). Thus, families at the lower end of the income distribution either do not have access to male earnings or have seen these earnings decrease over time.

At higher income levels, family income has grown due to two factors. First, the income of men at the upper end of the distribution has grown substantially. Second, employed women tend to be concentrated in higher-income families. This latter fact is consistent with increases in the educational homogamy (i.e., positive assortative mating) of marriages over time (Mare, 1991; Schwartz & Mare, 2005) and means that valued labor market skills are increasingly concentrated in two-earner families. Schwartz and Mare (2005) found

increases in the odds of educational homogamy caused by decreases in the intermarriage for both those with high and those with low education.

Taking a different approach from looking at income inequality, Hacker and Jacobs (2008), examine income volatility for families using 25 years of data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics. They find considerable growth in income instability (the amount of families' incomes going up and down with time). Such volatility can have a deleterious effect on family stability as well.

Figure 3.15 shows the percent of families with incomes below the poverty line. There are several striking components to this figure. First, there was a substantial reduction in poverty for both African Americans and Whites over the decade of the 1960s, reflecting the increases in income among the poorest Americans under Lyndon Johnson's Great Society programs. In just 10 years, the proportion of African Americans with incomes below the poverty line fell nearly 20 percentage points. For white Americans, the poverty rate was nearly halved.

The second interesting component of Fig. 3.15 is the overwhelming stability of rates of poverty

for most groups since 1970. For both Whites and Hispanics, the percentage of families below the poverty line has changed very little for a period of almost 40 years. Among Hispanic families, the rate has fluctuated between 20% and 27% since 1980, while the rate for white families is much lower but has remained constant at about 8–9% since 1970.

In a similar fashion, the poverty rate among black families remained virtually unchanged between 1970 and 1990. Representing a third interesting feature of Fig. 3.15, however, is the sharp decline in the black poverty rate between 1990 and 2000. After hovering at close to 30% for the previous 20 years, the black poverty rate fell to just over 21% between 1990 and 2000. The most recent statistics from 2007 indicate that the level of black poverty (23.6%) is slightly higher than that of Hispanics (20.6%), and still remains almost three times the level among white families (8.7%).

This recent decline in the rate of family poverty among blacks provides an interesting contrast to evidence indicating a decline in the economic standing of the lowest fifth of the income distribution and a corresponding increase in the level of income inequality. This contrast appears to indicate that, while the nation's economic expansion that occurred during the 1990s allowed a larger number of black families to rise above the poverty threshold, it has apparently done little to improve the economic conditions of the most destitute. Understanding the intricacies of changing levels of poverty and the expanding economic inequality among American families continues to be an important goal for future research.

Discussion

Clearly, the past quarter century has seen increased diversity in the demographic structure of American families. There has been a retreat from universal early marriage, and among some groups, particularly African Americans, there has been a retreat from marriage altogether. Cherlin (2004) sees marriage having undergone a process of deinstitutionalization. It is no longer the case that a child

born today can expect to live his or her childhood with both biological parents, as the composition of family households change—for instance, children may live with a single or cohabiting parent. Household composition is also influenced by the recent increase in nonmarital fertility and rise in fragile families, which is found across multiple race and ethnic groups (McLanahan, 2009). Additionally, children are experiencing a higher average number of transitions in living arrangements as parental unions form and dissolve more frequently (Bumpass & Lu, 2000).

How can we make sense of the changes that have occurred to America's families? Part of the answer appears to lie in the evolving economic environment facing families (Stevenson & Wolfers, 2007; Lichter et al., 2002). As the economic roles of men and women change, and alternatives to marriage increase in popularity, traditional norms concerning family formation have weakened. The specialization model of marriage (Becker, 1981) is challenged as men and women have had to renegotiate taken-for-granted assumptions about the division of economic and household labor, their notions about acceptable economic security and according to some researchers the separation of sex, marriage, and childrearing (Lundberg & Pollak, 2007). In particular, women's participation in the labor force is becoming an increasingly important attribute in marriage arrangements, as her financial contributions to the family is becoming more of a necessity (Goldin, 2006). These economic changes have made it extremely difficult for young men and women to achieve the type of family modeled by their parents or grandparents. Indeed, the production complementarities associated with more traditional marriages are being replaced with more subjective, and likely more fluid, complementarities based on tastes for goods such as leisure, entertainment, personality, and social networks.

Trends in assortative marriage based on educational homogamy and other socioeconomic variables prompt the idea that "...marriage has arguably become a 'luxury' available mostly to middle-class and affluent women with the best marital prospects" (Lichter et al., 2002).

Given these circumstances, substantial challenges to marriage remain among the most economically disadvantaged Americans. Both the current trends in educational assortative marriage as discussed by Schwartz and Mare (2005) and the reproduction of poverty as presented by McLanahan (2009) provide explanation of the plight of those in poverty and their inability to overcome barriers to a productive and fulfilling family. It is among these individuals that the threat of family decline remains most salient.

Debate continues on the implications of family change in the areas of marriage, divorce, remarriage, childbearing, cohabitation, and household composition. Increased diversity of family structures have occurred, which will have implications for the experience of families in the years to come. Future research will be challenged to identify the bases upon which unions are formed and the increasingly diverse challenges to their stability. Whereas previous research has tended to focus on more traditional predictors of union formation and dissolution such as income and education, given the strongly economic function of marriage, subsequent research may need to expand to consider less traditional variables that may tap tastes for noneconomic components of intimate living. This notion also means that greater attention should be paid to the marital match. How well are couples matched on the traits important to their union? Additional research should also focus on the “markets” in which persons find mates and evaluate their current partner.

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Alan C. Acock and Isaac Washburn

Quantitative methods are widely used in studying families because there are so many research questions they can address. What variables predict the person you select as a life partner? Why do some families flourish while others dissolve? Why do some families persist when all members have a miserable relationship with one another? Does cohabiting prior to marriage improve or hurt marital outcomes? Is marriage more beneficial for women or for men? These are a few of the questions we investigate using quantitative methods.

Quantitative analyses and statistics emerged as pivotal scientific methods when causal determinism was rejected in quantum mechanics and replaced by a probabilistic view of the world in the early twentieth century (Liboff, 2002). Since then, statistical analyses have played an increasing role in family scholarship. These methods fit family scholarship nicely, as few aspects of family life are deterministic, a probabilistic methodology is essential. We cannot determine who will have a successful life, but we can identify family processes that enhance the probability of achieving this success.

There are two broad classes of quantitative methods, namely, those based on surveys or observations and those involving some type of experimental or quasi-experimental design. Adopting an experimental design allows a stronger causal argument than would be possible with a survey, but it is difficult to utilize experimental designs to answer many family-related questions. By far, survey analysis is the method most commonly used in quantitative research published within the major family journals.

We can further subdivide both survey and experimental research based on whether the data are collected at a single time (cross-sectional) or over time (longitudinal), either for a panel of the same people or using a separate cohort of people each time. A panel design has many advantages for a causal analysis because a cross-sectional study can only demonstrate that variables covary, while a stronger causal case can be made with a panel design. A review of the major family journals shows a recent transition from cross-sectional designs to an increased use of longitudinal designs.

In this chapter, we examine both survey and experimental methods, covering topics of how data are collected, how variables are measured, and how statistical analysis is utilized. We attempt to set a high standard for what the best practices are, recognizing that current research often falls short of these best practices. We do this in the hope that the next generation of researchers will work to conform to if not exceed these standards.

A.C. Acock, PhD (✉)
Department of HDFS, College of Health and Human
Sciences, Oregon State University, 322 Milam Hall,
Corvallis, OR, USA
e-mail: alan.acock@oregonstate.edu

I. Washburn, PhD
Oregon Social Learning Center, Eugene, OR, USA
e-mail: ijnewtonmm@hotmail.com

Data Collection Practices

Sample Type

Surveys that sample some members of a target population are a widely used way of obtaining data for quantitative studies. Some surveys focus on a narrowly defined research question; others include a wide range of research questions. An example of the first type would involve interviewing couples to measure maternal and paternal depression just prior to the birth of their first child and then each month after the birth until the child is 1-year old.

The second type of sample is a broad range survey. A research team with funding from the National Institute of Health, for example, may conduct a broad based survey of parents with a 12-year-old child at the start of the study, repeating interviews annually until the child is 25. This research team has a general focus, perhaps how families influence the transition from adolescence to adulthood, but their survey instruments include items on far-reaching topics. Hundreds of subsequent researchers may utilize these data to cover a wide variety of topics, many of which were unimagined by the research team that designed the survey.

The small, local survey, because of its narrow focus, typically offers good measures of the key concepts. For example, maternal depression might be measured using a well-developed 20–40-item scale. The large, national survey, because it has a comprehensive suite of hundreds of concepts to measure, uses a very short list of questions for each variable. Sometimes there may be only a single question serving as an indicator of a complex concept. Often there are only 1–5 items rather than a well-developed scale to measure complex concepts such as marital satisfaction.

The strength of the narrowly focused survey is its precise measurement of key variables. Is this important? When we have poor measurement of independent variables and hence a lot of measurement error, we get biased results. Acock (1989) showed that when there was a lot of measurement error, the effects of a variable in a complex model

will generally be underestimated even to the point of reversing the direction of the true relationship.

Is the small, narrowly focused survey best because of superior measurement? Perhaps not, the large scale and comprehensive national surveys allow us to generalize our findings to the broadest possible population. If we limit our study to a small sample of college students or to people who live in a small university town, we cannot generalize beyond these communities. What we find for a particular group of college students may not be true for young adults who chose not to attend college.

National surveys typically provide high quality probability samples that use complex sample designs. These surveys may sample clusters of observations or oversample certain groups such as minorities. These differences from a simple random sample require special adjustments that are not available with all statistical software programs. This is particularly problematic when a researcher is analyzing a subsample such as couples who are recently married selected from a national sample of all married couples (West, Berglund, & Heeringa, 2008). A complex sample design that can be used to generalize to all married couples may not allow generalization to subgroups such as recently married couples without complex weighting procedures that are developed just for this subsample.

This often leaves the family scholar in a quandary. Select a national survey and you have very limited measures of key concepts and often very limited ability to predict outcome variables. Conduct a highly focused, small-scale survey and you have trouble generalizing your findings. A review of major family journals shows that the large scale, national surveys are responsible for more publications than the smaller samples that are highly focused.

Non-probability Sample

Is a non-probability sample okay? Many studies in fields such as medicine rely on convenience samples of patients who volunteer to participate

in a randomized clinical trial. The convenience sample is problematic if underrepresented groups respond differently to the treatment. Early medical studies often were limited to men because they were thought to be “less complicated” biologically than women. The unanticipated consequence was that research of special interest to women was not conducted.

Today, much medical research still relies on volunteer samples. This works when the processes being studied do not depend on economic, racial, regional, or cultural variation among participants. A pill that lowers blood pressure is assumed to work for Baptist as well as for atheists; for people who are married as well as for people who are cohabiting. The probabilistic effects are thought of as universal.

This rarely works for family research. The effect of close supervision of adolescents differs between cultures where it is normative and cultures where it is not. History, culture, class, race/ethnicity, and religion closely bound family life. Our study sample delimits what generalizations can be justified. Suppose you want to predict factors that influence a woman’s marital satisfaction and you have a sample of married couples that have at least one child who is 12 years old. Many of these couples will have been married for at least 12 years and some for much longer. Wives who had a very low level of marital satisfaction are likely to have divorced before the study. Also, the factors that are important to a woman who has been married for 15 years and has an adolescent child may be dramatically different than the factors that are important to younger couples or childless couples.

A final problem with highly focused surveys is that they often result in a restricted range on many variables. Statistical analysis relies on variation to predict outcomes. Any artificial restriction on that variation results in underestimation of the effects of a variable. A sample drawn from a small college town might result in most parents having at least some college. A survey of mothers who are identified as being in a high-risk family may include many that have less than a high school degree. Both surveys will have truncated variation on education and, as a consequence,

education will have a smaller effect on any outcome variable than it would in a representative sample that reflected the full range of parental education.

Complex Designs

Most national probability samples are what we call complex sample designs. They may involve elements of stratification and clustering. If you are doing a national survey that involves face-to-face interviews, you may first randomly sample a group of 50 counties proportional to size. Sampling proportional to size simply means that a county with a large population has a higher probability of being selected than a county with a small population. As a second stage, you may randomly sample 20 blocks within each county, again proportional to size. As a third stage, you might randomly select five people from each block. This results in a sample of $50 \times 20 \times 5 = 5,000$ people. This is a probability sample, but it is not a simple random sample. Why use this complex sample design? The cost savings are huge. You only need to have an interview staff in 50 counties and, within the counties, only 20 blocks. When doing interviews within a block, if a person is not available, the interviewer has four other people close by who might be available.

A researcher using a national survey needs to incorporate the design features into the analysis. Few family scholars have done this and thus findings can be quite biased. The people who live on the same block (cluster) are going to be more homogeneous than people selected at random from the United States. More than likely, neighbors have similar education levels, income, and ethnicity. They also share a common culture to a greater extent than people selected randomly from across the United States. It is important to adjust for the dependencies caused by the clustering. The effects of not weighting are equally problematic when we are trying to estimate a population central tendency. If the groups we oversampled have below average income, without weighting we will underestimate the true average income. Weighting can be ignored in certain situations.

If the relationship between variables is the main focus then weighting might be left out. This may be okay if the relationships are the same for your subgroup as they are for all other subgroups. With standard statistical software such as Stata (2009), SAS, and even SPSS with an add-on module, adjusting for complex sample designs is available for a variety of statistical procedures. To date, however, most publications have failed to incorporate the sampling design in the analysis.

Presenting Sampling Methods

In presenting the results of our analyses, it is important to describe the method of sampling. Using a national secondary data source is no excuse to ignore the sample design. Readers of an article should have a clear understanding of who was sampled, where they were sampled, how they were sampled, and why they were sampled. Often a table of demographic information that compares your sample with population characteristics is sufficient and recommended. This simple addition, if editors were to require it, would improve the quality of articles printed in our field.

We will only briefly mention the variety of data collection methodologies used in family research. These include face-to-face interviews, mailed questionnaires, telephone interviews, and Internet-based surveys. Each of these has advantages and disadvantages. Face-to-face interviews have reactivity between the interviewer and participants where characteristics of the interviewer may bias responses (see, e.g., Williams, 1994). Telephone interviews reduce this bias but must keep possible response options quite simple and the increasing number of people with only cell phones also presents a problem as it is illegal to solicit cell phones. All approaches have problems with individuals refusing to participate, and this is especially serious with Internet surveys. Individuals who refuse to be interviewed may be very different from those who agree to. This will introduce bias in the findings. Any information about refusals is helpful.

A final issue in sampling is the amount of incentive each participant is provided. Participants

deserve some compensation for their participation, however the amount of compensation may be too little or too large. A study focusing on families whose incomes are below 200% of the poverty level that offers a \$100 incentive to participate could be paying too much. Participants may feel they have no choice, rendering the incentive tantamount to a bribe. This compromises the meaning of voluntary participation. Researchers should disclose information about the compensation when presenting their results.

Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs

Experimental and quasi-experimental studies are rarely used in family studies. One reason for this is that it is hard to manipulate the types of independent variables family scholars study. Evaluation research is one area where experimental and quasi-experimental designs are being used. The work done by Patterson and colleagues at the Oregon Social Learning Center are good examples of this (Marion, Forgatch, Patterson, Degarmo, & Beldavs, 2009; Patterson, Chamberlain, & Reid, 1982). The most important application of these design techniques is in studies that involve an intervention such as an approach to counseling. A true experiment requires randomization of participants to the different conditions. A waitlist is often used in a randomized trial where those in the control group are offered the program content after the data for the study is collected.

Randomization and Random Sampling

Random sampling deals with how your sample was selected from the population and deals with external validity or the generalizability of your sample. Although random samples are rare, we often have a complex sample design where each participant has a known probability of being selected. These are called probability samples rather than random samples. Random assignment (or randomization) refers to using a random process to assign participants to each condition and deals with internal validity. Separately, each technique does something different. A study of the relationship

between infidelity and divorce in a national probability sample may be generalizable to the nation (external validity). The problem is that infidelity cannot ethically be randomized (internal validity), and so other traits of individuals that cheat on a spouse might be responsible for both the divorce and the infidelity. A second study of a voluntary sample where couples were randomly assigned to receive a positive or negative topic to discuss and then the couples' emotional closeness was measured has the benefit of randomization. However, the findings cannot be generalized to a large population. In the case that neither randomization nor random samplings are used, both causality and generalizability are problematic.

More on Experiments and Quasi-Experiments

A quasi-experiment lacks randomization. If participants have not been randomized then it is possible that pretest differences in variables other than the variable of interest could be the cause of relationships among variables. It is important to remember that randomization does not protect against all threats of internal validity. Participants in the control group may develop a correct or incorrect understanding of the purpose of the study and change behavior based on the understanding. For example, control group participants in a study of marital communication skills may look online for ideas (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002).

An important way to avoid this issue is by measuring how well your control and experimental groups actually remained control and experimental groups. School interventions are a good example because of the alternative programs available to schools. During the course of an intervention, control schools might implement a different but overlapping program. For example, a new drug and alcohol prevention program is tested in a series of schools and the control schools start the D.A.R.E. program half way through the study. The design is no longer treatment and control, but treatment A vs. partial treatment B. Measures of the level of fidelity of the implementation need to be included for the experimental condition, but may also be needed for the control group if any contamination is possible.

A concern of any experiment or quasi-experiment is the duration of effects. Once a treatment has ended, how long do the effects of the treatment last? Do they persist for 6 months, 2 years, or a lifetime? The test of the longevity of affects needs to be worked into the design from the beginning of the study. A pretest and posttest require a follow-up test.

Power

Whether using a survey or an experimental approach, the statistical power of your analysis is important. Family researchers pay attention to type-one error, relying on results being statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Very few published articles address the issue of power, which is an important complement of statistical significance. Statistical power refers to the ability to obtain a statistically significant result when the true result is a difference or relationship that the researcher considers substantively significant. If our sample is too small, we lack power to show a result is statistically significant even when there is an important real difference. By contrast, if our sample is very large, we have power to demonstrate a result is statistically significant even when it is substantively trivial.

Consider a comparison of the time fathers and mothers spend each evening playing with their children. First, we need to decide how much of a difference is substantively important. We will say a difference of one half of a standard deviation is important. This is generally regarded as a medium effect whereas 0.2 standard deviations would be a small effect and 0.7 standard deviations would be a large effect (Cohen, 1988). How many observations do we need to have a power of 0.80? Figure 4.1 illustrates this showing that for a power of 0.80 we need about 128 people. Assuming we select the same number of women as men we would need 64 women and 64 men. If we did this study over and over again, we would expect about 80% of the studies would have a statistically significant difference at the 0.05 level, when there was a 0.5 standard deviation difference between the women and men.

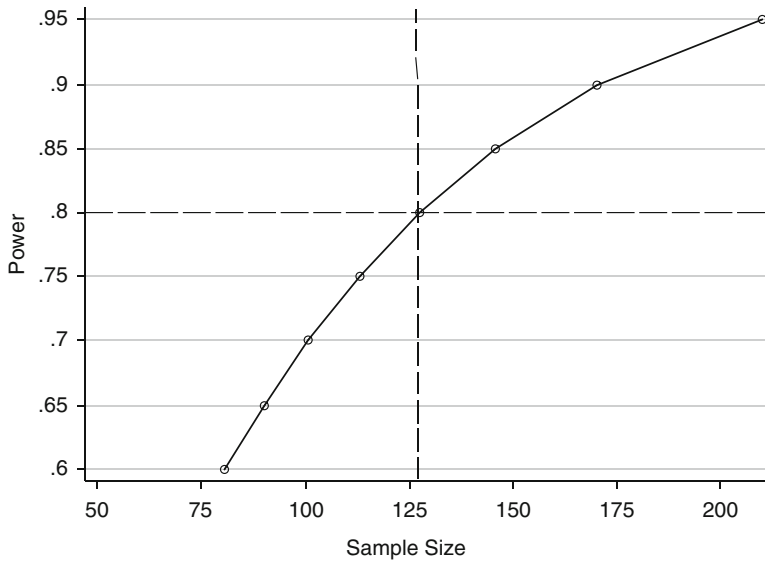


Fig. 4.1 Relationship between sample size and power

What if you can only afford to study 40 women and 40 men? Your power would be just ~ 0.60 . In other words, you face a 40% risk of finding an insignificant result when there really is a moderately strong difference. Would you be willing to go through all the work to do such a study when the risk of failure was this great? If such a study finds no significance gender difference, there is little confidence this was because there really was no difference. Many funding agencies insist on a power analysis before they will fund a project. There is little justification to fund an under-powered study that has a high risk of failure. Conversely, the funding agency may be reluctant to fund an extremely large and costly study when they feel a study with a much smaller sample would have ample power. Some funding sources would like to see a power of at least 0.80 and others would want a power of 0.90.

Can you have too much power? Not really, so long as you are sensitive to potential misinterpretations of statistical significance. Imagine you are doing the same comparison of time women and men spend playing with their children, but you are using a large national survey that included 6,500 women and 6,500 men. You find the difference is statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

Does this mean the difference is substantively significant—is it important? We don't know from this information, because with a sample this large you have a power of over 80% to detect a statistically significant difference when the actual difference is trivial—0.05 of a standard deviation. If the standard deviation of time spent with the child were 10 minutes, this would be a difference between women and men of just 30 seconds would be statistically significant.

The solution to the potential problem is to interpret the size of the statistically significant difference you observe in terms of its substantive importance. If the observed difference is trivial then the statistically significant result is also trivial. What is statistically significant is that the finding is unimportant. Some large studies misinterpret results as important when they are statistically significant without first making a substantive interpretation of the effect size.

Imagine having an intervention to increase emotional support that fathers give to expecting mothers. The mean for your control group that does not receive any intervention is 50 with an $SD=10$. The mean for your treatment group is 51 and it also has an $SD=10$. The effect size using Cohen's d is 0.1. Figure 4.2 shows

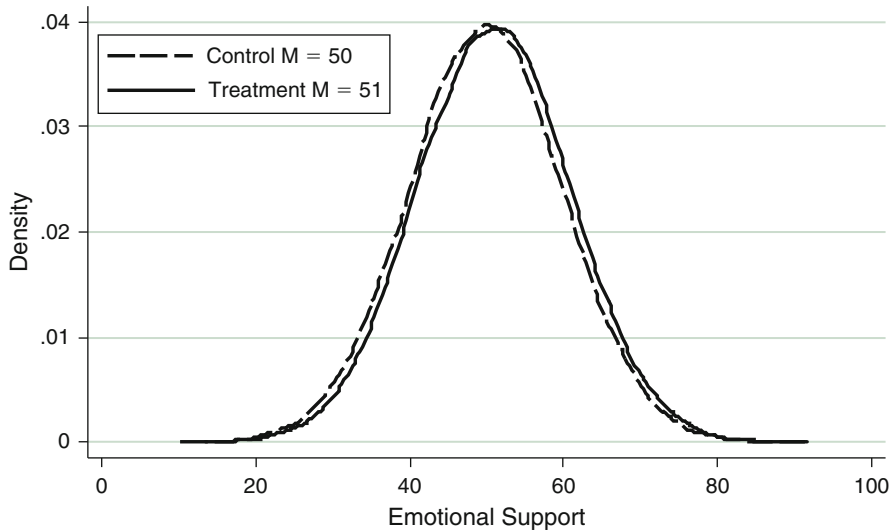


Fig. 4.2 A small effect

hypothetical data that is approximately normal for a sample of 5,000 in the control condition and 5,000 in the treatment condition. With such a large sample, the difference is statistically significant, $t(9,998) = -5.60$, $p < 0.001$. An inspection of the two distributions in Fig. 4.2 tells us that the result is extremely significant statistically, and with a $d = 0.1$, that we can be confident that the effect is very weak. Indeed, in this hypothetical data, 45% of the participants in the control group scored above the mean score for the treatment group.

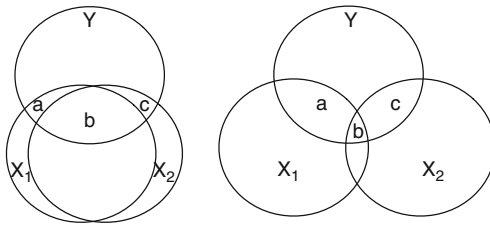
Great progress has been made in estimating statistical power. A free software program called G*Power 3 (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007) does this for many types of analysis. For more complex analyses and especially those with missing data, it is helpful to estimate power using a simulation. In a simulation, the researcher provides a model with estimates that would be considered important. Then a hypothetical population is generated based on these parameter estimates. The next step is to draw many random samples, 1,000 or more, from this hypothetical population. The proportion of these samples that have statistically significant results is the estimate of power (see Davey & Savla, 2009).

Multicollinearity

Many variables are often needed to predict an outcome about family life. Many family and individual variables could be at play, including parental conflict, income, mother's education, and emotional support of the child. When pairs or combinations of predictors are highly correlated, it is difficult to separate their individual effects. Sometimes they cancel each other out and neither is significant. Sometimes one of them is highly significant and the other one, that is almost as important, become insignificant. Multicollinearity is evaluated using the variance inflation factor (vif), a reflection on how much the standard errors are inflated due to the multicollinearity. Family researchers often use a statistic called tolerance that is $1/\text{vif}$. Tolerance is the variance in each predictor that is not explainable by the other predictors. If your set of predictors explains 95% of the variance in a single predictor, then only 5% of its variance is available to explain the outcome variable. When our variables contain substantial measurement error, that 5% may be mostly measurement error.

The meaning of multicollinearity is perhaps clearer in Fig. 4.3. On the left, Panel A, we have

Panel A: High Collinearity Panel B: Low Collinearity

**Fig. 4.3** Multicollinearity

two predictors X_1 and X_2 that are highly correlated. Perhaps these are the marital satisfaction of the wife and her husband. We are predicting an outcome variable, Y . Most of what X_1 explains is also explained by X_2 (labeled b in the figure). X_1 only gets credit for what it contributes uniquely, the sliver labeled a . There is no way to decide how to allocate the shared or joint effect area, b , so multiple regression simply does not try to allocate it. The figure on the right, Panel B, shows what happens when there is not a lot of correlation between X_1 and X_2 . In that case, the shared explanatory power becomes minimal and what can be allocated to X_1 , labeled a , is much larger. When there is a lot of multicollinearity, a rule of thumb is a vif should be less than 10 or the tolerance should be greater than 0.10, you may have a substantial R^2 even though each predictor seems to have very little direct effect.

Solutions to multicollinearity are sometimes available. When two variables, say X_1 and X_2 enter into an interaction (X_1X_2) term, the individual variables will be highly correlated with their product. Many researchers center their variables prior to generating the interaction term to mitigate this problem, where $x_1 = X_1 - M_{X_1}$ and $x_2 = X_2 - M_{X_2}$. Sometimes when there are several highly correlated variables, a composite score can be used or the variables can be included in a factor model. Multicollinearity is not always a serious problem. If you have a set of control variables and are not interested in their individual effects but simply need to control for them, multicollinearity within the set of controls (but not between them and the primary independent variables) is not a serious problem.

Attrition

The increase in longitudinal analysis in family studies means that attrition is an enormous problem. Attrition occurs when participants who start the study, drop out. The reasons for their dropping out are rarely random. People who find an intervention disagreeable are more likely to drop out. People who have personal problems such as being clinically depressed are more likely to drop out. People in a control condition are often more likely to drop out. Without considering attrition, the findings can be highly biased.

An author is obligated to provide detailed information on attrition. How many people were present at the start? How many of these people were present at each subsequent wave of measurement? There should be data on relevant background variables for all initial participants. It is then possible to compare the people who drop out to those who stay for the length of the study. Do more men drop out? Do people who are less motivated drop out? If there is a control group, are members in this group more likely to drop out? By identifying the variables for which there are substantial differences, it is possible to include scores on those variables as covariates. In epidemiology and medical research an approach called intent to treat is becoming standard. This strategy is based on the effect for people you intend to treat regardless of whether they dropped out for any reason (see Lachin, 2000).

One major mistake with attrition is the use of listwise or casewise deletion that occurs in panel studies where people are measured at 3, 4, 5, or more waves. For example, we might measure adolescents at the start of each grade from grade 7 to grade 12. If a student were measured every year except the ninth grade, the student would be dropped because of incomplete data. Eliminating such a student destroys the data you have for the student for five of the sixth years. Excluding that student gives you less information to estimate the statistics for each of those waves and will likely bias your results.

Missing Values

Missing values occur when participants in a survey or experiment simply do not answer questions. In longitudinal studies, missing values can also occur when participants are not available to answer any questions at one or more waves of data collection. It is not unusual for 30–50% of participants to have some values missing. There are many reasons why the values may be missing. You have people who accidentally skip an item. On the day that a questionnaire is administered in a school, you may have 10% of the children absent. Some questions involve sensitive information (frequency of oral sex, for example) and participants may refuse to answer.

Types of Missing Values

There are three types of missing values. Missing completely at random (MCAR) means just that. You might be doing a survey of preadolescents and each child gets a random sample of 70% of the items. This might be done to keep the questionnaire short enough to match the attention span of preadolescents (Graham, Hofer, & MacKinnon, 1996). Missing at random (MAR) means that missing values are explained by the other variables in your survey. Some variables might not be of substantive interest, but are important in explaining the missingness. These other variables, called auxiliary variables, provide the mechanism for predicating missingness. Such variables include gender, age, race/ethnicity, and cognitive ability. Once you control for these auxiliary variables and other variables in your study, the remaining missing values are MAR. There is no test for the MAR assumption because there could always be some variable you did not include that helps explain missingness. At the same time, if you have a wide variety of variables and auxiliary variables in your dataset, the MAR assumption is reasonable. The third type is missing not at random (MNAR). This happens when you fail to meet the MAR condition. When this happens you should make every possible effort to find auxiliary variables that

allow you to treat the data as MAR (Molenberghs, Beuchkens, Sotito, & Kenward, 2008).

Only studies that involve planned missingness are likely to meet the MCAR assumption. The more common situation is to have the MAR assumption be reasonable. Until recently, family researchers have failed to properly report and analyze data that meet the MAR assumption. Listwise deletion, where an observation is dropped if the observation has any missing data, overlooks a wealth of information about the observation and results in ignoring 30–50% of all participants. At best, this is a great loss of statistical power and will return biased results if the missing values are not MCAR.

Multiple Imputation and Full Maximum Likelihood Estimation

Landmark work by Rubin and Little (Little & Rubin, 1987; Rubin, 1987) provided an integrated treatment of multiple imputation as a solution to missing values. Since then, statistical software programs (e.g., SAS, Stata, Mplus, and SPSS) have provided a simplified way of doing this. Although the software solutions vary somewhat in how they impute missing values, all of the solutions provide much better results than earlier approaches. Multiple imputation assumes MAR. It is important to remember that these methods do not make new information. The parameter estimates and their standard errors assume the missing values are consistent with the observed data. They also incorporate a random error for each imputed value to insure that the uncertainty of the imputation process is incorporated. Multiple imputation should not be confused with single imputation procedures that yield biased estimates of the standard errors.

An alternative approach is offered by the structural equation modeling (SEM) programs such as LISREL, EQS, Amos, and Mplus. These statistical packages use a full information maximum likelihood approach that also uses all available information in the dataset. These approaches produce results that are similar to those of multiple imputation (Acock, 2005).

There are certain pitfalls when doing multiple imputation. First, you want to include all variables in that are in your analysis as well as selected auxiliary variables when doing the imputation. Including additional auxiliary variables that either predict the value a person has or predict who will or will not answer the item helps. Adding up to five auxiliary variables that help predict the score and five auxiliary variables that help explain missingness is reasonable. A second concern is that you do not want to push multiple imputation too far. If you have a massive amount of unplanned missing values, it is unlikely that you can justify the MAR assumption.

Some researchers are hesitant to impute missing values on the dependent variable. This is a mistake because the assumptions of the multiple imputation process assume the full covariance matrix is being analyzed. Leaving out any variable violates this assumption. There is a rapidly developing literature on working with missing values. Schafer (1997) provides an accessible book length treatment of multiple imputation. Schafer and Graham (2002) provide guidelines, as do Graham (2009) and Peugh and Enders (2004). Guidelines specific to family research are provided by Acock (2005).

Measurement

To many family scholars, measurement seems to be an unimportant issue. They use a secondary dataset within which they search for items that measure the concepts of interest. They may generate a new scale consisting of 3 or 4 items to measure a complex concept. Since they are analyzing secondary data, it is impossible to do any pretesting. The methods sections of many articles in leading family studies journals pay little attention to measurement. They may report that they used a scale that some other research showed was reliable on a different population. Whether a scale was reliable on some other population is sometimes important, but this is not demonstrating that it is reliable or valid for your population. Rarely is there any evidence of the validity of the measure and even more rarely is such evidence

shown for the study population. The current state of measurement in family studies is inadequate. If there is a normative standard in family research, it is probably to simply report the alpha reliability.

Most statistical procedures such as multiple regression assume perfect measurement in the predictor variables. When there is just one predictor the bias is simple; the greater the measurement error, the lower the correlation. With several predictors, this bias is more complicated. If one predictor has a little measurement error and another predictor has a lot of measurement error, the effect of the predictor with less error may be exaggerated and the effect for the predictor with more measurement error may be underestimated (Acock, 1989). When multicollinearity is a problem, measurement error is especially problematic and much of the independent variance in a variable may be based on errors in its measurement.

The Problem with Alpha

There are two versions of alpha. One of these is unstandardized (estimated using the variances and covariances). The other is standardized (estimated using the correlations of the items). For the standardized version, the formula for alpha is:

$$\alpha = \frac{k\bar{r}}{(k-1)\bar{r} + 1}$$

where k is the number of items and \bar{r} is the mean correlation of the k items. Note that two parameters determine the value of alpha, k and \bar{r} . The larger the average correlation among the items the larger alpha and the more items the larger alpha. Figure 4.4 shows a graph of this relationship between k , \bar{r} , and α .

With an average correlation of just 0.3, alpha reaches the desired value of 0.8 with just 9 items. Going from 10 items to 50 items does not result in much increase in alpha, but even with an average correlation of 0.5, a 3-item scale will not reach an alpha of 0.8. Alpha, a measure of internal consistency, is the most widely reported measure of reliability. If you have 50 items that have a mean correlation of 0.10, your alpha will

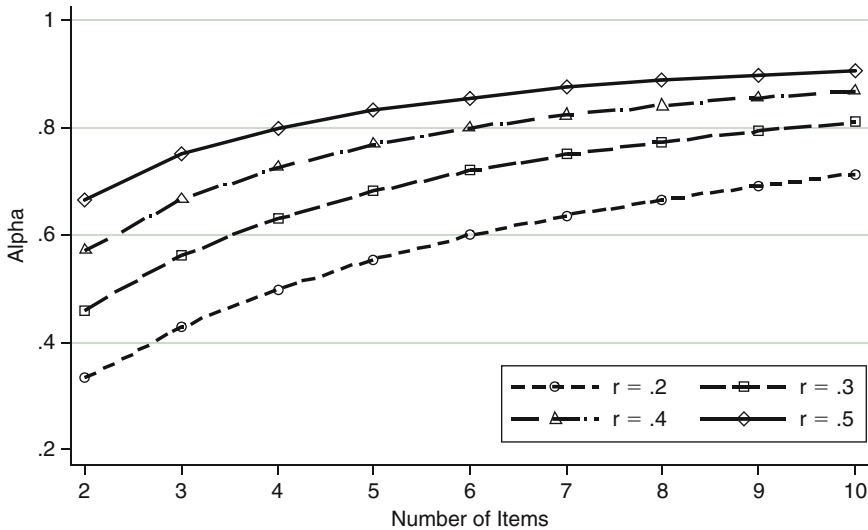


Fig. 4.4 Relationship between k , r

be good, i.e., over 0.80. This is because you have so many items even though they do not have much in common. Remember that when you square 0.10 you get 0.01 meaning that 1% of the variance in a pair of items is shared and 99% is not. These items, in spite the high alpha do not have much in common. When a researcher reports a high alpha for a scale consisting of 50 items, this does not automatically mean the scale is good. It is reliable, but pairs of items might not share much in common.

We can select items to maximize alpha by adding a couple items that will be highly correlated. The most efficient way to do this is to add items that have similar means and standard deviations to the items we already have. If we have three items with a mean of about 3.0 and a standard deviation of about 1.5 on a 1–5 scale, we need to add items with similar means and standard deviations. Essentially, we increase alpha by adding items that are largely redundant. In so doing, we increase our alpha to an acceptable standard, say 0.80, but still do a bad job of measuring real differences between people. Even when we add items, the items we add tend to differentiate people who are in the middle of the distribution from each other rather than people who are at the ends of the distribution. This results in a serious trun-

cation of variance where our measured variance is much less than the true variance of the concept. Truncated variance leads to small correlations and insignificant findings.

Consider a measure of satisfaction with the sexual relationship you have with your partner. The underlying continuum from very dissatisfied to very satisfied is shown in Fig. 4.5. Say we have a sample of just five people, Jim, Juan, Sonya, Maria, and Dre. Let's imagine we knew their true score on the scale, represented by the location of their names along the continuum.

Jim's true score is 0, Dre's is just under 2, Juan is between 3 and 4, Maria is a bit over 4, and Sonya is a 6. Our five items, labeled A, B, C, D, and E, are arranged by their degree of difficulty. The easiest item to endorse by agreeing or strongly agreeing is item A. Since Juan, Maria, and Sonya have higher true scores than Jim or Dre, this item distinguishes them as more satisfied with their sexual relationship. Notice, we have no item that helps us show that Dre is more or less satisfied than Jim. Three of our five items, B, C, and D, let us distinguish very closely between Juan and Maria. These items give us largely redundant information. If we replaced items B, C, or D with an item that was easier, say between 0 and 1, we could use it to discern between Jim,

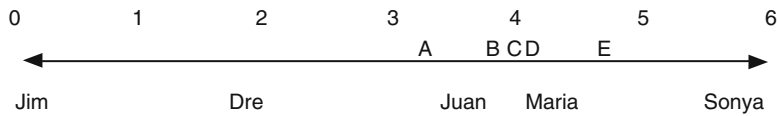


Fig. 4.5 Relationship between true score and degree of item difficulty

who is miserable, and Dre, who is somewhat dissatisfied. Without such an item, Jim and Dre will have the same response pattern and our scale will miss an important difference.

A common example given by measurement experts who use Rasch Modeling is measuring how high a person can jump. If each person is given five jumps, but the height of the obstacles to jump over are all between 3.5 and 4 ft, how useful is our measure? It is great if we want to distinguish between people who can jump 3.5 ft and those who can jump slightly more. It is terrible if we want to measure how high competitive athletes can jump or people with some serious limitation on their ability to jump. We need to have a series of items that lets us differentiate people across the full spectrum of the concept we are measuring.

Another byproduct of our reliance on alpha is that many of our scales result in highly skewed distributions. Scales that do a poor job of differentiating people at the ends of the continuum tend to have a big lump near the top (or bottom) of the distribution. We see this with marital satisfaction where a large number of people strongly agree that they are satisfied. Surely some of the people selecting the strongly agree response are more satisfied than others. By putting a premium on additional items that provide redundant information, and hence are highly correlated with existing items, we fail to ask the type of questions needed to differentiate people at the extremes.

Dimensions of a Measure

Is there a single underlying continuum on which we can locate people such as the one illustrated in Fig. 4.5? Consider marital satisfaction. Can a single score represent such a complex concept? Perhaps, but only in the most general sense can multiple dimensions be represented by a single score. Graduate students taking the GRE get a score on Quantitative ability and a score on

Verbal ability as well as a total score. Suppose Juanita has a 780 on the quantitative section and a 350 on the verbal and Rick has a score of 350 on the quantitative and 780 on the verbal for the same total score. If you were selecting for a math program, would you say they were equally qualified because they both had a total score of 1,130?

We have the same problem when we use a scale to measure marital satisfaction. Juanita may be highly satisfied with the sexual aspect of her marriage, somewhat satisfied with the parenting role, somewhat dissatisfied with the division of labor for housework, and completely dissatisfied with the emotional support she receives. Rick may have a very different pattern, but both of them may have the same total composite score. They have very different marriages and very different relationships, but we would measure them as having the same.

Many measurement experts argue that if you have more than one dimension you should have more than one scale (Furlow, Ross, & Gangé, 2009; Kirisci, Hsu, & Yu, 2001). Just like the math GRE may be more important than the verbal GRE for predicting performance in a math program, different dimensions of marital satisfaction may have different consequences. The total score glosses over these distinctions and leads to weak predictive power.

Others argue that creating many small measures is not the answer (Cheng, Wang, & Ho, 2009). In particular, it is argued that bandwidth (the amount measured) and fidelity (the accuracy of measurement) are often conflicting. If we have large bandwidth (with multidimensional measures), then we sacrifice fidelity. If we have good fidelity (a measure of a single dimension), we lose out on bandwidth.

If you feel there is a higher, general dimension of marital satisfaction and that specific dimensions such as financial security reflect the general dimension, you might want to do a second order confirmatory factor analysis to measure marital

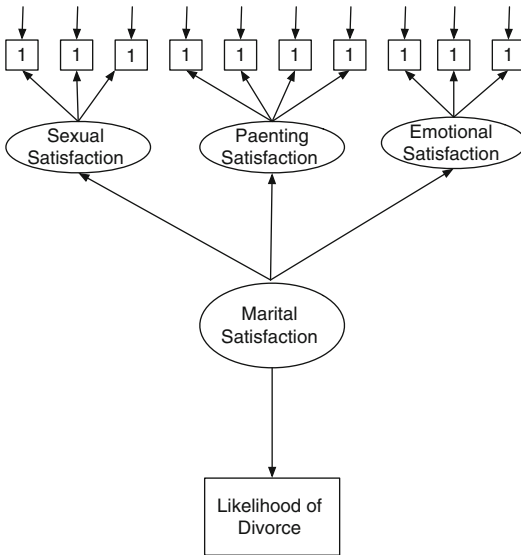


Fig. 4.6 Second order confirmatory factor analysis

satisfaction. This is illustrated in Fig. 4.6 where marital satisfaction leads to the likelihood of divorce. Those who argue that you need a single dimension would use multiple regression of the specific dimensions of marital satisfaction to predict the likelihood of divorce. If you believe that a second order factor exists, then either a multidimensional Rasch model or Item Response Theory (IRT), or a SEM model would be your best avenue for controlling for this. These approaches are rarely reported in family research.

Family studies are at the stage of development where substantial improvements in the strength of findings are possible by focusing measurement on a single dimension. Both factor analysis and principal component analysis allow us to see if a set of items is measuring a single dimension or multiple dimensions. If researchers do such analysis, it is rarely reported in journal articles. When there are two or more dimensions, the best measurement may be to have separate scales, each representing a different dimension.

Rasch Modeling and Item Response Theory

Rasch modeling and IRT offer related, but competing, alternatives to scale development.

Items are picked all along the continuum and thus allow us to differentiate people at both ends of the distribution as well as those in the middle of the distribution. This gives us more variance in the concept and potentially more explanatory power. Many popular scales used in family studies only differentiate within 1 SD of the mean where scales developed using Rasch modeling or IRT seek to differentiate people from 3 SD below the mean to 3 SD above the mean. These two methods assume a latent construct is being measured and estimate the item difficulties and participants score. For an accessible treatment and introduction to Rasch modeling and IRT see Bond and Fox (2007).

Validity

There are several types of validity that could be discussed in publications, but that rarely are. These include face validity, content validity, criterion validity (concurrent and predictive), and construct validity. Space does not permit giving them adequate coverage. Fortunately, they are discussed in many texts and there are two exceptionally useful treatments of them (American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, & National Council on Measurement in Education, 1999; Shadish et al., 2002). The point we want to stress is that these are rarely mentioned when a new measure is utilized in an article. Validity goes hand in hand with reliability, and a reliable yet invalid measure is just as useless as an unreliable yet valid measure. As Family Science reaches maturity in the fields of behavioral and social sciences it is important that we present clear measures of the constructs we are studying.

Statistical Procedures

Levels of Measurement

Historically, a great deal has been written about levels of measurement since the seminal work of Stevens (1946). Nominal level refers to classification where no ordering of the classes is merited. For example, gender is a dichotomous

nominal variable and marital status (married, divorced, cohabiting, widow) is an example of a polychotomous nominal variable. Where an outcome is dichotomous the most common model uses logistic regression. Where it is polychotomous the appropriate analysis is multinomial logistic regression.

Many variables we study are somewhere between being ordinal and being interval. An ordinal variable is a series of categories that are ordered such as strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. An interval measure is a numeric variable such as temperature Fahrenheit where the differences between values are equal, e.g., 50° is 10 more than 40° and 20° is 10 more than 10°. We can, of course, assign numerical values to an ordinal scale, e.g., strongly agree=4, agree=3, disagree=2, and strongly disagree=1. However, the difference between 3 and 2, agree vs. disagree, may be much greater than the difference between 4 and 3, strongly agree vs. agree. The difference between 4 and 3 or 2 and 1 may depend partially on personality rather than a real difference of opinion. That is, some people are yea-sayer or naysayers and pick the most extreme option to any question and other people are temperamentally reluctant to pick an extreme option on any question.

There are procedures for analyzing ordinal data such as ordinal logistic regression, but these are not widely used by family researchers. More often, family researchers treat ordinal variables as if they were interval. This has been shown to produce consistent findings and regression results for interval level variables have simpler interpretations than those for ordinal regression.

The area where the most grievous problem occurs is when the outcome being predicted is a count of rare event. How often did you strike your spouse? How often did you drink more than 5 beers in the last month? Ordinary least squares and related procedures that assume normality are inappropriate. These variables often conform to a Poisson distribution where the mean and variance are equal or negative binomial distribution where the variance is greater than the mean. The appropriate procedures are Poisson regression or Negative Binomial Regression. These options are

available in many statistical packages including SAS, Stata, and Mplus and can be utilized for many types of analysis including growth curves (Long & Freese, 2006).

A second option with count variables is using a POMP (Percent Of Maximum Possible) score. A POMP score is simply the count for each participant divided by the total count that is possible, or perhaps the highest count recorded. This might have the effect of creating a more normal distribution, but that is not guaranteed. Once you make the transformation, the interpretation of parameters is easier. See Cohen, Cohen, Aiken, and West (1999) for more information.

Another type of measure occurs when we have count variables that have an “excess” of zeros. Consider the question above about how often you struck your spouse in the last month. Most participants will say zero times. This would be a count of a rare event, but it is also a zero inflated count. There are two-part regressions where a logistic regression is done to predict who has done the behavior at all and a Poisson or negative binomial regression is done simultaneously for the subsample that have done the behavior at least once.

Programs such as Stata make it very easy to estimate these models for zero inflated Poisson regression and zero inflated negative binomial regression. The procedures estimate who is always zero where the behavior is not part of their repertoire and how often people do the behavior. Factors that predict the onset of marital violence, for example, might be separate from factors that predict the frequency of such violence.

Many of our measurements are censored. The distributions will be skewed with a large clump of participants at the top or bottom. Garrison Keillor in the Prairie Home Companion radio show tells us that in the mythical town of Lake Wobegon all the children are above average. When we ask parents to report on the well-being of their children we often find a distribution like the children in Lake Wobegon. If we have a 5-point scale, we will have a cluster of high scores with very few low scores. If we think the true distribution is not so skewed we could utilize censored regression to estimate the true relationships. On marital satisfaction we have many people giving

the most positive response—but some of these people are likely much more satisfied than others—we just don't ask sufficiently challenging questions to make these distinctions.

A final measurement issue is how researchers sometimes collapse their data. They may have a scale that ranges from 1 to 10. They collapse the data so 1–5 is a 0 and 6–10 is a 1. They may dichotomize at some other value such as the median or the mean. When is this appropriate? When is it inappropriate? This is a reasonable thing to do if the researcher has no confidence in the variance. S(he) needs to say that a score of 1 and a score of 5 are the same—no difference since both are assigned the single value of 0. If this assumption is unreasonable, then collapsing the data will destroy meaningful variance.

Another occasion for collapsing data is when there is a checklist of behaviors such as problem behaviors and all of them are problematic. If the researcher is interested in whether there are any problem behaviors rather than the number of problem behaviors then we might collapse the data so a person checking any of the behaviors is recorded as having a problem behavior and only those who check none of the behaviors are recorded as not having a problem behavior. Of course, treating the number of problem behaviors as a Poisson model or a zero inflated Poisson model would offer more information.

Mediation and Moderation

Many questions cannot be answered by a single equation but involve two or more equations. This happens when we have one or more intervening variables that mediate the effect of our predictor on our outcome. For example, divorce has been linked with problem behavior in adolescents. However, the direct effect of divorce may be mediated by other variables including household income, involvement of non-resident parent with the child, and continued parental conflict. After a divorce the household income of the resident parent may be reduced, the non-resident parent may or may not be involved with the child, and conflict between the parents may continue or not.

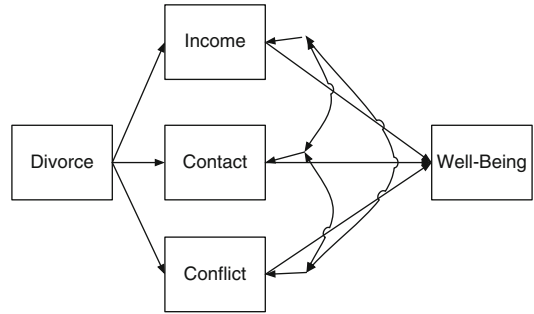


Fig. 4.7 Mediation model

The level of income, non-resident involvement, and parental conflict are more proximate causes of well-being than is the divorce itself. These variables are said to mediate the effect of the divorce. This is illustrated in Fig. 4.7 where divorce has no direct effect on well-being once we control for household income, nonresident contact, and parental conflict.

The curved lines are included because the variance in income, contact, and conflict that is not fully explained by divorce will tend to be correlated. This lack of independence needs to be incorporated in the model. We could estimate this model using seemingly unrelated regressions, but family researchers more commonly use SEM. SEM programs such as Mplus (Muthén & Muthén, 2009), LISREL (Mels, 2009), EQS (Byrne, 2006), and Amos (Arbuckle, 2009; Byrne, 2009) can do this for outcomes that are continuous, categorical, or counts. We evaluate a model such as the one in Fig. 4.7 using a few simple rules.

1. The predictor (divorce) is significantly correlated with the mediators (e.g., income).
2. The predictor (divorce) is significantly correlated with the outcome (child well-being).
3. The mediators are each significantly correlated with the outcome (child well-being).
4. The direct effect of the predictor (divorce) on the outcome (child well-being) controlling for the mediators (e.g., income) is not significant (the effect of divorce is mediated by income, contact, and conflict).
5. Or, the direct effect of the predictor (divorce) on the outcome (well-being) controlling for

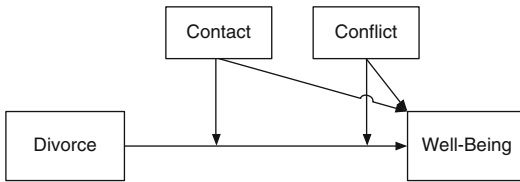


Fig. 4.8 Moderating model

the mediators (e.g., income) is substantially smaller than the direct effect of the predictor when you do not control for the mediators (the effect of divorce is partially mediated by income, contact, and conflict).

The most common result is partial mediation where part of the effect of divorce on well-being is direct (not shown in Fig. 4.7) and part is indirect. In this example there are three indirect effects, the first of which is divorce \rightarrow income \rightarrow well-being. When we estimate an indirect effect, it is important to test its significance. Many articles in family journals report that there is an indirect effect without reporting its size or its level of significance (MacKinnon, Fairchild, & Fritz, 2007; Ridenour et al., 2009).

Moderation is a technical term used by many family scholars to describe what statisticians call statistical interaction. A researcher may feel that the effects of divorce are moderated by having nonresident parental contact with the child and, at the same time having minimal continued parental conflict (see Fig. 4.8). That is, when the nonresident parent stays involved with the child and there is little parental conflict, the children will have better post divorce well-being than if the nonresident parent disengages from the child or continues to fight with the resident parent. This is different from mediation in that the moderators change the relationship between divorce and well-being. The relation is stronger or weaker depending on the level of contact and conflict. The moderation effect is estimated by adding interaction terms to the regression equation. In this case we would estimate the equation:

$$\hat{Y} = a + B_1X_1 + B_2X_2 + B_3X_3 + B_4X_1X_2 + B_5X_1X_3$$

where \hat{Y} is the child's well-being, X_1 is the parents divorce status, X_2 is the level of parent child

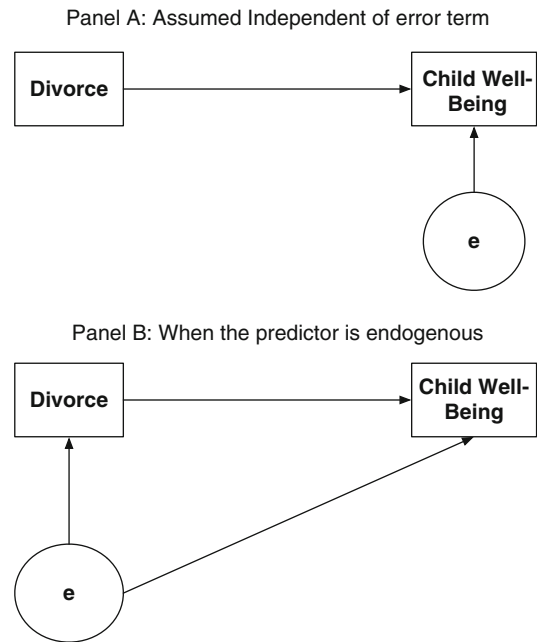


Fig. 4.9 Endogenous regressors

contact, and X_3 is the level of parental conflict. The two product terms represent the interaction effect. Notice that we have a main effect for X_2 and X_3 included whenever they appear in an interaction term. We have not covered centering or other important statistical issues when studies involve moderation; these are developed in Cohen, Cohen, Aiken, and West (2003).

A variable may be both a mediator and a moderator. A third model might combine both moderation and mediation by specifying that divorce has direct effects on contact and conflict as well as specifying contact and conflict have a direct effect on well-being, but would also have contact, and conflict moderate the direct effect of divorce on well-being.

Endogenous Regressors

Regression models make the assumption that independent variables are themselves independent of the error term as illustrated in Panel A of Fig. 4.9. In this example, the assumption is saying that everything related to child well-being other than parental divorce is unrelated to parental divorce.

In many family studies' applications this assumption is unreasonable and our regressions yield biased estimates of the effect of the predictor. That is, we do not know whether a significant effect of divorce on child well-being is because of divorce or because of common antecedent causes as shown in Panel B. What would some of these be? Poverty and a spouse that abuses the child come to mind. These variables are associated with both divorce and child well-being. We need to include all such variables in our model or identify an instrumental variable that directly causes divorce but does not directly cause child well-being. We would then estimate the model using an instrumental variable strategy (Cameron & Trivedi, 2009). Family policy research has often failed to consider the endogeneity of predictors, leading to invalid policy recommendations. There has been so much written about the adverse effect of divorce that what we think we know about divorce actually may reflect the adverse effects of other variables that lead to both divorce and the level of child well-being.

Multilevel Models

Over the last decade a new variation of regression has become increasingly important in family research. This is referred to by several names, which contributes to the confusion researchers have about the method. Statisticians usually call these mixed models. Applied researchers often use the term multilevel analysis. A popular statistical package for estimating these models is called Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM) and many family scholars use the name of the program as the label. Whether you want to call it mixed modeling, multilevel modeling, or HLM, it is a very important extension of traditional multiple regression.

In traditional regression we assume the observations are independent. If you have a sample of 500 mothers and measure them on ten variables, each of the mothers is independent of the other 499. If, on the other hand, you have a sample of mothers and fathers, your observations are not independent. The problem is evident when you have a variable such as household income that has exactly the same value for the mother and the father.

Obviously, the two scores are not independent. Even if we have individual level variables such as age, they may not be independent across observations. If the mother is 20 years old in one family and 50 years old in a second family, we can predict that the father will be older in the second family. The mother's age is probably more similar to her husband's age than to a randomly selected man. A coefficient called the intraclass correlation is used to assess the extent of dependence. Unless this coefficient is zero (some say not statistically significant), we need to do some sort of multilevel analysis. Otherwise, we will have a miss-specified model and incorrect standard errors (Atkins, 2005).

We may have variables at several levels. Suppose we are predicting the likelihood of a 20-year old having completed high school. The first level would be individual characteristics such as parental support, supervision, career goals, grade point average, and gender. The second level could be family characteristics such as family income. A third level might be neighborhood characteristics. If 10 of our 20-year olds lived in the same very poor neighborhood with high crime rates and another ten lived in a prosperous neighborhood with low crime rates, these differences could be important. However, all ten individuals in each of these neighborhoods would have the same score on crime rate and other neighborhood variables.

As a researcher, you might feel that variables at each level are important predictors of the likelihood of graduating from high school. This approach is entirely consistent with the ecological theory behind much family research. You should not use traditional regression methods. Multilevel analysis allows you to examine how variables at each level of analysis influence the likelihood of graduation. HLM is a specialized program that is designed explicitly for doing this analysis. Major statistical packages such as SAS or Stata have comprehensive commands that work under a variety of assumptions. SPSS has a limited capability that works for continuous, interval level outcomes. Multilevel analysis can also be approached from an SEM framework and both Mplus and LISREL are widely used for this

purpose. The literature on multilevel modeling is extensive. Raudenbush and Bryk (2002) provide an introduction to HLM, Singer (1998) and Little, Milliken, Stroup, Wolfinger, and Schabenberger (2006) provide useful introductions to SAS' Proc Mixed for multilevel models, and Rabe-Hesketh and Skrondal (2008) do the same for Stata.

Effect Size

Earlier we discussed the over emphasis on statistical significance and an under emphasis on substantive significance in large-scale family research. Increasingly, journal editors are insisting on reporting some measure of the size of the effect along with its statistical significance. Durlak (2009) provides a brief introduction to some of the more common measures of effect size. The U.S. Department of Education has a web resource called What Works Clearinghouse, <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>, that covers a wide variety of procedures including effect size calculations (U.S. Department of Education & Institute for Education Science, 2008).

There are many statistics called measures of effect size and these may disagree with one another (McGrath & Meyer, 2006). Cohen's d or Hedges g are often reported in experimental studies. For survey data, standardized betas are often used to measure effect size. This may or may not be appropriate. Whenever variables are measured on a meaningful scale, it is important to interpret the size of the unstandardized B 's. These tell us how much the dependent variable changes for a one unit change in the independent variable. A focus on unstandardized coefficients is common in other fields but underutilized by family scholars. Imagine an intervention to encourage people to buy energy efficient light bulbs. If the B for the intervention is 3.0 and the dependent variable is the number of energy efficient light bulbs in the household, this has a clear meaning. The intervention increased the number of energy efficient light bulbs by 3.0 per household. Is this a big effect? If you consider that the U.S. has over 100 million households, this intervention would replace 300 million inefficient light bulbs with more efficient

ones. This represents an enormous savings in energy. The researcher could compute the kilowatt hours saved, the reduction in releases to the atmosphere, etc. The researcher would have little interest in whether the standardized beta weight was 0.1, 0.3, or 0.5. Standardized coefficients provide little basis for a serious cost-benefit calculation (Duncan & Magnuson, 2007).

When we have a continuous predictor or dependent variable that is measured on an arbitrary scale it is appropriate to use a standardized beta weight. This happens with scales of attitudes and beliefs. One scale of marital satisfaction might range from 1 to 10 and another from 25 to 57. A one unit change is not equivalent and because the scoring systems have arbitrary ranges, interpreting an unstandardized coefficient may be hard. The beta weight tells us how much the dependent variable changes in standard deviation units for a one standard deviation change in the independent variable. We can use the beta weights to compare the importance of several predictors when the measurement scales do not allow more meaningful consideration of the unstandardized coefficients. Family scholars have an over reliance on standardized coefficients because of the clear norms in the field specifying that under 0.2 is weak, 0.3–0.5 is moderate, and anything above 0.7 is strong. We should always recognize that a more careful interpretation of unstandardized coefficients on variables that have accepted scales is better.

There are misuses of beta weights in the family literature. One of the most common is to compare the beta weights for the same predictor in two groups. Suppose we are interested in the relationship between education and income as this differs for single and married women. The unstandardized B 's tell us how much income is increased for each additional year of education. If single women have a $B=2,000$ and married women have a $B=1,500$, then single women have a bigger payoff for education. We should not, however, compare beta weights for the same variable across groups. The β for single women might be 0.2 and the β for married women might be 0.3. This would not mean education had a bigger payoff for married women than single

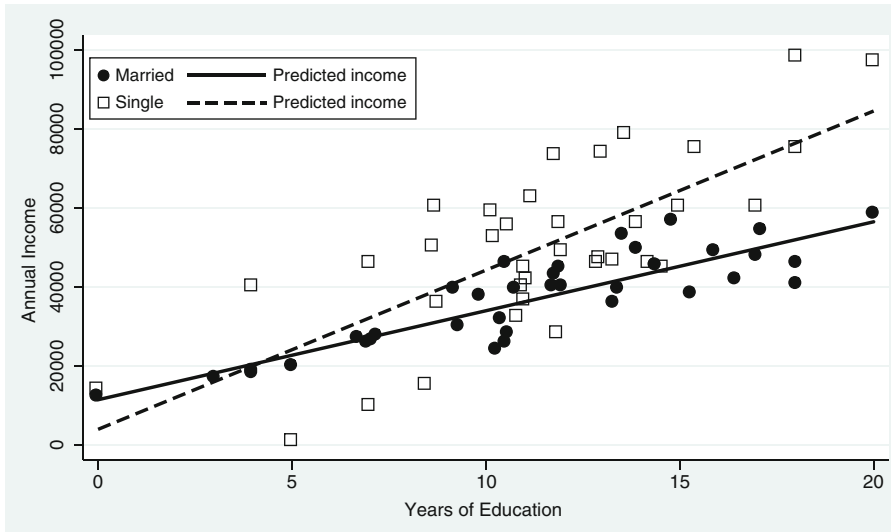


Fig. 4.10 Education and income for married and single women

women—rather we should get that information from the unstandardized B 's. The betas mean that if a single woman has one standard deviation more education than another single woman, she will have 0.2 of a standard deviation more income than that single woman. Notice the standard deviation for both education and income refers only to the sample of single women. If married women have a different standard deviation, then a one standard deviation change for a married woman is not comparable to a one standard deviation change for a single woman.

This problem with standardized beta weights applies equally to correlations. Figure 4.10 shows hypothetical data of the relationship between a married woman's education and her income as well as a single woman's education and her income. The $r=0.87$ for the married women and the $r=0.70$ for the single women. Relying on the correlations, a researcher would mistakenly say that education has more effect on income for married women than it does for single women. As is clear in Fig. 4.10, the black circles for married women are closer to the solid regression line for married women, hence the correlation is high. The hollow squares for single women are more spread around; hence the correlation is lower for single women. What about the payoff of education for income? The regression line for

married women is $\$11,479 + \$2,251$ (Education) and for single women it is $\$3,985 + \$4,027$ (Education). The $B = \$4,027$ for single women is nearly twice as high as the $B = \$2,251$ for married women. This means that for each additional year of education a single woman increases her expected income by $\$4,027$ and each additional year for a married woman increases her expected income by just $\$2,251$ dollars. The point is that you should not compare standardized coefficients such as r 's or β 's to compare the form of the relationship between variables in different groups. Instead, you need to compare the unstandardized coefficients such as B 's, means, and standard deviations.

Another problem with the reliance on standardized coefficients applies when using a binary predictor. Suppose we are estimating the effect of marriage vs. cohabiting on some outcome variable with marriage coded 1 and cohabiting coded 0. A beta weight tells us that as you go up one standard deviation on an independent variable you go up beta standard deviations on the dependent variable. You can be a 0 if you are cohabiting or a 1 if you are married. These are the only meaningful values. Some variables have an underlying continuum that has been collapsed as a 0, 1 dummy variable. It is possible to think of a latent variable for marital status that represents your

propensity to be married rather than cohabiting. Often such interpretations are awkward. A far simpler solution is a semi-standardized beta weight that is standardized only on the dependent variable. A semi-standardized beta of 0.4 would mean that if you were a 1 on marital status (married) you would be 0.4 standard deviations more satisfied in your marriage than if you were a 0 on marital status. For a dummy variable a one unit change, from zero to one, usually makes more sense than a one standard deviation change. This semi-standardized beta weight was proposed by Stavig and Acock (1981) and has been implemented in Mplus (Muthén & Muthén, 2009) and Stata using commands written by Long and Freese (2006).

Growth Modeling

In the late 1990s and early 2000s there was an explosion of techniques for handling longitudinal data (Bollen & Curran, 2006; Duncan, Duncan, Stycker, Fuzhong, & Alpert, 1999; Muthén, 1991; Preacher, Wichman, MacCallum, & Briggs, 2008; Walker, Acock, Bowman, & Li, 1996). These greatly extended what could be done within a SEM framework. One of the most promising of these methods involves estimating growth curves or growth trajectories. Applied to family scholarship there are endless possible applications. Most family scholars are interested in change and what accounts for change. Growth curves provide greatly enhanced isomorphism between our dynamic theories and our quantitative methods. Growth curve analysis is designed to answer such questions.

Suppose you are interested in what happens to a wife’s level of stress in the first 4 years after her husband has been diagnosed with cancer. You predict that her stress increases linearly from year to year. More complicated models are possible. Figure 4.11 shows that you have measured her stress each of the 4 years, W_1 , W_2 , W_3 , and W_4 . Because your measure of stress is imperfect, you assume there is some measurement error at each wave, e_1 , e_2 , e_3 , and e_4 .

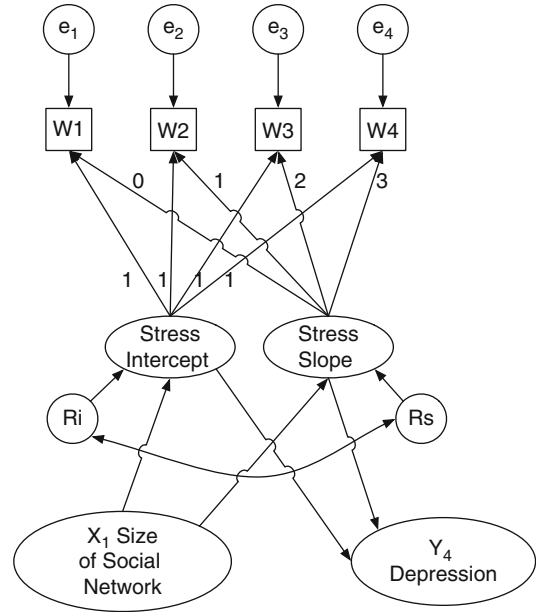


Fig. 4.11 Wife’s stress level

First, you want to identify the growth trajectory for her stress. A linear growth trajectory is defined by two parameters. The intercept reflects the initial level of stress that she had at the start. The slope reflects how much her stress goes up (or down) each year. The intercept and slope represents a fixed effect that applies to everybody.

However, some mothers may start out at a high level of stress and some may start out at a low level. Similarly, some mothers may have an increase in stress (positive slope) and some mothers may have a decrease in their level of stress (negative slope). Thus, both the intercept and the slope can vary across the mothers. We call this the random effect, and R_i represents the random effect (residual variance) for the intercept and R_s represents the random effect (residual variance) for the slope. Once we identify significant random effects, the next step is to explain them using time invariant or time varying covariates. For example, the size of the woman’s social network at wave 1 might explain both differences in the intercept and the slope. Because this is measured at just one time, we treat it as time invariant. It appears as X_1 Size of Social Network.

At the right side of the figure is a measure of maternal depression taken at wave 4. The figure shows a direct effect from the intercept (initial stress) to depression. Wives who have higher stress initially are more likely to have a subsequent high level of depression at wave 4. Depression appears as Y_4 Depression in the figure. The second direct effect is from the stress slope to depression. Wives who have a greater increase in stress will become more depressed than wives who are able to manage their stress more effectively. Notice, that our independent variables are the intercept and slope and not a simple score on a variable. This model would allow us to test how much change in stress influences depression.

This model can be extended in many ways. An extension would involve having a parallel growth curve. We might think of depression as a parallel growth curve rather than an outcome variable. In that case, we would have an intercept and slope for depression. We could test if the intercept on stress influenced the slope on depression and whether the intercept on depression influenced the slope on stress. Sometimes we have a growth curve for variables that are binary or counts. For example, we might do a growth curve where the intercept and slope represent how often the wife has a depressive symptom. All SEM packages can do some things with growth curves, Mplus is especially handy at doing these for categorical and count variables including extensions to zero inflated models.

Growth Mixture Models

Growth mixture models inductively identify subgroups of people who have different growth trajectories. Mixture models use quantitative methods in an inductive process. This approach grows out of latent class and latent profile analysis where subgroups are identified empirically as being homogeneous within each group and heterogeneous between. Using this inductive approach, typologies emerge from the data rather than being imposed on the data. This can be described as a person centered approach rather than a variable

centered approach because it locates groups of people rather than groups of variables as is done with factor analysis (Muthén & Muthén, 2000).

Applied to growth modeling, what emerges are different groups of people who have distinct trajectories. In what has become a modern classic, Muthén and Muthén (2000) did a growth mixture model of excessive drinking for a panel of people from their late teens to when they were in their 30s. They found a normative group that peaked at about age 22 and then dropped off and a deviant group that never engaged in much excessive drinking. The third group mirrored the first group up to age 22, but then they continued at this level. Identifying groups with different trajectories has compelling policy applications. The appropriate intervention and its consequences vary for each of these groups. The ability to predict who will be in each group can result in much more effective interventions.

Growth mixture modeling has many potential applications to family scholarship. For example, a growth mixture model of the level of interpersonal violence in married couples might reveal distinct groupings of couples with sharply different trajectories. The trajectory of many family processes may fall into distinguishable groups. Whatever the trajectory being studied, the follow-up task is identifying time invariant and time varying covariates that predict class membership. Equally important is finding distal outcomes that vary by class membership. Perhaps four classes might emerge for parental conflict: consistently low, consistently high, decreasing, and increasing. What are the adolescent outcomes when the parents are in the consistently low or high trajectory class? Does it matter whether the parents are in the decreasing or increasing trajectory class? A tutorial on growth modeling and growth mixture modeling is available at oregonstate.edu/~acock/growth.

Survival Analysis

Survival analysis deals with whether an event happened as well as when an event happened. It

is specifically designed for censored data, when only a portion of the sample experiences an event in the course of the study. It does require a time variable, so longitudinal data is needed. This use of time allows us to answer when the event is most likely to happen. Specifically, we can use a hazard function, which maps the probabilities of the event happening at a given time point. Using a logistic model, this map can then be predicated using covariates and show how it varies dependent on the covariates. The ability to predict both whether an event happened and when it happened has great significance in family studies. Whether and when a marriage ends in divorce, when a child becomes sexually active (Singer & Willett, 2003), how abuse affects later deviant behavior (Keiley & Martin, 2005) are all questions that are best suited for survival analysis. A logistic regression might give a partial answer to each of these, but would not be able to answer the when questions. For a brief introduction of survival analysis see Keiley and Martin (2005) or for a detailed treatment see Singer and Willett (2003).

A View of Where We Are Going and What We Need to Get There

We have reviewed a wide variety of quantitative procedures with an emphasis on the strategies and procedures that are becoming more prevalent. Quantitative research is moving toward longitudinal research that requires knowledge of SEM, growth curves, mixture models, and survival analysis. Recognition that many of the topics we study must be approached from a multi-level perspective is now widespread and the inappropriate application of traditional regression is becoming unacceptable. The best journals that deal with family research are demanding ever-higher standards for the quantitative analyses they publish.

We have also moved toward expecting a serious consideration of the assumptions of a procedure and the expectation that the most appropriate estimators be used. The choice of estimator now requires consideration of sampling characteristics. Is it a cluster sample? Are some groups underrepresented requiring weighting? Is the dependent

variable a binary, categorical, or count outcome requiring special estimation techniques? Is it reasonable to assume that the independent variable is uncorrelated with the error term?

Attrition needs to be explained and appropriate adjustments incorporated into our models. The *default* use of listwise deletion is being discredited and sophisticated methods of multiple imputation and full information maximum likelihood estimation are becoming expected. There are also increasing expectations to substantively evaluate our results much more carefully than simply reporting what predictors are statistically significant. We now have an arsenal of measures of effect size and a need to provide interpretation of the strength of results. Not the least of the expectations for the substantive significance is the consideration of the duration of effects. This chapter has only introduced the topics that are important for family research. A book length discussion of some of these topics is available in Bakeman et al.'s (2006) treatment of best practices in quantitative methods.

The reliance on a single software program for quantitative analysis has become problematic. It is a mistake to say one software package is the best, because all of them are constantly expanding their capabilities. The package that is best today may be superseded by another package next year. In selecting a general software package, we have several needs. We need to have flexibility to manage large, longitudinal datasets, and manipulate the data. Programs such as SAS, Stata, and SPSS all have at least adequate capabilities. We need packages that work well with complex sample designs and both Stata and SAS are quite good at this. SPSS is far behind them at the time this is written. We need programs that offer effective ways of doing multiple imputation or full information maximum likelihood estimation and that are able to work with different types of outcome variables including binary, categorical, ordinal, and count variables. Both SAS and Stata are quite strong in these abilities and SPSS is likely to improve its own capabilities.

We probably need to have skill with specialized software such as SEM programs. Here LISREL, Mplus, and EQS have comprehensive capabilities

and AMOS has some capabilities. Many family scholars who work with multilevel analysis rely on HLM, which was written explicitly for this type of analysis. Other packages have varying degrees of capability to duplicate or even extend what HLM does including MLwin, SAS, Stata, and Mplus. As with other applications, SPSS has more limited capabilities in this area.

One thing to remember about software is that anything written here applies only to these programs at the time this chapter is being prepared. Other programs such as *R*, which many family researchers find hard to use today, are developing and may soon become easier to use. *R* is unlimited in its expandability as new techniques develop. It is also advisable to have software that is dedicated to measurement including Rasch modeling and IRT. Mplus and Stata have some capabilities, but specialized programs such as Winsteps, Facets, ConQuest, RASCAL, BILOG, and MULTILOG provide far more detailed information for developing a scale.

Unfortunately, many family researchers stop enhancing their quantitative skills once they complete their graduate education. They rely on whatever was taught while in graduate school. The rapid growth in computer speed has gone hand in hand with the rapid growth in complex quantitative techniques. A complex SEM program that ran in half a day just 10 years ago will now run in seconds because of the joint improvement in computer performance and software efficiency.

Graduate programs training the next generation of family scholars vary enormously in the scope of quantitative training they require. Methodological advances are typically published by statisticians and are written for other statisticians. This results in a level of technical difficulty that is extremely challenging for applied researchers. Universities provide ever-increasing pressure to publish but fewer opportunities for professional development. How does a researcher keep up with all technical developments in quantitative methodology? There is positive news. In addition to specialized monographs, there has been a rapid increase in completely free online tutorials. It is impossible to list all of these, but one of the best web resources is the statistical

portal at UCLA (statcomp.ats.ucla.edu/). This site provides researchers with videos, tutorials, and links to a wide variety of Internet resources. They have special topics for most major software packages and even provide the programming code for examples in a number of advanced methods textbooks and monographs.

It is easy to be overwhelmed by the rapid development and we need to constantly remember that the best procedure is the simplest one that is appropriate. The advantage of some of the complex methods we have summarized here is that they are appropriate because they achieve greater isomorphism between your research question, theory, and methods. For example, it is easier to assume there is no measurement error in predictors, but it is possible to estimate the measurement error and incorporate these estimates in your model. It is easier to assume a simple random sample, but it is possible to choose options that give you unbiased results with a complex sample. It is simple to use listwise deletion, but you can get less biased estimates doing multiple imputation. As a researcher you have to choose what you will do as you balance the simplicity of a method with how appropriately it meets your statistical and theoretical assumptions.

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Qualitative Family Research: Enduring Themes and Contemporary Variations

5

Jane F. Gilgun

Contemporary qualitative family research stands on traditions that extend to the beginnings of social science research in the nineteenth century. Many themes have endured until today, molded and shaped by historical forces ascendant in each successive era. The purposes of this chapter are to show the intellectual heritage on which contemporary qualitative family research stands and to examine today's research through a framework based upon enduring themes. In this framework, my focus is on methodologies and methods, or the principles on which research is based (methodologies) and the approaches researchers use to carry out these principles (methods). Through these efforts, I hope to showcase an intellectual heritage and demonstrate continuities and changes over time.

Contemporary qualitative family researchers build upon distinguished traditions. An example of an enduring theme is immersion, where researchers spend extended time with families in order to develop in-depth understandings of meanings, interactions, and contexts over time. Another enduring theme is whether and how qualitative family researchers take critical perspectives and contribute to social change. Critical perspectives include the examination of power relations in families and society along the lines of

gender, age, ethnicity, race, and social class and how social forces and social structures shape governmental policies, cultural practices and beliefs, and individual, family, group, and institutional behaviors. Discussions of methods and methodologies also are enduring themes.

I begin with an overview of the history of qualitative family research. This section shows that today's research builds upon a rich heritage that extends to the origins of social science research. This heritage is a source of enduring principles, methodologies, and methods, as well as a rich vocabulary that qualitative family researchers can use as they explain their work to others. From this overview, I construct an analytic framework that I use to examine contemporary qualitative family research. I show how this heritage has endured, as well as how it has changed over time. I end with a discussion of the implications of the analysis for the future of qualitative family research.

Some History of the Influence of the Chicago School of Sociology

The roots of social research in general and research on families in particular are deep and wide, extending to the origins of social research in the mid-nineteenth century and spanning three continents (Gilgun, 1999, 2012). From its onset, this research focused on poor and working class families, studied families within their social contexts, presented detailed pictures of families

J.F. Gilgun, PhD, LICSW (✉)
School of Social Work, University of Minnesota,
Twin Cities, 105 Peters Hall, 1404 Gortner Avenue,
St. Paul, MN 55108, USA
e-mail: jgilgun@umn.edu

in their multiple contexts, and used multiple methods. This research also was emancipatory, meaning that its purpose was to bring about social reform and improve lives. Some researchers became advocates, while others believed that their results would mobilize public opinion and bring about changes they believed to be just and caring.

Researchers sought deep understanding and multiple, subjective points of view that captured the meanings individuals gave to their experiences. They believed that researchers have first-hand experience of the daily lives of informants, a principle related to immersion. Some researchers, such as Jane Addams, Edith Abbott, and Sophonisba Breckenridge of Hull House in Chicago, made their homes in the communities where they did their research, advocacy, and social intervention projects.

To develop these meanings and to place them in their social contexts, researchers took open-ended approaches that allowed for the development of the broad and detailed information that they sought. Various combinations of case studies of neighborhoods, towns, cities, individuals, and families; as well as surveys; document analysis including examination of archival data; and life histories of individuals were typical methods.

When writing up results, researchers did multi-layered descriptions followed by analysis, with wide variations on the breadth and depth of the analysis. Descriptions usually combined statistical tables and narratives. Typically, the narratives had an immediacy that drew audiences in. The analysis covered researchers' interpretations of the meanings of individual lives within social contexts of interest and the implications of these meanings for social reform in terms of policies, practices, and theories. They paid attention to processes and patterns, clear that human experience varies across individuals, groups, situations, and time.

Some researchers developed theory after detailed examinations of particular data. The theory they developed attempted to account for variations in human experience (cf., Thomas & Znaniecki, 1918–1920/1927). Although they

sought the ideal of universal laws, few believed that their findings were universally applicable. Instead, results and theories had to be adapted to particular situations. Researchers realized results and theories might not fit new situations at all. They believed that each new situation has the potential to lead to the modification of existing theory.

Examples of early qualitative research include the work of LePlay (1855), a French metallurgist and social scientist who did research on families and their economic status in several European countries in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. Other illustrations include the research of Booth (1889, 1903) and Rowntree (1901/1902) in England as well as the work of Jane Addams (1895) and her colleagues in the city of Chicago whose work extended from the end of the nineteenth century into the first two decades of the twentieth Deegan, (1990), finally, much of the research at the University of Chicago during the first third of the twentieth century and often later in the century, too (Bulmer, 1984; Gilgun, 1999). Examples of other early studies were the Pittsburgh survey (Kellogg, 1914b) and the Unemployment Study of 1928 (Calkins, 1930; National Federation of Settlements, 1931).

The earliest of this research was not discipline specific because academic disciplines as we know them today did not exist. Later into the twentieth century, members of various disciplines such as philosophy, sociology, social work, social psychology, education, and anthropology undertook research on families. This was the case in the formation of the Chicago School of Sociology, a term that is a misnomer because its origins are multi-disciplinary.

Methods of social research during much of this history were rarely written down in specialized textbooks. Individuals learned research methods through doing research with more experienced individuals and through reading published studies. Two methods texts of the era were Palmer's (1928) *Field Studies in Sociology: A Students' Manual* and Beatrice and Sidney Webb's (1932) *Methods of Social Study*. Palmer's text pulled together the research methods that Robert Park and Ernest Burgess taught graduate

students at the University of Chicago and that were the principles she followed as she supervised the dissertation research of Chicago Ph.D. students (Bulmer, 1984). The Webbs developed their text out of their work with Booth in London and research they conducted subsequently. The philosophies of science that guided the research were, in general, pragmatism, early symbolic interactionism, and phenomenological approaches that led to the principle of immersion and the significance of the subjective experiences of research participants and researchers and the meanings that they attributed to their experiences.

The master's and doctoral theses that the University of Chicago published as part of the Sociological Series were widely read examples of how Chicago students did their research. These publications included Anderson's (1925) *The Hobo*. Anderson, because of poverty, lived among homeless men, and it was there he gathered his data (Faris, 1967). He had first-hand experience. His work is a classic example of researcher immersion. Frazier (1932, 1939) based his studies of Negro families in Chicago (1932) and the United States (1939) on the methods Thomas and Znaniecki (1918–1920/1927) used in *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*. Frazier's studies used personal documents such as written life histories, agency case records, interviews, and demographic data. In the editor's preface, Burgess (1932) called this work "the most valuable contribution to the literature on the family" (p. ix) since the publication more than 20 years earlier of *The Polish Peasant*.

In conducting their studies, these early researchers met regularly to discuss the material they had gathered and to make sense of it. In this way, they did group interpretations of what they heard, observed, and gleaned from documents. They valued multiple points of view that resulted in findings that showed multiple patterns and interpretations. They routinely used several different methods: interviews, participant observations, document analysis, surveys, and social mapping. In addition, group analysis had the effect of socializing beginning researchers into research processes often without, as mentioned

earlier, the guidance of textbooks and articles. Teaching, therefore, took place primarily in field settings and not in classrooms.

For decades, beginning around the 1930s, quantitative research, often single method research such as surveys and experiments that placed little emphasis on contexts, meanings, theory development, and researcher reflexivity, dominated social sciences in general and family research in particular. Yet, the tradition of multi-method, context-sensitive, emancipatory research, brought to life through the subjective accounts of research informants and researcher immersion in the field, continued, showing up mainly in now classic studies such as Warner and Lunt's (1941) *The Social Life of a Modern Community*, Bott's *Family and Social Network* (1957/1971), Rainwater, Coleman, and Handel's (1959), *Working Man's Wife*, Rainwater's (1970) *Behind Ghetto Walls*, Komarovsky's *The Unemployed Man and His Family* (1940) and *Blue Collar Marriage* (1962), Stack's (1974) *All Our Kin*, among others. The work of Strauss and colleagues (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser, 1978, 1992; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Strauss, 1987) did a great deal to keep traditions of qualitative research alive, although they de-emphasized phenomenological and descriptive aspects of the research traditions on which they built. They focused on theory-building, mixed in with instructions about generic qualitative research. Pockets of qualitative researchers continued the tradition, most being graduates of the University of Chicago or researchers who emulated their research methods and methodologies.

With the advent of postmodernism, starting perhaps in the 1980s or so, themes prominent in early research gained attention and have a larger place in contemporary research than in the recent past (Gilgun, 1999). Many more institutions of higher learning provide training in qualitative methods. Some funders, such as the federal government, at times prefer research that they and others call mixed methods, which is a combination of surveys or experiments with qualitative interviewing and sometimes qualitative case studies. For the most part, today's funders do not

seek a variety of types of qualitative research, but prefer research that follows the principles associated with the research that became prominent in the 1930s. Preference was given to such quantitative issues as reliability and validity, rather than ideas associated with qualitative traditions, such as researcher immersion, the authenticity of representations given to the informants' experiences, and clear connections between concepts and empirical data on which concepts are based (Gilgun, 2002).

Much of today's qualitative research can be linked to the origins of social science research. Before examining contemporary work, I will discuss in some detail the heritage of qualitative research on families. Notably, the term *qualitative* entered the research lexicon up to 70 years after researchers began to conduct interviews, do participant observation, and examine documents of various types. Strauss (1991) who was a graduate student in sociology at the University of Chicago between 1939 and 1944, said

there was a well-entrenched tradition of doing what is now called qualitative research. It's wasn't called by this name then, and there was no self-consciousness about quantitative versus qualitative studies (p. 1).

The name researchers used was fieldwork, a term associated with anthropology, which is a testament to the interdisciplinary nature of early research. Early researchers borrowed methods and ideas from any discipline that offered approaches they viewed as relevant to their purposes. Strauss also attested to the interdisciplinarity and multiple methods approaches characteristic of research done at the University of Chicago.

Chicago theses and monographs might use one or both, or one or the other methods. They also used a variety of data sources: interviews, field observations, archival materials, diaries, government reports and statistics. This department also had close relations with anthropology, and I took a minor in social anthropology. The data for my doctoral thesis were part questionnaire and part in-depth interview (p. 1).

Strauss studied at the University of Chicago in the 1950s. His words attest to the continuity of the traditions of the first third of the twentieth century into the middle of the century and beyond.

Today, many qualitative family researchers conduct their work without knowing the intellectual history of their disciplines. For the most part, these researchers learn by doing, often because there are few and sometimes no courses of study and instruction under knowledgeable mentors. They may work alone, without the support and challenge of colleagues with similar disciplinary and methodological interests. They often struggle to find the words and concepts to explain what they are doing. This slows them down in terms of writing articles for publication, finding funding for research, and building teams of researchers who can put together proposals to governmental agencies that will sponsor research projects.

Working under these conditions, today's researchers feel challenged—and uneasy. Their experience of the work itself keeps them going. They know what they are doing is important. Their research has meaning to them, to informants, and to segments of the larger society. A schooling in the intellectual history of qualitative family research may provide a sense of continuity and a stronger sense of researcher identity as well as legitimate the foundations of qualitative research for those who are unaware of them.

Emancipatory Research

Ideals and values of social justice as well as concern for the distress they saw in poor families and unemployed parents led many early researchers to engage in work that later became known as qualitative research. As mentioned earlier, some rejected their class privilege and lived among the poor, gaining first-hand experience of what it means to live under conditions of poverty and exclusion from the advantages of membership in privileged social classes. The ideals of democracy, such as the principle of human equality, were uppermost in the minds of many of these researchers.

Concern for human suffering drove LePlay (1855), which is illustrated in an autobiographical chapter published in the first volume of the second edition of *Les ouvrierseuropeen*. LePlay (1879) explained that his ideas for research

sprang from personal experience that led to the development of his guiding ideas, primary among which was the relief of human suffering. He described that economic depressions, social upheavals, and revolutions that characterized France in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had a great effect on his life work, which involved conducting research on working European families.

Booth (1889, 1903), too, did his research with the purpose being to foster social reform. He took frankly moral perspectives, labeling social conditions in London “evil.” The following illustrates his viewpoints: “In considering this subject [housing] I shall first enumerate the evils and try to allocate responsibility, and then indicate the efforts that are being made to improve matters, and their results” (p. 158). A wealthy manufacturer and steamship company owner, Booth’s ideals of fairness and social justice appeared to have driven him. For example, in a letter about landlords who charge high rents for farmland and housing, he said the practice is “robbery” and “plunder” that “cutthroats” brought about. The cutthroats then “combined together to create laws to perpetuate their plunder.” He concluded, “rent for land is wrong” (Charles Booth Archive Library of the London School of Economics and Political Science, Ms797/II/24/1 49).

The origins of Booth’s moral stance is likely his Unitarian beliefs, among them adherence to the ideals of democracy and opposition to social injustice. He believed that industrialists like himself were the heirs of religious persons who took on tasks of social reform (Charles Booth Archive Library of the London School of Economics and Political Science, Ms797/II/24/1 49). Like LePlay (1879) and other reform-minded researchers, Booth took up lodging in the poor communities that he wanted to understand.

Researchers who emulated Booth’s work also took emancipatory stances. Stating in his concluding chapter that he had been searching for facts and not remedies, Rowntree (1901/1902) nonetheless made an impassioned statement about the “need for a greater concentration of thought by the nation upon the well-being of its own people”

(p. 305). His concluding paragraph was a comment on social philosophy:

The dark shadow of the Malthusian philosophy has passed away, and no view of the ultimate scheme of things would now be accepted under which multitudes of men and women are doomed by inevitable law to a struggle for existence so severe as necessarily to cripple or destroy the higher parts of their nature (p. 305).

The research of Addams and her colleagues at Hull House in Chicago—Edith Abbott, Sophonisba Breckenridge, and Florence Kelley—were influenced by Booth’s studies of the London poor through their connections with Toynbee Hall in London, which was a settlement house and the setting of major reform efforts. Booth and his research team were in regular contact with residents and advocates at Toynbee Hall. Hull House was modeled after the values of Toynbee Hall. Booth’s religion-based approaches were compatible with the values of the women of Hull House. Jane Addams, for instance, grew up in a family with strong values related to care and social economic justice, and she based her life’s work on these values.

Like those who came before, the Hull House group sought facts and scientific evidence that in the words of Deegan (1990) “could persuade all fair-minded people...to formulate the ‘right way’ for action” (p. 39). They lived in the neighborhoods where they did their research, constructed their social programs and lobbied for changes in social policies. Hull House, therefore, as Deegan documented, “became a center for empirical analysis, study, and debate” (p. 39), as well as social reform, similar to the work done at Tonybee Hall. Addams and her colleagues applied democratic principles to empower the disenfranchised and to change unequal structural arrangements in the United States.

Some of the founding members of the Chicago School of Sociology had emancipatory purposes, but they rejected social reform efforts that involved advocacy for change. Instead, they believed that if the research they produced was compelling enough, they could influence public opinion so that change would come about (Bulmer, 1984). Under the guidance of faculty

members such as Robert Park and Ernest Burgess, students at the University of Chicago produced works that directly addressed the social issues of the day, such as Johnson's (1922) study of Chicago race riots and E. Franklin Frasier's studies of Negro families in Chicago (1932) and the United States (1939).

Other researchers of the time did value-driven research to bring about social reform. Kellogg (1914a) wrote of the Pittsburgh Survey that its purpose was to gather information on underlying needs in Pittsburgh to form a "basis for local action" and "for civic advance in other American cities" (p. 497). The purpose of the Unemployment Study of 1928 (Calkins, 1930; National Federation of Settlements, 1931) was to put a human face on the issue and to mobilize legislative and business support for unemployment insurance. These studies are examples of early research that was done for the purposes of emancipation, or social transformation to make things better for individuals, families, and children.

Multiple Methods and Multiple Viewpoints

These researchers used a multi-methods approach that included social surveys, in-depth interviews, participant observation, document analysis including agency case records, analysis of demographic data, and social mapping to depict locations of interest, such as churches, pubs, and housing. Participant observation was a typical method, which allows researchers to grasp the social ecologies of the persons who were the subjects of the studies. Usual in these studies were descriptions of the physical environments and the range of viewpoints on the issues of interest. The subjective experiences of informants were sought. For example, Booth (1903) described a participant observation: his researchers took "long walks in all parts of London day after day with picked police officers who were permitted to assist us during the revision of our maps" (p. 61). Interviewing went hand-in-hand with observation. Booth said he sought "diversities of opinion affected by the point of view of the observer, as well as by the class observed." He, therefore, presented his

findings as "a patchwork of quotations...drawn from the clergy, ministers of religion, and missionaries, from schoolmasters and others" (p. 60).

Choosing an "extensive" method over an "intensive" method, Rowntree (1901/1902) sought to create a detailed portrait of poverty. He decided against research based on the analysis of statistics and instead sought to follow Booth's methods and to create a "picture" of life in a community, which is in Rowntree's research was York, an English town in Yorkshire in the north of England. He and his team of researchers did observations and interviews with the wage-earning population of York and with clergy and others familiar with working people. They also used government documents and statistics. They compiled massive amounts of data organized into tables, wrote case studies, and constructed a complex picture of working class life which often were lives of poverty.

The purpose of the Pittsburgh survey, too, was to present a portrait of working class life in a city using a range of methods and viewpoints. Methods included observations, interviews, photographs, and use of written documents. Kellogg (1914b) described an effort to engage multiple viewpoints in the Pittsburgh Survey. He wrote:

Our field work was done in railroad yards and mill towns, sweatshops, and great manufacturing plants; in courts, hospitals, and settlements. The investigators talked with priests and labor leaders, superintendents, claim agents and labor bosses, landlords, housewives, butchers and bakers—the workers themselves and those who live close to them (quote taken from Zimbalist, 1977, p. 144).

Following Booth, mapping became a mainstay of Addams' research at Hull House (*Hull-House Maps and Papers*, 1895) and the research of the Chicago School of Sociology (Deegan, 1990). Multiple methods that sought a range of views on social problems and highlighted both lived experience and social environments were typical of this research.

Subjectivity and Meanings

Recognition of the importance of engaging researchers' subjectivity and purposefully engaging

audiences are prevalent in early work. Building upon Kant's subjectivist, relativist, and perspectivist thinking, Dilthey (1976) developed the notion of *erlebnis*, translated as "lived experience," which he saw as the subject of scientific investigations. For Dilthey, human experience—composed of such intangibles as hopes, emotions, and thoughts—was subject to empirical investigations. He believed that experiences and interactions of individuals compose human social and cultural life that can be understood only in context. Dilthey emphasized a rigorous empirical basis for research (Palmer, 1969; Polkinghorne, 1983).

The ideas of Kant and Dilthey also centered research efforts on *verstehen*, or understanding, an understanding situated in social, cultural, and historical contexts. Bulmer (1984) speculated that Thomas and Znaniecki's (1918–1920/1927) emphases on life histories and personal meanings in their studies of Polish immigrants to the United States had a "theoretical origin" related to Dilthey, whom he quoted: "Autobiography is the highest and most instructive form in which the understanding of life comes before us" (p. 53, citing Hodges, 1994, p. 29). These ideas led to an often-quoted statement of Thomas and Thomas (1929) who said, "If men [sic] define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (p. 572). This is a foundational principle of much of Chicago research and symbolic interactionism, with its emphasis on process, interactions, social context, meanings, and interpretations.

Consistent with nineteenth century German philosophy within a human sciences tradition, Park and Burgess (1921) encouraged the development of findings that incorporated the experience of researchers and the points of view of informants, leading their students toward understanding and not toward axiomatic explanatory frameworks. In their textbook, *The Science of Sociology*, they stated that they wanted the text to "appeal to the experience of the student" (p. v), and they advised students to use "their own experience" in recording their observations and in the reading they did for their research (p. vi).

Park, in particular, was articulate about the centrality of understanding "the meaning of other people's lives" (quoted by Bulmer, 1984, p. 93).

This is done, not solely through intellectual processes, but through imaginative participation in the lives of others. According to Matthews (1977), Park frequently quoted William James: "the most real thing is a thing that is most keenly felt rather than the thing that is most clearly conceived" (p. 33).

Park applied these ideas to his work with students. Consistent with his view of the importance of researchers' experiences, he had a place in his methodological approaches for imagination. For example, Faris (1967) reported that Park advised Pauline Young to "think and feel" like the residents of Russian Town, the subject of her dissertation (Young, 1932). At the same time, both Burgess and Park emphasized the science and objectivity of the styles of research they were shaping. For many today, emphasizing personal experience and meanings of other persons' lives while considering them part and parcel of an objective science appears to be contradictory. Yet for Park and his colleagues, subjective accounts are proper subjects of scientific research. Researchers become objective insofar as they do not distort findings to serve a reformist agenda. For Park, the disinterested researcher who assembled subjective findings without distortion was displaying objectivity and doing science.

Waller (1934), like Park, saw a role for imagination in scientific methods and processes, and he compared processes of science to artistic processes:

The application of insight as the touchstone of method enables us to evaluate properly the role of imagination in scientific method. The scientific process is akin to the artistic process; it is a process of selecting out those elements of experience which fit together and recombining them in the mind. Much of this kind of research is simply ceaseless mulling over, and even the physical scientist has considerable need of an armchair (p. 290).

For Waller, armchair theorizing was a form of reflection on experience in order to make sense of it. Today, many people would call this kind of thinking *creativity*.

These ideas are consistent with Cooley's (1930) when he observed that "our knowledge of human beings is internally as well as externally derived" (p. 294), and he called "imagining what

it would be like to be somebody else” a form of “the scientific method” (p. 295). This, of course, is akin to what Blumer (1954/1986) called taking “each other’s roles” (p. 9) and is an elaboration of Park’s views. Sympathetic understanding as part of the scientific method is difficult to reconcile with the idea of scientific detachment, except when researchers allow others to challenge their understandings and discuss their own.

Reflection upon field experiences not only is a hallmark of early social research, but it is a precursor to today’s emphasis on reflexivity, which is a complex idea centered around researchers’ contributions to interpretations of research material. Reflexivity includes how researchers’ social locations influence research processes, research participants, and interpretations of data. Dollard (1937), who received his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago in 1930, gave a first-person account in his *Caste and Class in a Southern Town* that demonstrates reflexivity in research as an issue generations ago. Dollard described the awkwardness of being white in a southern town whose mores forbade treating “Negroes” as equals. Fearing that other white persons were watching as he talked to “Negroes” on his front porch, when he knew in the south at the time their “proper” place was at the back door, he wrote:

My Negro friend brought still another Negro up on the porch to meet me. Should we shake hands? Would he be insulted if I did not, or would he accept the situation? I kept my hands in pockets and did not do it, a device that was often useful in resolving such a situation (p. 7).

This description is a poignant verbal picture of a pivotal moment in Dollard’s fieldwork. It shows racist practices of the time.

This excerpt from Dollard illustrates a methodological point important to Small (1916), founder of the sociology department at the University of Chicago and the academic who recruited the faculty members who developed the styles of research under discussion in this chapter. Small, in an essay on the first 50 years of sociological research in the United States, emphasized the importance of going beyond “technical treatises” and providing first-person “frank judgments” that can help future generations interpret

sociology. Without such contexts, “the historical significance of treatises will be misunderstood” (p. 722). Throughout his essay, Small used the first-person and provided his views—or frank judgments—on the events he narrated.

Dollard undoubtedly built on Small’s ideas that others, such as Thomas, Znaniecki, Park, and Burgess, also espoused. In a footnote, Dollard (1937), commented on his use of “I,” which he said he used reluctantly, but did so because “it will show the researcher as separate from his data... and it will give the reader a more vivid sense of the research experience” (p. 2). Contemporary methodological discussions of the role of reflexivity in research echo these principles. (See Riach, 2009, for a recent discussion that brings in contemporary thought such as the ideas of Bourdieu, who shares human science traditions with early social researchers, especially the Chicago School.) Reflexivity in its multiple aspects is a way of approaching “objectivity” that may be elided when researchers hold simplistic ideas about objectivity.

Concern about bias, an issue then and now, also appeared in Dollard’s writing. He wrote a chapter on his own biases regarding his study, including a detailed analysis of how an informant, who was a well-known white southern writer, angered him but ultimately helped him become aware of his biases toward white southerners.

Other early sociologists have been concerned with bias as well. Waller (1934), for instance, pointed out that prior concepts can help researchers see things they might not have seen but can also blind them to what else could be operating. Webb and Webb (1932) developed procedures for dealing with researchers’ bias, including writing down all of one’s ideas, preconceptions, and favorite theories prior to designing the research. They assured researchers that if they put aside even their favorite questions and hypotheses, they would find that the processes of direct involvement in the field may result in new insights, answers to significant questions, and to testing and modification of hypotheses.

These procedures are in use today. For instance, setting aside one’s own views and biases, to the extent possible, is a well-established methodological principle in many different types of qualitative

research. In addition, stating researchers' social location and even personal experiences as they relate to research is another well-established principle. Harding (1991), among many others, argued that situating researchers as part of research processes creates a "stronger" and more objective science. Rather than presenting the research through an anonymous narrator whose standpoint is not known, researchers tell much more about their findings when the context the researcher provides is included in research reports, echoing Small's (1916) point made many years ago.

In addition to attributing significance to researchers' subjectivities, many of these early researchers sought to engage the emotions of their audiences by presenting the subjective experiences of informants. LePlay, however, did not do so, taking a more detached perspective on his findings. Other early researchers, such as Booth, quoted above, brought lived experience to the forefront. Rowntree (1901/1902) did as well. He quoted many of his informants, including a woman who said, "If there's anythink [sic] extra to buy, such as a pair of boots for one of the children, me and the children goes without dinner..." (p. 55). The subjective accounts were meant to influence public opinion and social policy. As Kellogg (1914a, 1914b) wrote of his studies of Pittsburgh, PA, USA where he presented his material in a variety of formats including photographs, diagrams, personal narratives, and charts

We wanted to make the town real—to itself; not in goody-goody preaching of what it ought to be; not in sensational discoloration; not merely in a formidable array of rigid facts. There was the census at one pole, and yellow journalism at the other; and we were on the high seas between with the chartings of such dauntless explorers as Jacob Riis and Lincoln Steffens before us.

This is why we tried to tell our findings through the eye as well as through the written word. This is why we collected industrial biographies as well as wage schedules; why we got the group picture of child life in a glass town, as well as analyzed the provisions of labor legislation and compulsory education laws; why we were concerned with the margins of leisure, and culture, and home life which are possible when a man works on a twelve-hour shift, as well as the free surplus which high wages may leave over a high cost of living (cited by Zimbalist, 1977, p. 158).

The Unemployment Study of 1928 (Calkins, 1930; National Federation of Settlements, 1931) was modeled after earlier research, being emancipatory in intent and using case studies that drew on both interviews and observations. Settlement workers from 20 states and the District of Columbia collected 300 case studies of families where an able-bodied male breadwinner was unable to find employment. According to Morrissey (1996) the planners of the study sought to document a social problem and "to put a human face on the statistical data commonly used to describe labor force participation" (p. 3).

Helen Hall, a prime mover in the study, recognized the role of emotions in emancipatory research. She wrote

No one who reads any number of the case-records can feel happy in his mind that we should leave it to people so disadvantaged to combat, single-handed, the industrial changes and dislocations which tear at the structure of their homes (Hall, 1931, p. 1, cited by Morrissey, 1996).

The reports of the study made ample use of case material that engaged audiences in the experience of informants and that also, in the words of Morrissey (1996) challenged "those who claimed work was plentiful for those who wanted" it (Morrissey, 1996 p. 22). The words of an informant, Mr. Hendel of Pittsburgh, show the dilemmas experienced by families where the main breadwinner was not employed:

I figgered with a thirteen-year work record behind me there'd be no trouble in *me* getting' a job in a big city like Pittsburgh....I remember one night when I'd been out of work a whole month and the rent was four months due, one of my friends told me he heard they was hiring men over to Spang-Chalfants—six miles away. I didn't even have the price of a car-check and I'd borrowed all I had the nerve to—and more—from my relatives. So I got up the next morning before five o'clock and walked all the way over there across the river without any breakfast—only to be told at the mill that they hadn't taken on a man in three months. I pretty near jumped off the bridge on my way home that day. If it hadn't been for the wife and kid, I guess I would have (Calkins, 1930, pp. 68–69).

Emphasis on lived experience, multiple methods, immersion, and social reform, then, were the hallmarks of early social welfare research.

Open-Ended Approaches

Emphasis on understanding informants in their environments led to quasi-inductive rather than deductive approaches. By quasi-induction, I mean that researchers began their research with questions and hypotheses that brought focus to the inquiries, but they continually generated new questions and hypotheses as they learned more about the phenomena of interest. In addition, they analyzed and classified their data during and after data collection. They also did group analysis of data, where two or more researchers read and studied fieldnotes, results of interviews, demographics, data collected by municipalities and townships, social maps, and social policies, among many other sources of data, all of which continue to be used by researchers today. Through extensive study and discussion, they generated categories, concepts, and theories that helped them to organize findings and to make sense of them. For example, Rowntree (1901/1902) used these methods, although he did not label his approach as induction. He began his research with questions he developed, classified a great many facts, and finished his research with additional questions constructed from immersion in the field.

LePlay (1879) articulate a rationale for a kind of inductive approach that is based on detailed observation and in-depth analysis. He wrote, "In scientific matters, only direct observation of facts can lead to rigorous conclusions and to their acceptance" (LePlay, 1879, Vol. 6, translated by Silver, 1982, p. 179). A metallurgist and engineer by training, LePlay spent 6 months of every year for 25 years on paid leave from his professorship at the *Ecole des Mines* in Paris to study European working families. LePlay wrote that this "method is as old as the human species and practiced by eminent men [sic] long before Descartes, Bacon, and Aristotle, recommended it to philosophers" (LePlay, 1866, p. 3).

LePlay did in-depth studies of families in many countries before he came to any conclusions. With the assistance of 100 interviewers, his research involved 300 case studies of families, which he called monographs. He and other

researchers lived with families for up to a month at a time. They also interviewed family members and a range of public officials familiar with family members.

For LePlay, observations must be verified repeatedly. Though he had completed almost 20 years of research, he returned to the field for several additional years to test and revise his findings before he published them in *Les ouvriers-europeens* (Silver, 1982). Using observation, classification, and quasi-inductive approaches, he sought "the principles of social science" (Zimmerman & Frampton, 1935, p. 567); in other words, theory.

Webb and Webb (1932) described a similar attention to detail and continual rechecking of findings in Booth's London work. Through interviews and "individual personal observations," Booth and other researchers amassed data on London society that they categorized into eight social classes. In their own research on the workings of local governments, the Webbs described years of research where the disparate pieces of data they had gathered made little sense. Finally, through close observation of the "facts," there eventually "emerged a series of types, to one of the other of which all additional instances seemed to approximate" (p. 59). They described and recommended processes of quasi-induction. They advised researchers to begin their studies with as many hypotheses as they can generate, and then to be prepared to revise them, discard them, and to develop new ones based on the evidence.

Today, researchers would say that these early researchers were "naïve realists" or "naïve empiricists" who believed that findings emerge from facts, seemingly independent of researchers' own perspectives. Replacing this older viewpoint is constructivism, where researchers believe that understanding of social phenomena are constructions, based upon researchers' perspectives. Ironically, however, constructivist researchers use the same methods earlier researchers used to analyze "social facts." The only difference is they explicitly state their results are constructions, but they also state, as did the earlier researchers, that others may interpret findings in different ways, arguably an implicit kind of constructivism.

Some Methodological Issues and Dilemmas

Many early researchers were eloquent about methodological dilemmas and issues that are widely discussed today (Gilgun, 2007). Mowrer, Anderson, and Dollard provide examples. Mowrer was interested in the relationships between observations and theory, a theme he addressed repeatedly. In *The Family*, Mowrer (1932) observed

But facts are not born full bloom to be plucked by anyone. In every perceptive experience there is an infinite number of observations which might be made but which are not. What the individual sees is determined in part, at least, by what he [sic] is trained to observe.... Abstraction thus takes the form of replacing of the actual experiences of the individual by symbols which serve as carriers of what he [sic] considers to be the essential elements of his [sic] experience. Events and objects are grouped by observed regularities or similarities in them. In this third step in scientific method there is always a certain amount of arbitrariness in the selection of what is considered essential, growing out of the training and experience of the researcher (pp. 281–286).

These early formulations of issues related to interpretation, induction, and deduction have been themes in symbolic interactionism and the social sciences in general for generations (Becker, 1988; Blumer, 1939/1969; Hammersley, 1989; Wolcott, 1994). Mowrer (1932) prepared the way for Blumer's (1954/1986) notion of sensitizing concepts, which are ideas that help researchers notice what they might not otherwise have noticed and Glaser's (1978) thinking on theoretical sensitivity, that is based upon understandings that researchers have familiarity with a range of theories that may or may not help them to understand and interpret their data. The roles of theory in data analysis and interpretation are enduring issues.

Chicago-trained sociologists made other cogent methodological points. Concerns about methods training and the place of previous research and theory in the conduct of fieldwork plagued Anderson (1925) who presented himself as knowing nothing about method. He kept away from other graduate students because of his felt ignorance. Even after his master's thesis became the first of many in The University of Chicago Press's Sociological Series, he characterized

himself as a poor researcher, and tongue-in-cheek perhaps, noted that "the book contained not a single sociological concept" (p. 403). His book is full of concepts, of course, but not highly abstract concepts and hypotheses; rather, his ideas were embedded in the meanings of the words in his text. Anderson appeared to be making fun of sociologists who may have made a bigger deal over concepts than Anderson thought was necessary for field research. He took up the more phenomenological side of Chicago research, leaving explicit theorizing to others.

Dollard (1937) also had concerns about the place of concepts and previous research in his field research. He reported that he did not review pertinent literature until after he finished his study. He deemed it "advisable to try for the advantage which lies in naiveté and a freshened perception of the local scene," rather than risk "repeating the well-documented findings of others" (p. 31). In addition, he preferred "to give the reader as deep a sense of participation as may be in what I have heard, seen, and sensed" (pp. 31–32), a theme I discussed earlier and one characteristic of Chicago sociology. Unlike Anderson, then, he found research and theory useful, but only after he completed his research, and, like Waller, he was concerned that his openness to data might be affected by knowledge of the literature. How and when to involve previous research and theory in qualitative studies are of interest in contemporary discussions of qualitative research in general and qualitative family research in particular.

Relationships Between Theory and Empirical Data

As the previous discussion shows, concerns about the empirical bases of theory have been part of social research from the beginning. Thomas and Znaniecki (1918–1920/1927) and Znaniecki (1934) discussed these issues in depth. They believed that the foundation of social theory is empirical data and that theory must be linked to empirical data, not a new idea, as the discussion of LePlay's (1879) thought has shown.

They criticized both abstract theory that did not have these discernable links and theorists who sought an “all-embracing synthesis,” but never tested the “truth” of their theories (Znaniecki, 1934, p. 27). Their commitment to the notion of variation and standpoints—they used that word—rules out grand synthesizing that assumes there is a single point of view on any human phenomenon. They also expressed wariness of research that appeared to have pasted a bit of theory after the fact on endeavors that were empirical, meaning they have no explicit links to theory. The writing of Strauss and colleagues (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser, 1978, 1992; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1997, 1998; Strauss, 1987) contain many of these themes.

Znaniecki’s (1934) thinking about theory-building is particularly relevant to today’s discussions of theory construction. He argued that sociology “can be nothing but a strictly *inductive* science, meaning that its foundation is ‘empirical data.’ He reserved a major place for deduction as well: ‘no science can live without deduction,’ and he stated that ‘the method of phenomenological analysis’ is also part of sociology” (p. 218). He recognized the interplay between induction and deduction. He noted that knowledge development is characterized by a “ceaseless pulsation” that involves “movement from concrete reality to abstract concepts and from abstract concepts back to concrete reality” (p. 25). He had no name that I know of for this over-arching set of processes.

Znaniecki (1934), like Mowrer (1932) and Park, also gave a role to intuition. He said, “scientific induction in its best form may be said to combine deduction and intuition into a higher dynamic unity” (pp. 220–221). He appears not to take a stand on whether induction follows deduction or that deduction comes first. Znaniecki may have discussed what he meant by intuition but I could not find it. By intuition, he could have meant hunches, insights, and what researchers learn from their education and from their professional and personal experiences, as well as the influences of personal and professional values. Sometimes what individuals know is so deeply embedded that some forms of knowledge become intuitive. This kind of intuition may be informed and educated, modifiable through experience.

Intuition is a piece of how I and many other people do research, just as intuition is part of what makes any professional practice possible (cf., Schön, 1983).

Znaniecki (1934) also advocated for the inclusion of variations and patterns in theory, and the creation of theories that are bold, simple, and comprehensive and that classify, organize, and systematize “a large mass of reliable empirical knowledge” (p. 257). To arrive at classifications, sociologists abstract “essential” features from data and then organize them into categories.

Znaniecki (1934) did not address what guides researchers in the processes of abstraction. Logically, to be able to abstract concepts from “concrete instances” requires some sort of prior conceptualization, which suggests that induction is not “pure,” but requires prior knowledge. Perhaps this is the role that Znaniecki gave both to deduction and to intuition.

Znaniecki (1934) had a name for research based on induction, deduction, and intuition. The name is analytic induction. He wrote that the challenge in analytic induction is to find general principles that will guide the analysis and help identify the central features of cases. Centrality is not dependent upon how often it appears. Out of comparisons and general principles, researchers formulate hypotheses. Znaniecki saw contradictory evidence as reason to develop competing hypotheses and to continue the analysis out of which “emerges new hypotheses and new problems” (p. 282). Later methodologists have names for two of these processes: constant comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) which was foreshadowed by Bott’s use of the term in her research on social networks and negative case analysis (Cressey, 1953, among others). Negative case analysis is a deliberative seeking out of cases that will lead to modifications of the emerging theory. I will discuss these issues in more detail later.

Znaniecki (1934) also believed that, in the doing of science, hypotheses, or “relative truths,” must be substituted for “absolute truths” (p. 221). This last statement is yet another iteration of the principle that theoretical formulations are not absolute but open to modifications.

Chicago researchers, both early and later researchers, gave a name to procedures that pay

attention to and seek “contradictory instances.” This is negative case analysis, which, as stated earlier, involves the search for data that add additional dimensions or even contradict researchers’ emerging understandings (Becker, 1953; Becker, Geer, Hughes, & Strauss, 1961; Cressey, 1953; Gilgun, 1995, 2005; Palmer, 1928; Znaniecki, 1934). Palmer’s (1928) discussions of negative cases have authority because she supervised much of the dissertation research students undertook at the University of Chicago in the 1920s. She also worked closely with Park and Burgess who gave overall direction to the research of the early Chicago School (Bulmer, 1984).

According to Palmer, once researchers complete a case, the findings must be compared with another case. The next case might turn out to be similar to the case or cases already analyzed, but it also could be a “negative case,” which she said is valuable because it “usually results in a more accurate definition of a concept or a statement of some scientific law” (p. 22). The term *scientific law* had a different meaning than it does now, especially within the Chicago School. Scientific laws are roughly equivalent to what we would call theory today, and the theory, as discussed previously, was the kind that is always provisional, subject to revision when evidence suggests a basis for revision.

Many of the ideas that Palmer discussed are present in other writings of the time and are foundational to grounded theory, a form of analysis that has roots in early Chicago research. Strauss and colleagues (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser, 1992, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Strauss, 1987), who are the originators of grounded theory, for example, emphasize comparisons within and across cases in language that is similar to Palmer’s and others who wrote at that time.

Summary

As in the past, today’s researchers enlarge their perspectives through immersion in the field, seek informants’ subjective experiences, see a major role for researchers’ subjective experiences, use

multiple methods, do group analysis of data, and do research for the purpose of understanding human experiences. Their products, broadly, are descriptions of human experience, often categorized by themes and typologies and the development of theory. Many want to contribute to the social good, a type of emancipatory research. Today’s methods and the principles behind them (methodologies) are vintage wines in new bottles.

Many contemporary qualitative researchers do their work without knowing the richness of their own heritage. The roots of qualitative family research go deep, to the origins of social science research. This review of the early history of qualitative family research helps to establish for qualitative family researchers that they have a rich heritage on which to base their work. This heritage is a solid foundation and provides not only enduring principle and methods, but also a rich vocabulary that we can use as we explain our work to others.

The Change

Ironically, the openness of early researchers to multiple methods and perspectives appears to have been a factor in the decline of the styles of research they conducted. Seeking to be ever more pluralistic in their approaches to research, Chicago faculty voted unanimously to invite William Ogburn, a leading quantitative sociologist, to join the faculty (Bulmer, 1984). In the late 1920s, there was a flurry of controversy within the faculty that pitted statistics against case study methods, but within a few years, after many colloquia, journal articles, and long discussions, Chicago professors and students came to view the two approaches as complementary (Faris, 1967). Burgess (1927) and Blumer (1928) made major contributions to this rapprochement. In a 1927 paper on statistics and the case study, for instance, Burgess wrote that statistics and case studies are complementary. Statistics provide correlations and indices, while case studies can reveal social processes and the meanings persons attribute to processes and events that will help “build more adequate statistical indices” (p. 120).

The tradition of methodological pluralism most likely created an openness to the new discipline of statistics, and subsequent Chicago-style research made ample use of them.

While many faculty maintained methodological pluralism, Ogburn apparently did not. He was a prime figure in moving social science away from emancipatory, phenomenological research and toward detached objectivity and quantitative methodologies (Laslett, 1991). According to Laslett, Ogburn was part of a chorus of distinct new voices in the social sciences that arose during and after World War I and that encouraged quantification, explicit descriptions of methodology, and a distanced objectivity. This approach to studying society discouraged ethical judgments, emancipatory research, and researcher immersion in settings of interest. To quote Laslett on Ogburn

Throughout his career, he advocated the position that sociology had to become more scientific, by which he meant empirical, objective, and quantitative. For him, to become scientific, sociology needed to distance itself from the moral and political reform interests and activities that had been characteristic of its earlier history. Social problems were of interest to the scientific sociologist as a subject for detached study, not involvement (p. 512).

Although Ogburn called his approach “scientific,” there is disagreement over what the word means. Many researchers, for example, believe that subjectivity, reflexivity, and values are part of science. In this view, researchers can seek to bring about social reform, but they have to ensure that the research is of the highest quality and that reform agendas do not distort research processes and interpretations. In other words, researchers have to do quality research, and then they can take up the role of advocates. In light of the difficulties with the word “scientific,” I will use the word “empiricist” to characterize social scientists who advocate for their version of objectivity, universal laws, and distance from values and reform.

Ogburn and other social scientists carried out empiricist principles that emphasized explanation, objectivity, and quantification and paid little or no attention to principles associated with the

human sciences. Empiricist approaches include distanced methods of research such as surveys, emotional distance from social problems, paying insufficient attention to interactions between persons and their environments, and emphasis on quantified theory testing rather than theory development. A basic idea in the thinking of some empiricists is that there is one way to do science—their way. Within human science traditions, these perspectives lead to “context-stripping” and to paring away variegated human experience as the proper focus of social science.

The well-entrenched Chicago traditions that viewed science as arising from immersion and that sought to understand social problems for the sake of social change went out of fashion in many sectors of academia. For these academics, no longer could researchers get “the seat of their pants dirty” in pursuit of understanding issues of interest from multiple points of view using multiple methods. Academics seized upon the ideas that science is explanation and not description of lived experiences and not theories grounded in human experiences and that there is one *true* way to do research, which, as stated earlier, is their way. While they appeared to recognize variations across persons, contexts, and time, their methods and perspectives did not allow the depth and breadth that is part of human sciences traditions and they actively discouraged value-based research and social reform efforts for the sake of their versions of objectivity.

Empiricist ideas about science eclipsed other views for years, to the point where generations of students had no idea that research could involve immersion, theory development, descriptions of human situations, and emotions and experiences of researchers and of those whom they research. Almost lost was the idea that research could be conducted for the purposes of advocacy and social change. Quantification and distance from “objects” of study became the definition of science for most social scientists. The “social” seemed to have disappeared from the social and human sciences for the sake of what appears to have been an unreflective “objectivity” and definitions of science that not everyone shared.

The Traditions Carried On

The Chicago style of research carried on and even spread to other institutions, but it was as if these researchers were on the outside, raising their hands, and saying, “Hey, you guys, there’s another way of doing research. Sometimes it’s even fun. People like to read our research because it makes sense to them.”

Many researchers carried on the traditions, of course, mostly composed of “descendents” of the early Chicago scholars. For instance, the writings of Glaser, Strauss, and Corbin (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Strauss, 1987) are replete with statements about the importance of multiple methods and about the self-evident nature of researchers’ subjective engagements with informants and the meanings of their data. Glaser (1978) talked about methodological pluralism:

Our perspective is but a piece of a myriad of action in Sociology, not the only right action.... The division of labor in sociology needs all perspectives on styles of both theoretical and empirical renderings of research data (p. 3, emphasis in original text).

Glaser (1978) stressed the centrality of the “social psychology of the analyst” and noted that “Generating theory is done by a human being who is at times intimately involved with and other times quite distant from the data—and who is surely plagued by other conditions in his [sic] life” (p. 2). This is a statement on the role of reflexivity in research. Glaser and Strauss, whose primary work was medical sociology, assume that the results of their research would be applied and used to ameliorate personal and social ills.

Case Studies of Chicago Graduates in the Middle Years

During the years from the late 1930s to the mid-1980s, the University of Chicago continued to have an interdisciplinary faculty and graduate students who were drawn to Chicago’s traditional styles of research. A sense of the continuities and transformations of Chicago traditions is part of

the life history accounts of Lopata (1992), who was a student at Chicago from 1945 to 1954, and Gerald Handel (Gilgun, 1992), who received his Ph.D. in human development in 1962. Rosalie Wax, an anthropologist, also shared these traditions, particularly in her emphasis on shared meanings, the centrality of interactionism, and her efforts on behalf of social reform. Elizabeth Bott, also an anthropologist, built her research around the development of both theoretical and descriptive understandings of families and social networks. Such goals are also linked to the Chicago School tradition.

Lopata emphasized theoretical issues such as role theory and sensitizing concepts and appeared less focused on method, as if the rationale for her methods were self-evident. This self-evident quality was undoubtedly true for her and the traditions in which she learned and practiced research. From her Chicago sociology professors, she received the same directives that Park gave his students decades earlier. An immigrant from Poland, she wanted to study Polish immigrant family life in the United States. She said her professors

told [me] to go to Polonia—and actually talk with the people, attend meetings, and even collect questionnaires? I went (Lopata, 1992, p. 1).

Lopata was open about her “reformist” attitude—that is, her interests in social change, aroused while she at the University of Chicago. She had concerns about the response to Nazism in the midwestern United States.

Speeches given around the midwest about Nazim and the crucial need for clothing and money for medicine to send back to Europe met with total indifference and ignorance. I ended up doing a master’s thesis on “International Cooperation in Medicine,” probably to convince myself that cooperation is possible in the world (Lopata, 1992, p. 1).

She showed no trace of self-consciousness about the personal meanings of this and subsequent research projects. Lopata had no courses on research methods, but learned methods of procedure through course lectures, reading theory and research reports, and through her field experience, guided by members of her master’s and Ph.D. committees.

Gerald Handel and Creative, Independent Thinking

When Handel was a student at Chicago, he, too, had no formal training in research methods, but was enchanted by the Chicago emphasis on interpretation. Like Lopata, he found that students were expected to be independent scholars in close contact with informants and the worlds in which they lived. Handel's work is embedded in interactionism and his interest is in the meanings that informants attribute to their situations. Handel's publications include the study of whole families (Handel 1965, 1996; Hess & Handel, 1959), the psychosocial interior of the family (Handel, 1967; Handel & Whitchurch, 1993), childhood socialization (Handel, 1988), and case studies (Handel, 1991). He co-edited a volume of examples of qualitative family research (Gilgun, Daly, & Handel, 1992).

Handel studied with Carl Rogers, Bruno Bettelheim, Lloyd Warner, and Elizabeth Bott in an exemplary interdisciplinary program in human development. He regrets not taking Everett Hughes' research course in which each student was assigned a census tract and had to find out everything possible about that tract: qualitative and quantitative data, the subcultures, the institutions, demographics. This, of course, is part of the Chicago methodological tradition of social mapping. For Handel, the environment at Chicago was demanding and creative. Students were surrounded by faculty who were at the height of their careers, creating new insights through interpretive activities. He was immersed in exciting new ideas that inspired him in his own research. As he said:

Each of us had to come to our own interpretation of the material. No one would do it for us. Bettelheim was developing his own ideas, Carl Rogers was doing his thing, and Warner was developing his ideas about American communities. Individuals, as rooted in society, was a core idea at Chicago.... The act of interpretation was a central activity. Interpreting symbols—that's what Freud did. That's what G. H. Mead said was important. Warner's course based on his studies of Yankee City was subtitled *The Symbolic Life of America*. He had an analysis of the symbolic organization of a Memorial Day parade in Yankee City—what kind of floats people produced and who was allowed to do what.

He interpreted the symbolic meaning of the floats. This was an extraordinary analysis.

Another was on the social organization of the cemetery—who's buried where and how. It was amazing stuff to us. These ideas were very, very innovative. One way or another, among the work we studied, the intellectual activity was interpreting human behavior: Freud, Erikson, G. H. Mead, Piaget, and Warner (Gilgun, 1992, p. 5).

Handel struggled with the notion that the ideas being presented in class and through reading often did not match up with what was called research. "Here I was reading [and studying with] those magnificent, insightful thinkers," Handel said, "and then there was this other kind of [quantitative] literature which was smaller in scale." Handel said, "Students who did quantitative work puzzled me. My question was, 'Why were they doing that?'" Excited by ideas and deductive/inductive processes of working with ideas, Handel could not connect with the thinking behind quantitative studies (Gilgun, 1992, p. 5).

Handel did not take courses on qualitative interviewing, which was his main method of data collection. "I was not explicitly trained," he said. "It's a mystery how I absorbed it. Somehow I absorbed it, probably through the notion of whose ideas were important to me—G. H. Mead, Freud, M. Mead, Erikson, Piaget" (Gilgun, 1992, p. 5).

Students together in human development, Hess and Handel cowrote a proposal to the National Institute of Mental Health, which was funded. That research was written up as *Family Worlds*, based on in-depth qualitative interviews with each member of 33 families. They also used the projective Thematic Apperception Test. This work blended Burgess's (1926) notion of family interaction with Chicago's emphasis on multiple methods and personal meanings in interpretations of situations. Through primarily inductive analysis, they formulated five processes of family interaction and functioning: patterns of separation and connectedness; notions of individual and family images; family themes; family boundaries; and the meanings of age and gender to each family member. These ideas have been applied in a wide range of theoretical and applied settings (Handel, 1996; LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993; Rosenblatt & Fischer, 1993).

The Work of Rosalie Wax

The writing of Rosalie Wax a Chicago graduate with a Ph.D. in anthropology, demonstrates how researchers continued to use methodological ideas espoused by Park, Thomas, and others of the Chicago school from earlier in the twentieth century. Wax continued Chicago's tradition of reflecting on methodological issues related to subjectivity, particularly in her classic fieldwork text (Wax). Her openness to the processes of research transformed her. She became an advocate for the persons on whom she did research.

In her preface, she thanked, among others, the Chicago sociologist Everett Hughes who had carried on the earlier traditions. In her presentation of fieldwork, she incorporated her biography, which was a tradition in early research. Like Albion Small and John Dollard, her stated purpose was pedagogical: to train "future generations of fieldworkers" (p. x). She also spoke in the first person, which is in the Chicago tradition, in order to provide historical contexts that aid in interpretation. She shared her "pre-college life experiences," such as how she earned a living during the Depression, how she managed her life as a junior college student, and how she learned about cultural variations as a child. These and other autobiographical details situated Wax within her text and helped in its interpretation.

Wax was concerned with "shared meanings" (p. 11), which she saw as preconditions for understanding social phenomena, her view of the purpose of fieldwork. This, of course, is within the human sciences tradition and fits well with Chicago traditions. For Wax, researchers attain understanding through personal experience; that is, a resocialization into the culture under consideration, a stance Park imparted to his students and probably based on his training in German philosophy. Wax gave many examples of resocialization but noted that researchers remain outsiders.

Wax recognized that resocialization may entail personal transformations, an insight Wax (1971) attributed to Malinowski. In other words, participation in research processes can change researchers. In some cases, researchers become social reformists, a theme in the early qualitative family

research of such persons as LePlay and Booth. She noted that as a result of their field work, she and her anthropologist husband Murray "became moral protagonists of Indian communities" (p. 41). Moreover, Alfred Lindesmith became an opponent of harsh narcotic laws after his research on opium addicts and that many other social researchers found that fieldwork "undermined" the "pretence of moral neutrality" (p. 41). She acknowledged that these transformations met with approval by some but "antagonized" those who "defined science as pure" (p. 41), another reference to an empiricist form of social science research. Wax built upon themes within the Chicago tradition, including her commitment to advocacy as an outcome of research.

Elizabeth Bott and Theorizing

The work of English anthropologist Bott (1957/1971) on couples' social networks was within the Chicago tradition, and, as mentioned earlier, she later became a faculty member at Chicago. While Wax emphasized descriptions of shared meanings, Bott's focus was on theory development. In her work, she illustrated the interplay between induction and deduction in the conduct of qualitative family research. Her work anticipates many of today's research methods, particularly grounded theory (see, Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Terming her research *exploratory*, Bott did not begin her study with "well-formed hypotheses" but had the general goal of "psychological understanding of some ordinary urban families" (Bott, 1957/1971, p. 8). She said she and her team "succumbed to the confusion" of open-ended research "in the hope that constant careful comparisons would eventually lead to a formulation of specific problems" (p. 9). Bott not only anticipated the methods of grounded theory, but she even used the term *constant comparison*, a term Glaser and Strauss later used. She also followed procedures that were part of Chicago traditions.

Having no hypotheses does not mean that the research was a atheoretical and unguided by concepts. Bott's theoretical framework was

Lewin's field theory (1935, 1936), which holds that behavior is a function of person and environment. This, of course, is a variation of ecological theory and consistent with the interactionist perspectives that characterized the Chicago School of Sociology from its inception. Lewin's concepts undoubtedly were sensitizing (Blumer, 1954/1986), helping Bott and her team to identify and name processes they might never have noticed otherwise. For Blumer, who received his Ph.D. from Chicago in 1928, sensitizing concepts give researchers "a general sense of reference and guidance in approaching empirical instances" (p. 148). In other words, sensitizing concepts orient researchers to the analysis and interpretation of data, ideas that Mowrer (1932) discussed many years earlier and that was routine for most researchers within Chicago traditions (Lopata, 1992).

Doing her research during a time when empiricist styles of research were in ascendance, Bott (1957/1971) made methodological points about the generalizability of her findings and the nature of the hypotheses that result from studies such as hers. Her sample of 20 urban families, Bott noted, was neither representative nor random. Whether any facts that such research uncovers were typical was not her concern. What was of concern were hypotheses, which she saw as possibly "generalizable to other families but require further testing" (p. 10), not only on English families but on families in other societies. In short, she saw the kind of research she did as a way of developing viable, testable theory. She pointed out that such hypotheses are written in general terms so as to permit testing. Thomas and Znaniecki (1918–1920/1927), Lindesmith (1947), Znaniecki (1934), among others, articulated similar views on generalizability, the nature of formulated theory, and qualitative methods.

Bott's results were well received and set off a series of studies and papers that Bott (1957/1971) chronicled in a long chapter at the end of the second edition of *Family and Social Network*. Her work continues to be quoted in contemporary research on social networks. Empiricist principles had become so strong that Bott was aware of how different her research was and conceded that some may find it difficult to accept.

When Bott presented her preliminary analyses to Max Gluckman's seminar on social anthropology at the University of Manchester, England and asked the seminar participants what to do with her material, Gluckman and one participant said simultaneously "Write a novel about it" (Gluckman, 1971, p. xiv). Gluckman later admitted he was wrong and called her work "one of the most illuminating analyses ever to emerge from social anthropology" (p. xiv). Empiricist thinking appears to have influenced Gluckman's first impressions of Bott's work, but he was open-minded enough to carefully read what she had written. He was able to see the depth and breadth of her theorizing and the importance of what she had found.

Pockets of Chicago-Style Research

Chicago graduates and former Chicago faculty fanned out across the United States to create small pockets of graduate students and professors who sustained the tradition. For instance, Anselm Strauss went to the University of California-San Francisco in 1968 to form the department of social and behavioral sciences. There he recruited like-minded faculty, such as Barney Glaser, Leonard Schatzman, Fred Davis, and Virginia Olesen. This faculty trained generations of nursing and sociology students, with Strauss, Glaser, and Schatzman having decades-long responsibility for training in research methods and methodologies (Strauss, 1991).

Chicago graduates Howard Becker spent most of his career at Northwestern, Blanche Geer had several academic jobs including at Syracuse University where she was Bob Bogdan's (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) advisor, and Erving Goffman was at Berkeley. Wiseman (1979, 1981, 1991), a qualitative family researcher, was one of Goffman's students. Blumer also was at Berkeley for many years.

Nursing and sociology students at the University of California-San Francisco routinely took courses at Berkeley with Blumer, Goffman, and such phenomenologically-oriented philosophers as Dreyfus (1991), Rubin (1988), and Packer (1985; Packer & Addison, 1989), all of

whom have had a major influence. In some ways, the Berkeley area during these middle years and into contemporary times replicated the intellectual atmosphere of the University of Chicago in the early part of this century.

Life Course Research

The life course perspective is an example of approaches to research that draw upon Chicago School traditions. Glen Elder and Janet Giele, leading life course researchers, have consistently cited works from the early Chicago School as foundational to life course perspectives. For example, Elder (1978), in discussing family histories and the life course, cited Dollard (1949) regarding Dollard's views on life histories. Giele (2009) cited W. I. Thomas several times in the most recent iteration of life course theory. Giele attributed to Thomas emblematic life course perspectives that include the study of lives "influenced by a changing society" (p. 1), the importance of longitudinal research (p. 3), human agency as prominent in life course research (p. 10), the documentation of the influence of human relationships on human actions as mediated by family and community (p. 246), and the carryover of responsibility and obligation from one life stage to the next (p. 248). She also characterized other aspects of life story research in terms that connect her perspectives to the Chicago School. These perspectives include her view that life stories are based on subjective accounts that convey comprehensiveness and meanings, and that values are embedded in life history accounts.

Further documentation of the links between life course theory and Chicago School traditions are chapters in Elder and Giele (2009) on life records, life stories, and urban ethnographies. The urban ethnography is *Welfare, Children, and Families: A Three Cities Study* (Burton, Cherlin, Winn, Estacion, & Holder-Taylor, 2009; Burton, Purvin, & Garrett-Peters, 2009), which used a classic Chicago School design that included multiple methods and implemented the principles of immersion, symbolic interactionism, and researcher subjectivities. The influence of the

Chicago School is far and wide. The present chapter does not exhaust these influences.

Summary

Human science traditions are deep and broad within family research, research that includes several disciplines including sociology, social work, human development, and anthropology as discussed in this chapter. These researchers have had an enduring commitment to multiple methods and perspectives, immersion, theory-building, descriptive research, and social reform. While empiricist traditions have challenged the human scientists, many researchers carried on with the ideas, goals, and approaches associated with human sciences and the traditions of the Chicago School of Sociology. As is now evident "sociology" is a misnomer because the Chicago School traditions are interdisciplinary and include social work, family studies, anthropology, philosophy, education, psychology, sociology, and human development. Many graduates of the sociology department called themselves social psychologists to emphasize their goals of understanding subjective experiences of research participants within the various environments in which they live their lives.

An Analysis of Contemporary Qualitative Family Research

From this overview of the methods and methodologies of the Chicago School, I have constructed an analytic framework that I use to examine contemporary qualitative family research. My purpose is to assess whether and how the themes carried on and how contemporary thought may have transformed them.

The Elements of the Framework

The methods and methodological themes of the Chicago School tradition are multiple and complex. They include the following dimensions.

They followed *human sciences traditions* including emancipatory perspectives, phenomenology, pragmatism, and symbolic interactionism that assumed that human phenomena are first to be understood in interactive social contexts. From these perspectives, researchers may go on to theorize, develop programs, and advocate for social policy to address social inequities. They used their imaginations in order to understand informants' experiences, and they often had implicit constructivist orientations.

Interdisciplinary perspectives characterized early researchers who were trained in several different disciplines including philosophy, sociology, social psychology, psychology, family studies, anthropology, education, and social work. These scholars borrowed methods, procedures, and ideas from multiple disciplines. Graduates in sociology often called themselves social psychologists and some called themselves social workers.

The place of prior research and theory. These early researchers had multiple points of view on the place of prior research and theory. Some avoided prior literature reviews in order to avoid biasing themselves and finding what they expected to find while others saw prior knowledge as sensitizing concepts that alert them as to what might be present in their data. Still others used existing research and theory to focus their research and as sources of hypotheses to test. They sought to develop understandings of the mutual influences of persons and situations. Variations on the use of negative case analysis characterized much of this research, and this approach supported the assumption that social processes are composed of variations and patterns across persons, situations, and time.

Methods include case studies of various units such as individuals, families, ethnic groups, neighborhoods, and cities. Life histories were one of several approaches used and served to depict lived experience within historical contexts over time. Participant observation was another approach that often involved immersion in the field to the point where researchers lived within the communities of persons on whom they did research. Other

related approaches included interviews, analysis of personal and official documents, surveys, and social mapping. Group analysis for the purposes of understanding research material from multiple points of view and for making conceptual and theoretical sense of the material was the prime method of data analysis.

The methodological principles infused in these methods included immersion, emancipation, lived experience, persons in the multiple contexts, open-endedness, multiple perspectives, understanding lives over time, and theory grounded in lived experience. Understandings, concepts, and theories were subject to modification if new understandings warranted change. Many were positivists in the sense that each datum had to be studied in its particularity so that generally applicable conclusions could be reached. They did not follow empiricist principles of detachment, quantification, and focus on rational thought.

The centrality of experience is important and included both informants' lived experience and those of researchers. One of the purposes of research was to provide information on which to base informed social policy. Thus, persons on whom research was done were often poor and working families who had struggles that resulted from social policies and practices that researchers hoped to change.

Learning to do research was based on direct experience in the field, with classroom learning being de-emphasized. Good, interesting writing was important in order to draw in audiences. Drawing in audiences had many purposes, including mobilizing public opinion in support of social change. In presenting *findings*, detailed, multi-layered descriptions were central. When theory was an intended product, researchers still used ample descriptive material to show the foundations for their theory. Most if not all had a strong commitment to social justice and part of their analysis included implications for policy, programs, education, and practice.

The products included monographs (books) articles, social interventions such as policies, educational programs, and social programs such as widows' pensions. Some researchers hoped that

their findings would promote the social good, but did not become advocates. Others not only became advocates but developed and implemented social policies. Jane Addams and Helen Hall are prime examples of advocates who based their efforts not only upon research but on values such as social justice.

Analysis

To identify qualitative research on families, I reviewed every issue of family journals and journals that publish articles on families from January 2008 to January 2010. These journals are the *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, *Family Relations*, *Journal of Family Economic Issues*, *American Journal of Sociology*, *Journal of Family Psychology*, *Journal of Family Nursing*, *Families in Society*, and *Social Problems*.

Out of the many choices I had, I focused on four articles that showed the various types of research that is characteristic of the heritage of qualitative family research. One article was descriptive and done for the purposes of contributing to social policy. Another was theoretical, focusing on power relations in families along the lines of gender and age. The third was a study of the meanings young children in out-of-home care attributed to their separations from their families of origin. The final article is a classic study that replicates the methods of the Chicago School in almost all if not all of its aspects.

In the spirit of the principle that there is no one true way to do qualitative analysis, I chose to examine articles that interested me and that had some diversity in terms of informants and their situations. I did not seek articles that fell on either end of an empiricist-human sciences tradition; I remained neutral about those issues. In the analysis, I show how the articles are consistent or inconsistent with human sciences traditions.

Descriptive, Emancipatory Research

How Son and Bauer (2010) set up their study of low-income rural mothers is an example of

contemporary work has direct roots in the heritage of qualitative family research. Their informants were low-income mothers, their unit of analysis was the case, they did in-depth studies of lives in context over time, and their perspectives were emancipatory. They also took phenomenological perspectives, used the literature review as a source of sensitizing concepts, and based their theorizing and policy recommendations on their descriptions of the women's situations. The setting of the study was rural, which contrasted with most Chicago School studies that took place in urban environments. Since the intent of the study was emancipatory and low-income mothers in rural areas are understudied, the divergence to rural settings is consistent with Chicago School traditions. Some empiricist influences are present in the article because the authors maintained a "distanced" stance by not describing their own subjectivities, although these subjectivities are implicit in their writing.

The study is emancipatory and ecological as evidenced by the following from Son and Bauer (2010):

The current welfare policy in the United States discourages welfare recipients from staying on welfare by reducing cash assistance and expands work-first programs. In this welfare context, understanding the characteristics of employed, low-income, single mothers and low-wage jobs is critical in order to provide appropriate support and to develop policies.

These researchers had emancipatory perspectives and a goal of understanding the particular women's situations within particular contexts over time in response to changing policies and work opportunities.

They elaborated upon the ecological aspects of their research when they discussed their interests in describing matches and mismatches between environmental contingencies and women's employment histories. The contingencies included resources and challenges within families, work, communities, and the effects of social policies.

Bronfenbrenner's (1986) perspectives on human ecology helped them to explain their views on how environmental issues facilitated understanding of individual lives. They pointed out that components of macrosystems include

values and culture, topics of interest throughout the history of the human sciences.

This study also showed that immersion continues to be part of family research. Son and Bauer (2010) followed 28 single, low-income mothers for 4 years over three waves of data collection, providing them with a study of lives over time, a hallmark of the Chicago School.

In addition, these researchers had a multifaceted literature review from which they drew sensitizing concepts. Their interview questions came from their literature review and so did the concepts they used to organize their findings. In their analysis, they did not use the literature review as a source of codes. Instead, they attempted to put their explicit ideas aside and taken an inductive approach in order to identify themes and patterns within each case and then do within-case and cross-case analysis. This “putting aside” was practiced by many members of the Chicago School. Given the literature review and their knowledge of the subject area, it is unlikely that their analysis was “pure” induction, however, but rather a combination of induction and deduction, with the deductive aspect having to do with their prior knowledge. The literature review made them “theoretically sensitive” (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Again consistent with Chicago School traditions, their unit of analysis was the case, but they made no mention of attempts to find exceptions to the emerging themes, and so it is not clear if they did so. They identified four themes in the case studies, and they showed patterns within each theme. For example, for the theme of support from supervisors, they did descriptions and provided excerpts from interviews to describe from the mothers’ points of view the impact of supervisory support and lack of support. They presented many excerpts from the cases to show the meanings of their experiences as low-income working mothers.

Son and Bauer (2010) based their theorizing and policy recommendations on their interpretations of the employed mothers’ experiences, a strategy that shows clear links between the mothers’ experiences, theory, and policy recom-

mendations. Overall, then, the Son and Bauer (2010) study is a premier example of contemporary family research that is consistent with a human sciences and Chicago School tradition. The researchers used some theories, research, and language that did not exist in their present forms during the Chicago School years, but their work maintains and advances the tradition.

Research Whose Purpose Is Theory Development

Zuo’s (2009) work shares many characteristics of the Son and Bauer (2010) study, including researcher “distance” with an implicit subjectivity related to her being of Chinese descent as her informants were. I will not repeat commonalities, but will point differences that show variations possible in studies that link to the human sciences and the Chicago School. Zou also studied lives in context over time, took phenomenological perspectives and a comparative approach, used sensitizing concepts, was implicitly emancipatory, and recognized patterns. In contrast to Son and Bauer, Zou’s purpose was to contribute to theories of gender and power. Thus emancipatory goals were not directly related to concerns about influencing policy and practice, as was the case for Son and Bauer.

Zou’s topic was changes in Chinese family patriarchy and women’s social status during various stages of marriages among couples married before 1950. Because the changes over time in which she was interested were long past, Zou chose to do life histories, which she called life stories. Life histories are the hallmark method of the Chicago School. Zuo (2009) maximized the variations and perspectives in her sample in several different ways. Early in her article, she shared her assumption that male-dominated social orders are contested in a variety of systems. She therefore expected to see variations in her sample. Her methods were consistent with her assumption of contestations of gender orders. She interviewed couples as well as widowed individuals conjointly and individually, examined power relations in couples who resided with

husbands' parents when the parents were or were not dominant, compared power relationships in couples who lived or did not live with husbands' parents, and compared various types of economic dependencies between couples and their parents. To further ensure that she identified variations, her sample was from 14 rural and urban provinces and had a range of education and income. China has many different ethnic groups, and, although Zuo (2009) does not say so, presumably informants had diverse ethnic backgrounds as well.

In her literature review, she presents research and theory that of course did not exist during the early years of human sciences research, but nonetheless is consistent with it. For example, she addresses issues of process and change within Chinese families and culture in terms of women's increasing power as mothers and mothers-in-law as they grow older. She emphasizes cultural meanings of age and gender as they relate to authority in families. Her literature review sets the stage for her focus on the meanings that older Chinese married or widowed women and men attribute to the status over time. Social constructionism is an explicit part of her conceptual framework, in contrast to the implicit nature of constructionism early on, but nonetheless consistent with human sciences methodologies.

The interview itself is derived from concepts in the literature review and also is the sources of the sensitizing concepts she used in data analysis. She followed the principle of immersion in her use of two interviews per informant or couple for a total of five hour of interview time. She did her data analysis following the generic coding schema of Strauss and Corbin (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), with the result that she identified a core concept she called patrilineality, around which she organized her findings.

The concept of patrilineality was not part of her literature review but is evidence of her theoretical sensitivity (Glaser, 1978), which means that she had the concept of patrilineality in her mind and was able to identify and document processes she called "patrilineality." This also illustrates what Blumer (1954/1986) meant by sensitizing concepts and what Mowrer (1932) was getting at when he observed that "facts are not born full bloom"

and that training and, presumably, experience influence what individuals notice.

Phenomenological perspectives are clear in Zuo's (2009) findings section, where she described the experiences of informants in a systemic way, organized by the framework she developed through her analysis. Her framework shows the many variations are related to age and gender in two-generation Chinese families. In an extended discussion, Zuo (2009) considered the theoretical implications of her study. This excerpt shows not only her theorizing, but theorizing that recognizes variations with and across couples and families over time.

I uniquely situate the lives of married women and men in multiple and intertwining power processes that produced ever shifting experiences of women and men with family patriarchy at different stages of their family life. When dominated by generation patriarchy, neither husband nor wife enjoyed family power or personal autonomy, although such deprivation had gendered effects channeled through gendered roles performed by husbands and wives as well as through spouses' differential relations to the family. As parental control became more relaxed or absent in later stages of family life, both spouses seemed to enjoy greater autonomy in personal life and in family power (p. 554).

Emancipatory Research for Practice

The third study I analyze is Winter's (2010) descriptive, emancipatory research on children ages 4–7 in out-of-home placement in England. This work shares many of the characteristics of the Son and Bauer (2010) and Zuo (2009) research in terms of phenomenological perspectives, sensitizing concepts, immersion, social justice, and person-environment interactions. I chose to analyze this study for its human sciences components based on my own emancipatory inclinations, which in this case is my concern that social policy and practice formulate actions around the meanings young children attribute to their life circumstances. I share this stance with Winter who clearly articulates her views on this matter. I also think that Winter's views on subjectivity respond to issues characteristic of the Chicago School and human sciences traditions. Neither the Zou nor the Son and Bauer studies explicitly

addressed or acknowledged subjectivity in such frank terms as Winter did.

Winter's (2010) study is noteworthy for its immersion into the meanings that children attribute to being in care. She did 10 case studies and 39 interviews. While some may believe that this many interviews would be oppressive, the children were delighted and gratified that an adult would take that much time to listen to how they experience their lives. Winter's rationale for in-depth interviews with young children include a child rights framework integrated with what Winter described as "a sociological approach to childhood in which the emphasis was on the social agency of the children and their competence and capacity to express a perspective" (p. 187).

Also noteworthy about Winter's (2010) work is her discussion of researcher sensitivity to the children during the process of doing the research. Consistent with her framework of children's autonomy, agency, and freedom of choice, she described her interview style as flexible and responsive to the children. As a researcher with vulnerable persons on sensitive topics, I imagine, although Winter does not say so, that she did not ask standardized questions but tailored her questions, comments, requests for elaborations, and responses according to how the children responded and what the children wanted. She is a trained social worker, as I am, and she stated that her skills as a professional were significant in her capacity to form relationships with children and to foster their sense of safety.

Furthermore, in her reflexivity statement, she said that she had had a prior relationship with the children she interviewed in her capacity as a guardian *ad leiturum*. The interviews were part of a research project, and she undertook several layers of consent before she began the interviews. As she pointed out, her prior relationship with the children had the advantage of establishing a degree of trust, which is foundational for research in sensitive areas. Since do no harm is the fundamental premise in the helping professions, the issue of trust is paramount. Such concerns about the ethics of research are consistent with human sciences traditions. These issues are of high importance when working in sensitive areas

with vulnerable persons. Although Winter (2010) could have said much more for the sake of educating her readers, she did say enough to emphasize how sensitive she had to be to the children.

As is true for many researchers who concern themselves with their own subjectivities and the subjectivities of informants, Winter (2010) defended her subjective stances and acknowledged the empiricist-based concerns about reliability, validity, and generalizability that some may raise. She stated that she did not want to construct objective accounts because the point of her study was to focus on the children's subjectivities. Furthermore, she was not concerned with the reliability of their perspectives, but simply wanted to know what the perspectives are. Along the lines of the thought of Mowrer (1932) and other human scientists, she pointed out that "all perspectives are subjective and filtered through many lenses (McLeod, 2007; Schofield, 2005), but that they are still valid" (p. 189).

In terms of generalizability, Winter (2010) made no claims of probabilistic generalizability, but stated that she had identified and documented an "emotional void" that can further the trauma that children experience in response to the almost cataclysmic changes they experienced in moving from biological families to out of home care. She documented how young children have few if any opportunities to process, understand, and learn to manage the impact of trauma on their sense of themselves. Adults were generally unresponsive to their emotional needs and abandoned them into "emotional voids." Winter made no claims that every child experiences out-of-home care in this way, but that social workers, policy makers, and program supervisors and developers must pay attention to the emotional void of being unresponsive to young, traumatized children. Winter is not explicit in her evocation of the values of social justice and care, but these values are infused in her research report.

Winter's (2010) article, of the four I examined, especially contrasts with empiricist principles of objectivity, quantification, and avoidance of ethical and emancipatory concerns. In addition, her use of excerpts from interviews is exemplary in that they evoke responses in audiences, which is a

principle that Park impressed upon his students, as previously discussed. As a study of human beings in difficult circumstances, it exemplifies long-held human sciences perspectives.

The Three Cities Study: A Project in Classic Chicago Traditions

The final example of contemporary research in the tradition of the human sciences and the Chicago School is the Three Cities Study, six-year, longitudinal research on welfare, children, and their families (Burton, Cherlin, et al., 2009; Burton, Purvin, et al., 2009). The project took place over a six-year period and used a classic design that was multisite and urban. It combined surveys, a developmental study, and longitudinal ethnographies. The conceptual framework included symbolic interactionism and the associated principle of immersion with the purpose of understanding in great detail the experiences of low-income women and their families over a six-year period. The methodological principles included the importance of forming relationships in the field with informants in order to establish trust. Trust provides contexts for informants to discuss “sensitive or potentially hidden behavior” (Burton, Cherlin, et al.). The purpose of this study was to understand low-income women and their families, to document the effects of welfare reform, and to have an impact on welfare policy, an example of an emancipatory goal. This study shows that classic Chicago traditions are alive and well in contemporary family research.

Summary

Overall, these four articles demonstrate the continuities and changes over time that have occurred in Chicago-style and human sciences research. Many methods and methodologies have endured. For the most part, the changes have built upon and supplemented the traditions. Some empiricist perspectives have influenced researchers, such as Son and Bauer’s (2010) and Zou’s apparent “objective” stance regarding themselves as researchers and Winter’s (2010) defense of the

subjectivity of her research, but on the whole, the traditions have endured.

Final Words

Qualitative research on families builds on enduring traditions whose roots extend to the middle of the nineteenth century and the origins of social research. The Chicago School of Sociology in the first third of the twentieth century pulled together methods, methodologies, and philosophies of science that encouraged methodological pluralism. These diverse methodologies included studies of interactions between persons and historical contexts over time, subjective accounts of informants and of researchers, immersion, multiple methods, emancipatory perspectives, and interest in description and theory. There was no one way to do research, and any combination of the above and other creative strategies were part of the diverse bundle of approaches to social inquiry that characterized Chicago traditions. When empiricist approaches gained dominance in social research, the traditions persisted throughout the United States and internationally, although in relatively small numbers. It is not clear how much of a resurgence is occurring today in terms of these traditional approaches to research. However, they do persist, appear in new forms with updated perspectives, and show signs of effectiveness in advancing both human understanding and social change. There is reason to believe that they will persist and continue to contribute to the social good.

Social research began with multi-method studies, and researchers have continued to do them to this day. Many agencies of the federal government want to fund multiple method studies, often called mixed methods, for the purposes of capitalizing on the depth and breadth that qualitative research can deliver and on the scope and quantitative testing that survey methods and experiments can provide. This is an important development that represents a turn to tradition that itself is deep and rich.

The future of family research is likely to see a continuation of human sciences traditions since they have endured for so long and have a proven

record of theory development, descriptive research, and practical applications. My hope is that family researchers also return wholeheartedly to embracing emancipatory research, reflexivity, research infused with values, and the role of advocate. Value-free, objective research is unlikely to be possible. The best we can do is to reflect upon our own assumptions, values, and perspectives and to be as transparent as possible about them. By so doing, we may be clear-minded enough to do research that follows principles whose purpose is to create trustworthy research, useful theory, and valid interventions in terms of policies, programs, and practices. Interventions, such as policies and programs, are valid not only in terms of external, internal, construct, and statistical conclusion validity but they also are valid when they are responsive to the lived experiences of the persons for whom the interventions are crafted.

Qualitative approaches bring researchers into direct contact with the lived experiences of family members. Sometimes these experiences are joyful and happy, but often we do research out of concern for human suffering. Through immersion, we develop in-depth understandings of suffering. The research of Winter (2010) and Son and Bauer (2010) are examples. We can choose to write research up and, like Robert Park, assume that the research will influence public opinion. We can also be like Rosalie Wax, Beatrice Webb, Sidney Webb, Frederic LePlay, among many others, who found their research so compelling that they wanted to do something to change social conditions that were hurtful. They took on the roles of advocates for social change. To be effective researchers and advocates, we would have to keep these roles separate in the sense that we can't let our social concerns distort what research participants tell us and how we interpret what we hear. By being good researchers and skilled advocates, we could be advocates of social change. We could testify before legislative committees, create draft legislation, and plan intervention programs.

In the future, if family researchers turn to emancipatory perspectives, increasing numbers may consider the Internet as a site of dissemination. Refereed journal articles and scholarly books

would continue to be of high value, but much of what we learn in our research is of importance to family members, practitioners, policy makers, and the general public, few of whom read academic journals. There are multiple Internet sites where researchers may disseminate brief articles. For example, I disseminate my research in scholarly journals and books and testify whenever I have the opportunity before legislative bodies. I also have published about 250 articles on a website called scribd.com between June 2009 and August 2012. By August 2012, I had more than a half a million reads of my short articles. This means a great deal to me, that my research and other writings draw interest and may contribute to the common good. Surprising to some academic scholars, perhaps, is that many people do not like to read. There is always YouTube where we can disseminate brief videos about our research, a tactic that many researchers use in their quest to make a difference.

Few researchers study families only because it's interesting and because theory and descriptions are important solely for their own sakes. We want to make a difference. Reassessing the place of values, advocacy, and reflexivity in our research may be a route many family researchers want to take. Such directions are traditional in family research and serve many purposes, among them contributions to the common good.

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Stephen A. Anderson, Ronald M. Sabatelli,
and Iva Kosutic

Introduction

Systems theory and its offspring family systems theory have evolved and matured over the course of some 4 decades. The developmental history of family systems theory has been rich. If a theory is judged by its utility, or as Kuhn (1962) proposed, by the number of adherents it wins in the scientific community, then family systems theory has accomplished much. It has informed theorists, researchers, educators, and clinical practitioners from a variety of disciplines including education (Eppler & Weir, 2009), nursing (Bell, 2009), social work (Dunst & Trivette, 2009), psychiatry (Schweitzer, Zwack, Weber, Nicolai, & Hirschenberger, 2007), medicine (Steinglass, 2006), public health (Novilla, Barnes, De La Cruz, Williams, & Rogers, 2006), religion

(Richardson, 2005), and marriage and family therapy (Bartle-Haring & Slesnick, 2012).

Family systems theory has been widely accepted within the family social sciences because it has provided insight into the unique patterns and processes found within and between families. Additionally, family systems theory has highlighted the importance of understanding each family as being embedded within a unique historical, social, ethnic, and cultural context. However, in our view, the value of context extends beyond consideration of the contextual factors that influence a given family's organization and functioning. Context also is critical to understanding the theory itself and how it has evolved over time. Much like families are said to be self-organizing and tending towards greater and greater levels of complexity (Bertalanffy, 1975), so too family systems theory can be viewed as evolving towards greater levels of complexity and becoming more comprehensive in the process.

In this chapter, we offer an overview of some of the basic concepts, historical developments, and contemporary advances in our understanding of family systems. We think it is useful to apply the concept of *punctuation* to an analysis of how systems theorizing has evolved over time. This concept was introduced by Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson (1967) to describe differences in how partners explain a sequence of events that occurs between them. According to Watzlawick et al., each behavior can be thought of as both a cause (of subsequent actions) and reaction (to previous

S.A. Anderson, PhD (✉)
Department of Human Development & Family Studies,
University of Connecticut, Mansfield, CT, USA
e-mail: Stephen.Anderson@Uconn.Edu

R.M. Sabatelli, PhD
Department of Human Development & Family Studies,
University of Connecticut, Mansfield, CT, USA
e-mail: ronald.sabatelli@uconn.edu

I. Kosutic, PhD
Marriage and Family Therapy Programs,
University of Connecticut, Mansfield, CT, USA
e-mail: iva.kosutic@uconn.edu

actions). However, each person will interpret the resulting interaction in a unique way, often attributing the cause to the other (“You started it by being in a bad mood” says the wife. “I wasn’t in a bad mood until you came in and provoked me” replies the husband). These punctuations are in essence a way of constructing meaning.

So what does this have to do with systems theory, you ask? It is our contention that over the years various systems-oriented theorists have applied their own punctuations to the theory. This has resulted in certain aspects of systems being made the focus of the theory with other systemic properties being de-emphasized. One example of this is theorists attempting to understand patterns of interaction that occur within the family while not attending to important contextual influences that are external to the family.

Throughout our discussion of systems thinking, we will focus on how context influences the patterns of interaction found within families. We contend that an understanding and application of systems theory is as much dependent upon the punctuation applied by the theorist, researcher, or practitioner as the specific concepts that have come to define the theory. Further, these punctuations change in response to changes in the broader culture and developments in other areas of the physical and social sciences. We acknowledge, too, that the depiction of family systems theory we offer in this chapter is based upon our own collective punctuation. For us, context spans the spectrum from biological processes within the individual to the individual, family subsystems, family unit, extended family, community, society, and culture.

Overview of Family Systems

System thinking is grounded in the simple but elegant notion that what makes a system unique are not the parts comprising the system, but the relationships among the parts. A simple illustration is an engineered system like a bridge. Knowing the components that go into building the bridge can never provide sufficient insight into what allows the bridge to withstand the

stresses of weather, temperature, or weight, or understand the purpose the bridge serves. To understand the bridge as a system requires an awareness of how all of the component parts and subsystems that go into it are connected to one another. It further requires an appreciation of its holistic quality in that the bridge, like the family system, is more than the sum of its individual parts (Buckley, 1967; Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993).

Although the family is not an engineered system, the application of systems thinking to the family transforms our thinking as to what contributes to the uniqueness of each family. When conceived of as a system, it becomes clear that the interrelationships among family members, more so than the individuals who comprise the family, are central to our understanding of the family. Knowing that a single mother heads a family, for example, does not tell us anything about what goes on inside the family. To know what makes this single mother-headed family unique (unique from all other single parent-headed families and unique from all other family structures) requires an understanding of how the members of this family interact with one another. That is, the unit of analysis is the relationships that occur among family members.

Additionally, family systems theory posits that the relationships among family members are governed by recurring, predictable, and purposive constellations of relationship rules (Anderson & Sabatelli, 2007; Kantor & Lehr, 1975; Watzlawick et al., 1967). Interactions among family members are not random acts. They are purposive and goal-directed. That is, families are organized in ways that allow them to execute a broad constellation of tasks to meet the internal needs and demands of their members and the requirements of external agencies in society (Hill, 1971).

The family’s organization also is said to be structurally complex because it is comprised of various units including individuals and subsystems (e.g., marital, parental, sibling) that may be organized hierarchically by generation, gender, or function. That is, some subsystems may hold greater power or influence than others. Together these units comprise the larger family system

(Minuchin, 1974). Relationships among individual family members and subsystems are also viewed as being organized by a system of rules that govern how the family's common purposes or tasks are executed (Broderick, 1993).

Family systems are said to be interdependent because changes in any part of the system will reverberate throughout the entire system prompting changes in other parts as well (Bertalanffy, 1975; Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993). This point is important because, as we will see later on in this chapter, not all levels of change are easily discerned and the changes that reverberate throughout the family system can originate within an individual member or outside of the family unit altogether in the broader environment (Bateson, 2000; Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993).

The family system is maintained by the establishment of internal and external boundaries that define the system and mark the interface between one element of the system and another. Internal boundaries regulate the flow of information between and within family subsystems. They also regulate the degree of autonomy and individuality permitted among members within the family. External boundaries delineate the family from other systems and determine family membership by delineating who is in, and out, of the family. External boundaries also regulate the flow of information between the family and other social systems (Anderson & Sabatelli, 2007). The concept of boundaries, much like other family systems concepts such as holism, is largely metaphorical because information about family boundaries is not directly observable. Rather it is derived from the observer's punctuation, or subjective impressions, of how the systems and subsystems relate to one another (Steinglass, 1987).

Family systems are considered to be open systems because they have some degree of exchange between and among levels of the system, although they differ in the degree to which they are open or closed (Minuchin, 1974; Olson, Sprenkle, & Russell, 1979). Because they are considered to be open, information-processing systems, families must continually monitor information, or feedback both from within the system and from the external environment, to determine when change

or reorganization is required (Bertalanffy, 1975). The family's adaptation depends upon its capacity to reorganize or change in response to new sources of information. Sources of information may be internal, such as family members' maturation, additions or departures from the family, or external, encompassing various alterations in the family's circumstances. Examples of internal family events are the birth of a child, the transition from childhood to adolescence, or the death of a family member. External events could include moving to a new community or mother obtaining a new job. These changes place stress upon established strategies and rules, and this stress can ultimately lead to a reorganization of strategies and rules such that a better fit is achieved within the family's present circumstances. At all times, there exists within a system a dynamic tension between morphostatic (change-resisting feedback) and morphogenetic (change-promoting feedback) processes. Unless the need for reorganization within a system goes beyond some critical threshold, the system resists changing its existing strategies. When the need for reorganization exceeds some critical threshold, adaptation or reorganization of the family system will occur.

Some have suggested that families may sometimes fail to make adaptations when they are required. These systems have been referred to as "closed," or "rigid." Other systems are thought to make adaptations when none are required. These systems have been referred to as "chaotic," "random," "disorganized," or "unstable" (Olson et al., 1979). In both instances, families, as open systems, are reacting to information and making adaptations. However, the adaptations made by these systems are not optimal, because they may fail to perform critical systems tasks. One such task is meeting the physical needs of family members for food, shelter, and clothing. Another is fostering a clear sense of identity for both individual family members and the family as a whole. A third critical task is maintaining clear boundaries. This includes clear boundaries between individual members, subsystems, or the family and the external environment. For individual family members, this entails a balance between family connection and individuality. At the level

of subsystem, families must determine what responsibilities are to be carried out by the couple (intimacy, sexual relationship), parents (child discipline, education), and siblings (support, socialization). Boundaries with the external environment define who is in the family and who is not. A fourth critical task is managing the family emotional climate with respect to members' needs for closeness, acceptance, and nurturance (Anderson & Sabatelli, 2007; Hess & Handel, 1985; Kantor & Lehr, 1975).

However, it must be noted that decisions about whether a family's adaptation is "optimal" or "less-than optimal" are derived from an observer's subjective impressions. An alternative punctuation is offered by scholars such as Dell (1982) who suggested that family systems always operate in a manner that is congruent with their context. That is, if we were able to discern all contextual factors operating at all levels of the system at a given point in time, the family system would be shown to be operating in an optimal manner. We return to this issue later. In the next section, we review early efforts to develop family system concepts into an organized theory of family social science.

Early Efforts to Formulate a Theory of Family Systems

One critical issue addressed by early theorists was whether or not family systems theory was indeed a theory. Some criticized it for being overly general and ambiguous. Aldous (1978) concluded that its core concepts were conceptually defined but difficult to operationalize. Further, a framework of hypotheses linking the core concepts together was largely lacking (Aldous, 1970). Some suggested that systems theory was really not a theory at all but rather a philosophical perspective (Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993). One early review of the theory concluded that, at the then current stage of development, it was best considered a "conceptual perspective, a sensitizer to critical issues rather than a set of interrelated propositions" (Broderick & Smith, 1979, p. 126). These authors

went on to suggest that the chief problem was not with the theory but with the application,

The fact is, we know very little about the family as a system. Its system parameters have certainly not been specified and calibrated (let alone measured) in a degree to even approximate the level of precision required by much of the systems literature (p. 128).

However, a year later, Holman and Burr (1980) concluded that,

At the beginning of the decade, debates existed about whether the systems approach was an analytic approach or a bone fide theory. These debates no longer occur. It is clearly both (p. 732).

They went on to say that, "Nevertheless, systems theory has not matured as quickly as many had hoped" (p. 732).

Underlying much of the early debate regarding whether systems theory was or was not a theory was the predominance of a modernistic, positivistic paradigm to understand theory development in particular and family social science in general. The focus was on the scientific method which involves observation of phenomena, formulation of hypotheses concerning these phenomena, experimentation to demonstrate the truth or falseness of the hypothesis, and arriving at conclusions that validate or modify the hypothesis. Such a position is evident in some early assessments of family systems theory that concluded it had not yet achieved the status of theory because even though its key concepts made us aware of certain properties of families and aspects of family members' behaviors, they had not been joined into sets of related propositions that had been verified empirically (Aldous, 1978; Hill, 1966; Rodman, 1980). According to Holman and Burr (1980), the main factor that determines the quality of a theory is where it is in the process of being gradually tested and revised. Based upon their review of theory development in the family field in 1980, they concluded that "the progress that has been made up till now is little more than a beginning" (p. 734). They called for future theory development to include identifying the logical connections between parts of the theory. This included specifying the nature of the relationships among the theory's propositions and clearly

identifying how various factors interrelate to influence the operation of the family system (e.g., specification of intervening variables, direct and indirect effects, and the role of various processes in the dynamics of family functioning).

A more pragmatic stance was taken by Sprey (1988) who suggested that the relevance and credibility of a theory ultimately rests with its potential to guide effective social policy, improve the quality of marriages and families, and help emancipate those whose lives are locked into unfair or oppressive structures (p. 879). A similar conclusion was reached more recently by Doherty and Baptiste (1993) who suggested that theory needs to be evaluated in relationship to its “contribution to the discourse.” Clearly, systems thinking has found its way into the mainstream of family social sciences. It has influenced the discourse in the social sciences, informed research and practice, and guided social policy.

Much has changed in the ensuing decades that have added to, and changed, the utility and scope of family systems theory. In the following sections, we identify several of these developments. We next discuss the shift from grand theorizing to the development of middle-range theories. Then in the following section, we examine contemporary developments that influenced the evolution of family systems theory.

A Shift from Grand-Scale Theorizing to Development of Middle-Range Theories

The shift from grand-scale theorizing to middle-range theories was envisioned by some of the earlier grand-scale family theorists. The purpose of developing middle-range theories is to promote further research and theoretical revision (Broderick, 1971). Middle-range theories are modest in scope and generality, relatively close to the data, easily tested and revised (Holman & Burr, 1980). It was anticipated that the propositions derived from these efforts would be eventually integrated into a more comprehensive theoretical framework (Hill, 1966).

There have been numerous efforts to apply family systems concepts to smaller, middle-range theories or models of family functioning (cf. Bateson, Jackson, Haley, & Weakland, 1956; Kantor & Lehr, 1975). The goal of these middle-range theories was to predict and explain the levels of functioning found within and between families. Many of these theories were developed by family therapists whose primary interest was to devise intervention strategies that facilitate positive change. The decades of the 1970s and 1980s included the development and empirical testing of several influential middle-range theories. We focus our attention here on several models that have developed a coherent conceptual framework and received empirical support. Each of these models developed instruments to operationalize key concepts (Beavers & Hampson, 1990; Craddock, 2001; Epstein, Baldwin, Bishop, & Keitner, 1983; Franklin, Streeter, & Springer, 2001) and accumulated a strong body of empirical evidence to support its major hypotheses. We offer an overview of the key constructs and hypotheses specific to each model below, but we will not offer a comprehensive review of supportive empirical findings because they are extensive and readily available in previously published works (Beavers & Hampson, 1990, 2000, 2003; Epstein, Ryan, Bishop, Miller, & Keitner, 2003; Miller, Ryan, Keitner, Bishop, & Epstein, 2000; Olson, 2000; Olson & Gorall, 2003).

Circumplex Model of Marital and Family Systems

The Circumplex Model (Olson et al., 1979), one of the most widely researched middle-range theories, posits two primary dimensions, cohesion (emotional bonds between family members) and adaptability (capacity to change), with a third dimension, communication, serving an important facilitating function (Olson, 2000; Olson et al., 1979). Four levels of cohesion (disengaged, separated, connected, enmeshed) when combined with four levels of adaptability (rigid, structured, flexible, chaotic) produce a typology of 16 family types that are used to explain the degree to which

the system is effective in fostering the health and well-being of its individual members and the family as a whole. Families that fall in the central (balanced) regions on both dimensions have been found to be the most functional in meeting members' developmental needs and allowing them to achieve appropriate levels of individuality and closeness at each developmental stage. There is also recognition that a family's placement on the two dimensions will vary according to the family's developmental stage, environmental changes (loss of employment, life-threatening illness), and other contextual factors such as ethnic and cultural norms.

Beavers Systems Model

The Beavers Systems Model also identifies two primary dimensions along which families are presumed to vary—competence and style (Beavers & Hampson, 1993, 2003). *Competence* refers to the health of the system as defined by factors such as egalitarian leadership, strong parental coalitions, clearly established generational boundaries, support for the autonomy of family members, promotion of intimacy and trust, and the capacity to accept and resolve differences (Beavers & Hampson, 1993). The *style* dimension refers to the degree of closeness or separateness in the family as evidenced by degree of centripetal (binding) or centrifugal (expelling) forces. Functional families are able to maintain both a sense of separateness and involvement in the outside world and a sense of connection to the family. The model identifies ten family types based upon the family's level of competence and predominant style.

McMaster Model

The McMaster model posits that healthy family systems must be able to deal effectively with three sets of tasks—maintenance (food, money, transportation, shelter), developmental, and hazardous (handling crises). Healthy functioning is dependent upon the family managing all three

sets of tasks by using effective strategies for problem-solving, communication, clearly defining roles (task assignment), affective responsiveness (emotional expressiveness), affective involvement (disengaged, empathic involvement, over-involved), and behavior control (rigid, flexible, laissez-faire, chaotic). The flexible style has been found to be the most optimal and the chaotic style the most dysfunctional (Epstein et al., 2003; Miller et al., 2000).

Although each of these mid-range models offers a unique perspective on the elements of healthy family functioning, they also share many of the same systems theory assumptions. They all address the critical task of establishing interaction patterns or strategies for managing the family's emotional environment. Whether this is referred to as forming alliances, cohesion, family style, or family involvement, a sense of connectedness, caring, and mutual support is seen as critical to healthy family functioning.

All models address the systems concept of adaptation. Families are viewed as being able to alter their structure and organization in response to changes in family life. The concepts of adaptation, adaptability, rigidity, and behavior control all address the important notion of system change.

All models address the regulation of the family's internal and external boundaries. Internally, functional families develop patterns of interaction that demonstrate respect for individual differences and account for the differing needs of family members at various stages of development. The concepts of hierarchy, clear subsystem boundaries, enmeshment, disengagement, autonomy, and empathic involvement all speak to this task. The family must also develop clear boundaries and strategies for dealing with the external environment. The emphasis on the broader social context, external stressors, establishing a positive view of humanity and the outside world, developing the capacity to balance centripetal and centrifugal styles, and the management of hazardous tasks and crises all point to the need for the family to move freely beyond the boundary of the family to elicit needed information, resources, and support.

A fourth feature is the importance of effective communication or rules for relating. The Circumplex model suggests that effective communication is characteristic of families that function in the balanced regions of cohesion and adaptability. Both the Beavers Systems model and the McMaster models view clear and direct communication as characteristic of competent and healthy families.

Finally, these models address the systems concept that families are purposive (problem-solving), goal-directed, and task performing. The McMaster model highlights the importance of the family fulfilling essential tasks (and implementing strategies such as problem-solving) to insure its own survival. The Circumplex Model posits that the family system is organized so as to address the developmental needs of its individual members. The Beavers Systems Model's concept of competence refers to how well the family performs the necessary tasks of organizing and managing itself in such a way as to support the health and well-being of its members.

One of the major advancements that resulted from the shift from grand-scale theorizing to middle-range models is that it benefited those who must conduct assessments that differentiate functional from dysfunctional family systems or intervene in these systems to promote positive change. A social worker, for example, observes parents during a home visit and determines whether the parents are effective or not by examining how well they execute the tasks of parenting. This determination requires a comparison of the parenting behaviors observed to the parenting behaviors thought to be appropriate by the social service community. Similarly, researchers determine whether a family is effective or not by using questionnaires to assess how families execute their tasks. The items comprising the questionnaires are thought to tap into compelling and meaningful aspects of family life. The responses to the questions are judged against what the research community believes should be found within effective families.

All judgments of functioning, whether they be observations made by a social worker during a home visit or observations collected by a

researcher employing a measure of family functioning, are grounded in values. These values are emergent—they evolve and change over time in response to the ongoing “dialogue” that exists among social service providers, family researchers, policy makers, and others. It is through this ongoing dialogue that we clarify and refine our thinking about the processes involved in making judgments about family functioning. In this regard, it is also important to note that the middle-range models discussed here require a particular punctuation of the central features of family systems. They focus primarily on the essential intra-family qualities of effective functioning and attend less to the influence of the family's external context on its overall functioning.

In our view, judgments about family systems functioning will always be approximations at best. It is impossible to predict the sheer scope and variety of random events, unexpected occurrences, and contextual influences that shape family experience. Nor can we anticipate fully how individual family members' traits, abilities, biological predispositions, and developmental pathways will affect the family system over time. On the other hand, the empirical replication of core family systems constructs across multiple samples, using varied methodologies, and encompassing diverse cultures and contexts lends credibility to the view that some family system processes may indeed be nonrandom and reliably explained and predicted (cf. Cummings & Keller, 2007; Gottman & Notarius, 2002; Rohner & Britner, 2002; Sabatelli & Bartle-Haring, 2003).

In summary, the development of a grand theory of family systems with a set of well-defined, empirically validated propositions has never been achieved. The careful documenting of the causal interrelationships among theoretical propositions that was advocated for by family studies scholars has not been accomplished and may likely never be. The axiomatic form of theory building based upon a positivist, modernistic search for axioms, and propositions seems to have reached a plateau several decades ago. However, this is not to suggest that the primacy of empirical research in advancing family systems theories has changed. Many scholars

continue to rely upon systems concepts as a theoretical basis for their research. Nor do we wish to suggest that the development and evolution of family systems theory has ended. In fact, family systems theory has seen many developments and advances in the last 30 years. In the next section, we will summarize some of these contemporary developments and illustrate how the richness and breadth of family systems theories has expanded.

Contemporary Developments in Family Systems Theories

Postmodernism

Most theoretical developments in the area of family systems theory have been derived from a positivistic or modern perspective. As we have noted earlier, the primary method used to develop theory is through the process of concept development and clarification, formulation of propositions that link key concepts together, and researching the direction of influence of the relationships among key concepts. The engine for this process is the linkage of conceptual work (proposition and hypothesis formation) with accepted research methodologies and the accumulation of empirical results which are then used to refine key propositions of the theory. Variables logically related to a concept in the theory are portrayed in a causal matrix (Hill, 1966).

As Sprey (1988) has noted, theory building is a human endeavor in which questions and answers are shaped by cultural influences and the social milieu within which theorists operate. Theory development is a recursive process that links the theory with prevailing cultural beliefs and attitudes, language, world views, and frames of reference of theorists and scholars of the times. The evolution of family systems theory parallels developments in broader arenas of culture, philosophy, and the physical and social sciences. Most notable is the contribution of postmodernism. According to Doherty (1999), postmodernism is the principal force shaping emerging theories.

Postmodernism has been defined as a cluster of concepts that critically challenges the existence of objective knowledge and absolute truth (Kvale, 1992). It assumes that all “reality” is inevitably subjective. It calls into question the search for universal laws, conventions, or structures. Postmodernism does not make exclusive claims. Rather it is viewed as one perspective among many competing perspectives. It is self-reflexive in that it invites and demands continued analysis (deconstruction) of its premises and applications. Social constructionism, which is considered one of several postmodern perspectives, places emphasis on truth, reality, and knowledge as being socially embedded and products of the language used to describe them (Gergen, 2001).

Chief among the premises of postmodernism of interest to us here is the notion that the creation and interpretation of any theory, family systems theory included, is a subjective exercise and cannot be separated from the prevailing cultural milieu (Sprey, 1988). Further, the theory is dependent upon the constraints of the language used to describe it. From this vantage point, the search for objective, empirically derived propositions that lead to the development of a grand-scale theory of how families operate is unattainable. This is because the context in which families operate is continually changing, and descriptions and explanations applied to the family by different observers are always subjective. We are all born into a socio-cultural context within which we learn the language of our group and internalize its norms, values, and ideology. We speak in the conventions, metaphors, and symbols by which our community is characterized (Becvar & Becvar, 1999). During each encounter we select what we will see and hear and what we will ignore and these choices are more often than not governed by the interpretations and meanings we have established before. Rather than inhabiting a universe, postmodernism proposes that we live in a multiverse, or a context of multiple perspectives. Each participant in the relevant social context operates by his or her own observations, interpretations, and use of language.

Another important implication of postmodernism for systems theory is the location of the researcher or theorist in relation to the family system. A modern or positivist perspective places the researcher or theorist outside of the system that is to be observed. Whether the level of observation is the individual, subsystem, family system, or larger context, the observer remains outside (and “objective”) of the system. In contrast, the postmodern perspective locates the observer inside of the system. From this vantage point, “reality” is seen as self-referential. That is, the act of observation influences what we are attempting to understand. Everything observed by the theorist or researcher is filtered through one’s personal frame of reference and one’s very presence alters the context under study. In this regard, one does not discover behavior, one creates it (Becvar & Becvar, 1999). The behaviors we observe and the meaning we assign to them are our own constructions.

Another implication is that family systems are neither functional nor nonfunctional, overstructured or understructured, overly open or overly rigid. The system is what it is (Dell, 1982). It always operates to maintain itself. The appearance of change or instability at one level is understood as system maintenance or stability at another level. For example, environment does not determine family structure. Rather family and environment reciprocally affect one another and the potential for reciprocal interactions is a function of the structure created through earlier reciprocal interactions. Family and environment are parts of a broader system. The family affects and is affected by environment and environment affects and is affected by family. A change at any level must be accommodated by the system at another level.

Similarly, family and boundary require each other, but do not cause one another. That is, in order to recognize the family as a level of system distinct from other levels, there must be a boundary. At the same time, in order for a boundary to be present, there must be ongoing recursive interactions among family members by which we can identify the family system (Becvar & Becvar, 1999).

Dell (1982) introduced the concept of coherence to denote this process. In his view, the

description of any part of the system as separate and distinct from other parts (e.g., family-environment) requires a dualistic (cause-effect, subject-object, independent-dependent variable) form of thinking rather than a systemic (post-modern) orientation since a system is a coherent whole. Differentiating the system into parts (including observer-observed) is to mistake the parts for the whole, or what Bateson (2000) referred to as “chopping up the ecology.”

The implications for family systems theories, and all other grand-scale theories, are profound and may very well explain the plateau that was reached in the development of a grand-scale family systems theory several decades ago (Doherty, 1999). From the postmodern perspective, there are no truths out there waiting to be discovered (Anderson, 2003). There are no cause-and-effect relationships among dependent variables, no sets of empirically derived propositions to be applied to all families, and no universal properties that can be used to explain all families. In fact, every effort to observe and explain a family phenomenon will be changed by the very act of observing and explaining. Every family system will be comprised of individual members who observe, explain, and use language from a different vantage point. So, too, will every member of the broader social and cultural context who attempts to ascribe certain properties to a given family system, including theorists and researchers, operate from a different vantage point. All explanations will be limited by the selective perceptions of the individual observer and by the structure and limitations imposed by the prevailing cultural norms and language system.

We chose to begin this section on contemporary influences on the development of systems theory with this overview of the postmodern influence. However, we also acknowledge that the punctuation on family systems offered by postmodernism is not a new development. Bertalanffy (1969) suggested some 4 decades ago that,

perception is not a reflection of ‘real things’ (whatever their metaphysical status), and knowledge not a simple approximation to ‘truth’ or ‘reality.’ It is an interaction between knower and known,

this dependent on a multiplicity of factors of a biological, psychological, cultural, linguistic, etc., nature (p. xxii).

It perhaps required a different time and cultural context in order for this perspective on family systems to gain broader recognition. Other significant influences on the development of family systems theory that also emerged in a particular social and cultural milieu were feminism and multiculturalism.

Feminism and Multiculturalism

The contributions of feminist perspectives to family systems theory started with critiques of the theory in the late 1970s and early 1980s. These critiques centered on the failure of family systems theory to consider key features of the family's broader context. One overlooked element was the patriarchal social system of beliefs that was thought to marginalize women's experiences and minimize their voice both in the family and the broader society. From the feminist perspective, the dominant social and cultural ideology defines family members' roles, identities, and rule for relating with one another (Allen, 2001; White & Klein, 2008). This becomes manifest in the way resources in the family and society are distributed and how power and influence is acquired and maintained. Men by virtue of their privileged position in the family and society have greater access to resources than women and this gender imbalance shapes family relationships by extending greater power and privilege to men in areas such as division of household labor, child rearing, and financial decision-making (Chafetz, 2004).

An especially critical interaction pattern involving gender concerns couple violence. According to feminist scholars, family systems theory did not hold perpetrators responsible for their abuse because attention was focused exclusively on the couple's interaction patterns (Bograd, 1984). These theorists argued that such a conceptualization diffused responsibility for violence across all involved parties and implicitly blamed the victim for the abuse. According to Avis (1992), "the abusive act disappears in systemic

formulations, this time seen as but one step in a recursive loop, the loop itself a sign of family dysfunction, where the abused is perceived as equally (or more) responsible with the abuser for the maintenance of the dysfunctional pattern" (p. 229).

The feminist perspective has played an important role in expanding the range of family system theory by calling attention to the interface between broader social forces and internal family dynamics and the need to clarify the role of individual responsibility in family systems. Current systems formulations no longer absolve abusers of responsibility for their violence nor do they blame the victim. However, they do take into account the complex set of factors that define each interaction and hold each partner responsible for actions that may contribute to abuse. This includes identifying who uses violence, the direction of violence (batterer-to-victim, reciprocal), established couple communication patterns (conflict-avoidant, conflict escalating, intimacy-enhancing), availability of social supports, degree of openness of the family's boundary with the broader community, community enforcement of laws against domestic violence, victims' decisions to stay or leave the relationship, and other individual factors such as affective and personality disorders, alcohol abuse, gender attitudes, and a family history of being victimized by, or witnessing, violence (Anderson, 2001; Anderson & Schlossberg, 1999; Johnson, 1995; 2006).

Whereas the feminist critique of family systems theory started with an emphasis on gender, the multicultural critique started with a focus on how ethnic and cultural differences inform family interactions (McGoldrick, 2003). Over time, both perspectives have broadened to include an array of social categories such as gender, race, class, ethnicity, ability, and sexual orientation (Burman, 2005). More recently, integrated feminist and multicultural perspectives such as feminist-informed critical multiculturalism have emerged. According to McDowell and Fang (2007), this approach acknowledges the politics of cultural differences and the "historical disparities and dissimilarities in lived experiences of women across racial and/or cultural and

socioeconomic groups” (p. 551). This approach further underscores the idea that various markers of social identity—gender, ethnicity, race, class, and sexual orientation intersect to position each individual along multiple continuums of power that can vary by time, place, and relationship (McDowell & Fang, 2007).

A major contribution of these perspectives has been a thickening of the description of the social and cultural contexts, within which family systems must operate. As we have noted earlier, family systems are open systems that must continually manage information that originates outside its boundary. Feminist and multicultural perspectives call attention to the legal, social, and political “systems” with which families must interact and point to the need for families to manage the powerful socially constructed influences of privilege and oppression in their daily lives (Fields, 2008).

Ecological/Contextual Perspectives

Early family theorists envisioned that contemporary theories would evolve through a process of borrowing concepts from other theories and integration of existing conceptual schemas into broader, more flexible ones (Aldous, 1970; Sprey, 1988). Hill (1966) called for the building of “interpretive bridges” which would link theoretical frameworks in such a way that concepts developed in one could be translated into the concepts and language of other theoretical frameworks. The integration of family systems theories with ecological/contextual theories is one excellent example of this kind of integration.

In the same article noted above, Hill (1966) noted,

We lack group terms for family transactions with external agencies, where the internal system of the family is left residual and one concentrates on the network of relationships external to the family. What vocabulary of terms can characterize these exchanges, reciprocities, and interdependencies? None of the conceptual frameworks identified to date provides such a vocabulary for whole families (p. 13).

In the ensuing 4 decades, ecological perspectives have clearly addressed this shortcoming.

Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model provides the language and the mapping of connections between family systems and “external agencies” (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). The focal point in the bioecological model is not the larger social system but, instead, the individual human being. Human beings are active, evolving biopsychological organisms that develop through complex, reciprocal interactions with their immediate settings which are referred to as microsystems. The family is one microsystem among others such as a social clubs, groups of friends, or school. The interactions that take place between microsystems and the individual are referred to as proximal processes because of their proximity to the individual. And because of their proximity to the developing individual, proximal processes are thought to exert greater influence than settings that do not come in direct contact with the individual.

The mesosystem describes connections among elements of the person’s microsystems (teacher–parents, parents–neighbors). The exosystem encompasses the larger social system in which the individual does not function directly. This level of context affects development by interacting with one or more structures in the person’s microsystem. A mother’s work setting is an example of an exosystem that affects a child indirectly. The child does not interact directly with the mother’s work setting and yet the work setting influences the child by affecting mother’s emotional state, her behavior, and her ability to provide for her family. The macrosystem is the outermost level of context which contains cultural values, customs, and laws (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). The effects of these macrosystem influences have a cascading influence throughout the interactions of all other layers. For example, if the prevailing cultural belief is that parents should be solely responsible for raising their children, the culture is less likely to provide resources to help parents.

The last element identified by Bronfenbrenner (1977) is the chronosystem. The chronosystem refers to the dimension of time as it relates to individual development. Time can be external such as the timing of a parent’s death, or internal, such as the physiological changes a child

undergoes with age. As children age, they are likely to react differently to their environment.

Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model has provided a language and framework for describing the multiple levels of context within which family systems operate. However, rather than conceptualizing family as an open system embedded in a reciprocal relationship between family and environment, as was the case with earlier family systems formulations, the bioecological model positions the family system as one element among many that interact with other levels of systems to constitute a larger, holistic, social system. By locating the unit of analysis as the individual, the model has been able to differentiate the level of influence exerted by various contexts or settings according to their proximity to the developing person. A good deal of empirical evidence supports Bronfenbrenner's formulations (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000). They have been used extensively in family research to identify the relative influence of various contextual settings on individual and family development (cf. Anderson, Sabatelli, & Kosutic, 2007; Meyers, Varkey, & Aguirre, 2002).

Attachment Theory

Another noteworthy theoretical integration that has received a great deal of recent attention is the bridge between systems and attachment theories (Crittenden & Dallos, 2009; Hill, Fonagy, Safier, & Sargent, 2003; Ng & Smith, 2006). Developed by Bowlby (1973), attachment theory draws attention to three critical dimensions relevant to family systems theory. These are the unique qualities of the attachment subsystem, the interface between individuals' internal working models (cognitions, images, affective states) and patterns of interaction, and the intergenerational transmission of attachment strategies over succeeding generations.

According to Bowlby (1988), attachment is an innate motivating force that motivates infants (and all human beings) to seek proximity to others during times of distress. A secure infant attachment is formed through reciprocal interactions between

infant and caregivers. The caregiver responding to cues from the infant responds with soothing and reassurance thereby providing a fundamental sense of warmth and security. The infant's responsiveness (calming, smiling) to these overtures, in turn, reinforces the caregiver's motivation to attend to the infant's needs. Securely attached infants are able to use the caregiver as a secure base for exploration. Insecurely attached infants are not confident that their caretakers will be available to them when needed and so develop various strategies (avoidant, ambivalent, disorganized) to maintain physical proximity and psychological closeness (Byng-Hall, 2002). However, all attachment styles are thought to be protective and adaptive (Bowlby, 1973). They develop in response to the child's unique attachment system and their underlying goal is to protect the child from danger and maintain a sense of safety (Bowlby, 1973, 1980).

Based upon the individual's early attachment experiences with primary caregivers, the child internalizes a mental representation or working model of the attachment figure and the self (Bowlby, 1973). This model becomes the standard by which the self is organized and relationships with others are judged and acted upon. Internal working models provide individuals with a framework for maintaining a sense of personal well-being, forming emotion-regulation strategies, and engaging in exploration, affiliation, and caregiving towards others (Mikulincer, Florian, Cowan, & Cowan, 2002). Securely attached individuals react to stressful experiences with less anxiety and avoidance, and greater support-seeking. They hold more positive views of the self and expectations for their relationship partners, and they are more responsive to the needs of others than are insecurely attached individuals (Mikulincer et al., 2002). Some insecurely attached individuals (avoidant, dismissing) deny negative aspects of their childhoods, exhibit a restricted range of emotional expressiveness, withdraw from negative affect, and cutoff from attachment experiences. Others (ambivalent, preoccupied) exhibit confusion, anxiety, passivity, anger, fear, and a preoccupation with past attachment experiences (Sloman, Atkinson, Milligan, & Liotti, 2002).

Over time, patterns of interaction with attachment figures become organized into generalized interactional styles, or attachment strategies, that are dependent upon the person's internal working model (Hooper, 2007). Attachment strategies developed during childhood are generally thought to be stable patterns that once learned or reinforced throughout infancy and childhood become further reinforced in one's adult relationships. This is because working models direct attention to information consistent with one's representations, influence interpretations in directions consistent with those representations, and thus lead the individual to behave in ways that elicit responses from others consistent with established expectations (Mikulincer et al., 2002). However, consistent with family systems theory concepts of morphogenesis and adaptation, attachment strategies are capable of revision over the life span as a result of maturation, neurological development, and new experiences (Crittenden & Dallos, 2009). An extensive body of research has emerged that supports the replication of attachment styles developed in childhood in adult parent-child, dating, and intimate couple relationships (Hill et al., 2003; Hooper, 2007; Kretchmar & Jacobvitz, 2002; Mikulincer et al., 2002; Solomon & George, 1999; Waters, Merrick, Treboux, Crowell, & Albersheim, 2000).

Both family systems theory and attachment theory share the view that family patterns of interaction are adaptive within, and congruent with, the family's context. However, attachment theory's specification of the dynamics operating within the attachment subsystem and its focus on the boundary between individual inner experience (internal working models) and external relationship patterns have broadened the lens through which systems theory can be viewed. In fact, recent research has now extended attachment theory's attention to smaller internal systems. The advent of brain imaging technology has allowed examination of the interface between attachment behaviors and neurobiology. Attachment relationships are now being linked to the activation of specific neuronal circuits in the brain (Kendrick, 2004; Stein & Vythilingum, 2009). These findings add further support to the linkage between systems

theory and biopsychosocial models which will be addressed in the next section.

Finally, attachment theory has been the basis for extensive empirical work that has traced the transmission of attachment relationship patterns over time through successive generations of the family system. This broadening of the lens of systems theory has reinforced earlier research and theory-building efforts in the family therapy field that traced the intergenerational transmission of anxiety, self-differentiation, intimacy, and distance-regulation strategies such as fusion, triangulation, and emotional-cutoff from one generation to another (Bowen, 1978; Crittenden & Dallos, 2009; Lawson & Brossart, 2001; Miller, Anderson, & Keala, 2004; van Ecke, Chope, & Emmelkamp, 2006).

Biopsychosocial Model

The biopsychosocial model was first introduced originally by George Engel (1977) as an alternative to the traditional medical model's primary emphasis on the biology of illness. Engel (1977) challenged the dualistic nature of the biomedical model, with its separation of body and mind. Instead, he offered a patient-centered approach to treatment based on the systems notion that one cannot ignore the influence of the observer on the observed. He understood that one cannot understand a system from the inside without disturbing it in some way and in so doing he provided a rationale for including the relationship between physician and patient as a legitimate focus for scientific study (Borrell-Carrio, Suchman, & Epstein, 2004). His model also considered the multiple levels of systems affecting the course of illness and disease processes. The biopsychosocial model offers yet another example of the ever-expanding range of internal and external contextual factors affecting, and being affected by, the family system.

For example, it has been used to interpret findings from genomics research which studies interactions among all of the genes in the human genome and their relationship to environmental influences since genetic factors alone seldom determine disease expression or human development

(Collins, Green, Guttmacher, & Guyer, 2003). It has informed research, noted earlier, on the reciprocal relationship between neurological processes and behavior. Not only does brain function produce learning, but learning produces alterations in brain function and this occurs through the reciprocal interaction between emotional experience and neurological pathways (Shuttleworth, 2002). It has addressed the level of couple and family systems, finding that supportive couple and family interactions can affect the course and outcomes of a variety of medical conditions (Rolland & Williams, 2005). The model has been used to highlight the importance of supportive, open, and information-sharing interactions between patients, family members, physicians, and the broader health care system (Adler, 2007). The biopsychosocial model also calls attention to the influence of the broader social context on family adaptation and management of individual members' health and illness needs. This includes the effects of health care policy, cultural differences in definitions of disease and illness, differences in health care utilization, and choices of treatment (Borrell-Carrio et al., 2004; Vetere, 2007). According to Hepworth and Cushman (2005), the power of the biopsychosocial model is its attention to the uniqueness of disease expression due to the uniqueness of each patient in context. They question the possibility of bypassing that with simple syndrome classifications. This admittedly brief overview of the biopsychosocial model is intended to offer one of many examples of how systems theory has evolved over time and how family system processes are embedded within (affecting and being affected by) ever-expanding levels of complexity.

Conclusions

We have argued here that the development of family systems theory has much in common with the way the theory has been used to study families. Developments, interpretations, and applications of family systems theory, much like the families to which the theory has been applied, can be seen as operating in an ever-changing context. How we

understand family systems theory is dependent upon numerous factors such as significant historical events, changes in societal and cultural mores and values, paradigmatic shifts in how knowledge and truth is defined, developments in the broader fields of the physical and social sciences, and the unique perspective of the individual researcher or practitioner. Early efforts by family studies scholars to establish a grand theory of family systems with an established set of universal laws and propositions occurred in a time when a modernistic, objective, positivistic paradigm was dominant. Eventually, attention shifted to the development of middle-range theories of family systems and later to a search for "interpretive bridges" that could link the concepts and language in one theory with those in other theoretical frameworks. A paradigm shift from modernism to postmodernism brought recognition of the subjectivity of "reality" and the important role of the observer in both interpreting and altering that which is observed. The current research climate now recognizes the importance of both a modernistic, empirical perspective and a postmodern influence that recognizes the existence of multiple realities and the need for reanalysis and deconstruction of dominant premises and applications.

Our presentation has emphasized the importance of interaction patterns and context as core features of family systems and ecological theories. Further we have emphasized how family systems are comprised of multiple levels of systems and subsystems, all interacting in reciprocal fashion to affect and be affected by other levels of systems. Advances in empirical research and parallel theories continue to inform our understanding of these reciprocal processes and to expand the levels of systems to which we must attend. At this stage of family systems theory development, levels of systems range broadly from internal biological systems to social and political systems. The challenge for family systems theorists is to identify the myriad ways by which these levels of systems affect the family and its members, and in reciprocal fashion, the role the family plays in affecting these other levels of systems.

We have identified a number of contemporary theoretical perspectives that have informed

family systems theory. Feminism and multiculturalism expanded awareness of social and political contexts and called attention to limitations in family systems theory formulations. Ecological/contextual perspectives have identified the multiple levels of context within which family systems interact and the levels of influence of each on development. Attachment theory has added to our understanding of interaction dynamics within the caretaker-child subsystem, how these attachment patterns affect the individual's sense of self (internal working models), and further, the neurological processes with the brain. Attachment theory also has informed our understanding of how attachment patterns can become replicated intergenerationally within couple relationship and parent-child relationship systems. Biopsychosocial models further explain the interactions among biology (genes), individual cognition and behavior, family dynamics, social and cultural influences, and disease and illness processes.

However, we must acknowledge that, by highlighting the contributions of these theories to family systems theory, we punctuate what is decidedly a reciprocal process in a subjective, unidirectional manner. We have focused more on the influence of these parallel theories on the development of family systems theory. It is equally true that core concepts from family system theory have informed the development of these and other theories as well. Yet, in so doing we have attempted to illustrate how family systems theory is a vibrant and evolving framework. Our understanding of family systems has become ever more complex and yet better informed as a result of these elaborations on interaction and context as provided by these other theoretical models.

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Katherine R. Allen, Alexis J. Walker,
and Brandy Renee McCann

Investigating families from feminist perspectives has invigorated the field of family studies by continuously challenging taken-for-granted assumptions about the dynamics and structures of family relationships in social historical contexts. Feminists have contributed many new perspectives about the gendered nature of family and have shown that research and theory about families need to center on the ways that *gender relations* structure family dynamics and interactions with other social institutions, not on women per se. Families are private *and* public spheres; that is private family dynamics cannot be understood apart from the broader, public social systems in which they operate (Ferree, 1990; Walker, 1999). Thus, feminists have challenged mainstream ideas about the institutional context of families and the individuals who comprise them. Feminists

view families as an arena of contested relationships between intimate and intergenerational partners, where variability, not unity or predictability of perspective, is characteristic. Feminists have demonstrated that families are structured in pluralistic ways and are not reducible to the pervasive ideology of the Standard North American Family (SNAF). This “default” or SNAF portrayal is that of families being composed primarily of White, married heterosexual partners with dependent children who reside together in one household (Smith, 1993). Over the last 40 years, feminists have infused the study of families with critical analyses of how gendered relationships operate, bringing new ways of seeing the complexity and difference in families according to how lives are stratified by systems of oppression and privilege.

In this chapter, we address the contributions and potential of feminism as theory, method, and practice in family studies and assess its centrality for critique and transformation of this interdisciplinary field of study. We discuss how recent feminist conceptualizations have led to expectations for research measures and analyses that are still reflective of the personal, yet also capable of intersectional analysis (Ferree, 2010). We provide our own speculations and vision for the future of family studies informed and transformed by feminist perspectives, suggesting that what keeps our field lively and strong is the clash between critical ideas and lived experience.

K.R. Allen, PhD(✉)
Department of Human Development,
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University,
401C Wallace Hall (0416), Blacksburg, VA 24061, USA
e-mail: kallen@vt.edu

A.J. Walker, PhD
College of Health and Human Sciences,
Oregon State University, 406 Waldo Hall,
Corvallis, OR 97331-5102, USA
e-mail: walkera@oregonstate.edu

B.R. McCann, PhD
Department of Gerontology, Sociology
and Political Science, University of Louisiana, Monroe,
206 Stubbs Hall, Monroe, LA 71209, USA
e-mail: mccann@ulm.edu

Theorizing Gender from Feminist Perspectives in Family Studies

Feminist influences on theory and research in family studies have been evolving for nearly 4 decades. Feminists have served to critique the very foundations of the field by challenging taken-for-granted assumptions about the natural order of family life and the passive way in which gender had been treated as a dichotomous variable (e.g., female, male). Research informed by feminist theorizing has broken new ground to reveal ways in which families intersect with society at large. In this section, we describe how feminist theorizing about gender has evolved over time and made significant contributions to theory in family studies.

Emergence, Development, and Critique of Gender Theorizing

Feminist ideas and social activism gained widespread visibility in the 1960s, beginning with the publication of Betty Friedan's (1963) landmark analysis of depression in women's lives, *The Feminine Mystique*. Friedan named the insidious problem of women's passive acceptance of the limited roles of wife and mother in foregoing their own ambitions and fulfillment. Although it grew out of the experiences of educated White women, Friedan's book helped spark the beginnings of the second wave of the feminist movement, paving the way for later landmark texts such as *Our Bodies, Ourselves* (Boston Women's Health Book Collective, 1971). The Women's Liberation Movement grew out of the Black Civil Rights movement and the protest against the Vietnam War, and was a response to the sexual revolution many men had experienced in the 1960s. A feminist perspective entered academic discourse in the 1970s, with the advent of the first academic publications and the first women's studies courses (Freedman, 2002). The feminist movement in the 1970s was referred to as "second wave feminism," in comparison to "first wave feminism" of obtaining the right to vote, achieved with the passage of the 19th amendment in 1920.

In family studies, the introduction of "sex roles" as a distinct category for investigation was an important step in recognizing that the different roles assigned to women and men in families led to consequences in how their lives unfolded, as well as how gender was conceptualized and investigated in the field (Scanzoni & Fox, 1980). Yet, the term "sex" itself, implying biological difference, was soon replaced by the concept of gender. That is, feminists argued that gender was not essentially a function of biological sex, leading to differential and static roles in families, but rather revealed *gender relations*, or the social construction of gendered roles and relationships that connect private life with other social institutions (Ferree, 1990; Thompson & Walker, 1989). Utilizing the concept of gender roles, feminist family scholars made explicit the implicit assumption that male experience was the norm and exposed the ways in which women's work in and out of families was devalued.

Second wave feminism eventually was challenged by women from inside and outside the feminist movement (Freedman, 2002). Although the idea that women were diminished and even excluded from societal and academic equality was still important, the concept of gender posited by feminists was critiqued as reflecting an essentialist paradigm, in that it assumed that all women shared a common experience. Critics charged that second wave feminists conceptualized female gender as representing women much like themselves: White, middle-class, educated, heterosexual women, typically in young or middle adulthood, who were married and mothers. This definition, by omission, ignored oppression in other facets of life—marginalization by race, social class, sexual orientation—what Butler (1990) referred to as the illimitable *et cetera*: "Through this horizontal trajectory of adjectives, these positions strive to encompass a situated subject, but invariably fail to be complete" (p. 143).

Black feminists were among the first to critique the essentialist paradigm, persuasively arguing that from their standpoint, gender, race, and class cannot be separated (Combahee River Collective, 1982; Lorde, 1984). Lesbians, too, through coming-out stories and autobiographical narratives, argued that they had their own unique

standpoint as women dealing with heterosexism; they made claims to being more marginalized than women in the privileged group (Martin, 1994; Rich, 1980; Zimmerman, 1984). Similarly, working-class women were critical of middle-class feminists, saying the women's liberation movement's call for equality did not speak for them. Working-class women never had the luxury of homemaking; their wages were always needed to support families or to supplement family incomes (Stacey, 1990). The critique of gender as an essentialist category evolved to a model of additive oppressions where a woman's experience of oppression was seen as increasingly severe with each new layer of marginalized identity (Shields, 2008). In this model, for example, White women contended with one oppression (gender); Black women were more oppressed than White women because they were dealing with two oppressions (race plus gender), and Black lesbians were in triple jeopardy, disadvantaged by race, gender, and sexual orientation (Bowleg, 2008; Hurtado, 1994).

Thus, Black feminists, working-class women, and lesbians were among the first women to challenge what had become mainstream feminism (Freedman, 2002). This critique of a unified gender perspective from the late twentieth century has given way to twenty-first century feminist concerns with gender as performance, intersectionality, transnationalism, and critical race perspectives (Allen, Lloyd, & Few, 2009; Burton, Bonilla-Silva, Ray, Buckelew, & Freeman, 2010; De Reus, Few, & Blume, 2005; Few, 2007; Mahalingam, Balan, & Molina, 2009).

From a Gender Paradigm to an Intersectionality Paradigm

New conceptualizations of gender relations and intersectionality have altered the previous way of operationalizing gender as a dichotomous variable, from gender defined as a "being" (male, female) to gender defined as a social construction, a "doing" (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Risman (1998, 2004) has conceptualized gender as a social structure that exerts influence at

multiple levels: (a) individual—through identity, beliefs, and attitudes; (b) interactional—the doing of gender or gender performance; and (c) structural—the organization of women and men into work and roles with differing resources and rewards. Thus, feminist scholarship has advanced so that analyses must examine "both the politics of location and the intersectionality of multiple identities" (De Reus et al., 2005, p. 459). A contemporary feminist perspective should go beyond an individualistic standpoint, for example, as a disabled woman, or a lesbian, or an African American, as if one representative could speak for all members of that particular group. Instead, individuals engage their own multiple, contradictory, and intersecting identities through dialogue with others, whose identities also are fluid and complex (Collins, 1990; De Reus et al., 2005). To complete the process, examining the politics of location through dialogue with others is not an intellectual pastime; it must lead to action by confronting and transforming the political and economic contexts in which families struggle to live and survive (Ferree, 2010). Thus, the additive model of oppressions generated a new wave of feminist theorizing that changed the conceptualization of gender. This conceptual change was from an essentialist or layered paradigm to one of intersectionality in which gender can only be understood in relation to how it intersects with other social structures and identities.

In contrast to the former model that positions oppressions simplistically as accumulative or quantitative, there are "qualitative differences among different intersectional positions" (Shields, 2008, p. 303). Difference, not similarity, is the focus in the intersecting identities paradigm, where the concern is with the multiple axes of oppression (Collins, 1990, 2005). For example, given cultural, religious, and ethnic histories, Chicanas, relative to women from other racial ethnic groups, are likely to have very different views of motherhood, rooted in the principle of *marianismo* (e.g., a woman is expected to be nurturing and self-sacrificing, Lucero-Liu & Christensen, 2009).

Now in the third wave of feminist thinking and practice, the concept of intersectionality has

been hailed as the major contribution to feminist theory and method in the past 30 years (McCall, 2005). The contemporary conceptualization of structural and relational systems of oppression and privilege (e.g., gender, race, class, sexual orientation, age, ability, nationality, and others) as interlocking, overlapping, and mutually constructing one another has emerged through continuous engagement with feminist theory, method, and praxis (e.g., Collins, 1990, 2005; Crenshaw, 1991; Dill, McLaughlin, & Nieves, 2007; Few, 2007; Lorde, 1984; Shields, 2008).

The goal of feminist thinking, research, and practice is social change—in the academy, in the community, and in the hearts and minds of individuals. To be true to its ideals, feminist scholars and activists have responded to continual challenges, from both within and outside feminist movements that feminism needs to be more inclusive. Yet, the challenge to redefine feminism in more inclusive ways through key theoretical concepts such as intersectionality has also threatened to obscure the very concept of gender. The importance of gender is its focus on the experience and oppression of *women*, particularly as feminism has become institutionalized as a body of thought. At odds with academic feminism are activist efforts to transform women's lives throughout the world—and in the street, the village, the field—efforts that grew out of the women's liberation movement and not academia. As Mies (2007) explains, feminist research emerged not from the academy but from “women's struggles against patriarchal oppression and exploitation, struggles whose arena was the street rather than the classroom or research institutes” (p. 663). The struggles, originating in women's bodies, and hence inextricably tied to gender, had to do with unpaid labor in the home (e.g., housework), institutionalized discrimination against women in nearly all social structures, and control of women's bodies through abuse, rape, wife burning, female infanticide, and lack of contraception and abortion rights. These struggles began and were sustained by women who were “not mainly interested in careerism and academic fame” (p. 663), a charge made against purely academic feminists.

At issue here is to what extent does gender (still) matter as an organizing and stabilizing force in feminist intellectual and activist movement. This tension between (a) radical critique rooted in lived experience and (b) mainstream infiltration with the goal of influencing academic discourse has been at the center of feminism from its inception, particularly in the field of family studies (Allen et al., 2009).

As feminist perspectives have been integrated into family theory, method, and pedagogy, they also have been subject to critique both among feminist scholars and within the family studies discipline itself. The very issues that initiated feminist family studies—questions about the relevance of family theories such as developmental, social exchange, stress, and systems perspectives to women's lived experience (Allen & Pickett, 1987; Luepnitz, 1988; Osmond, 1987; Thorne & Yalom, 1982; Walker, 1985; Walker & Thompson, 1984)—can now be found in critiques of *feminist* perspectives in family studies: In what way is feminism relevant to family studies today (Thompson & Walker, 1995; Wills & Risman, 2006)? Are feminist concepts, such as intersectionality, too diffuse to guide research, particularly in family studies (Chafetz, 2004)? Is feminism just a particular version of some other theoretical framework, such as critical theory or poststructuralism (White & Klein, 2008)? Can research on gender and families ever be a “depoliticized science?” (Ferree, 2010, p. 433).

Perhaps the goal is not resolution of this challenge or tension but to continually find ways of keeping the promise of feminism alive and viable: (a) defining feminism as relevant to contemporary issues by keeping women *and* gender in the center of analysis, (b) operationalizing feminist concepts such as intersectionality to contribute new knowledge through scientific research, and (c) committing to revolutionary social change. Although these can be contradictory goals, rather than emphasize polarity, feminists work with the tensions. These tensions include the reality of being a woman in the context of intersecting identities, and the value of influencing scientific knowledge and academic discourse by tempering knowledge with lived experience.

As more scholars use an intersectional paradigm in analysis, more nuanced understandings of the construct have emerged. For example, Ferree (2010) offers a conceptual distinction between *locational* and *relational* intersectionality as a way to deal with the complexities inherent in the term. With its emphasis on content specific standpoints, identity categories, and disadvantaged social positions that occur simultaneously, locational intersectionality gives voice to oppressed groups. When locational intersectionality is used most effectively, it illuminates the issues facing what these multiply marginalized persons and groups face and also allows others to learn how intersectional systems of disadvantage (e.g., being poor, Black, lesbian, or being an immigrant domestic worker) operate from the perspective of those who actually experience such disadvantages. By example, Nelson's (2006) qualitative study of single mothers is an exemplar of the best of this type of locational intersectional analysis. The women in Nelson's study used their power as mothers to create families that conform to the SNAF family model (Smith, 1993), even though this traditional family form has failed them. That is, they designated their own mothers as placeholders for potential husbands they did not yet but one day hoped to have (e.g., mothers provided housing and financial support as well as help with childcare), so as to complete the dream of becoming a traditional family. This type of locational intersectional analysis demonstrates how individual experience with social location (e.g., divorced, single mothers) is reflective of larger structural and institutional constraints (e.g., risk of impoverishment because the husband is absent).

The relational approach to intersectionality moves beyond a focus on how the most disadvantaged groups are positioned within mainstream society and is more concerned with the processes that interact to produce patterns of inequality for everyone, not just those who are marginalized and oppressed. In the relational view, the focus moves to the institutional practices and cultural discourses with which individuals must contend. In this approach, intersectionality is seen as strategic and mobile. Identity, then, is not static, but shifts with changing cultural discourses and

social institutions. Challenges to heteronormativity in families provide a good example: Gay fathers who stay at home to care for their children (e.g., who "mother") while their partners work outside the home have less power in their relationships (Goldberg, 2010). Their multiple, conflicting identities are intersecting with ways in which social institutions (e.g., family and work) are changing and cultural discourses about families are interpreted. In a similar vein, among lesbian couples, birth mothers tend to do more of the childcare, whereas nonbiological comothers do more of the paid work (Goldberg, Downing, & Sauck, 2008). In another example, Dodson and Schmalzbauer (2005) used this relational approach to interpret how poor women of color utilized "habits of hiding" to exercise caution when discussing their lives with professionals.

Feminists have used the concept of praxis to work with the tensions created by studying family life from perspectives that acknowledge power. Praxis has been defined in many ways but a continuing thread is that the pursuit of knowledge and the choice of method to gather that knowledge are not neutral but always involve critical self-reflection about power relations and dialogic interaction between the researcher and the participant (Collins, 1990; Harding, 1991). Theory and method are symbiotically related, gathered with enquiring feminist eyes for critical knowledge and social change (Stanley & Wise, 1990); as Stanley (1990) explains, not simply "'knowledge *what*' but also 'knowledge *for*'" (p. 15).

Methodological Innovations in Feminist Family Studies

What are feminist family research methods? Perhaps no area in feminist scholarship is more subject to critique than feminist methodologies. Witness the lively debate as to whether there is something unique about feminist methods or if they do not differ substantially from methodologies used by researchers from other theoretical bents (Hesse-Biber & Piatelli 2007; Ramazanogulu & Holland 2002; Walker, 2004). A shared perspective is that feminist methodologies are methods

used by explicitly feminist researchers who are interested in confronting and ending gendered as well as other social inequities, and in transforming people's lives.

Classically, feminists have been distrustful of quantitative methods, preferring qualitative methods that lend themselves to theory building and that do not rely on obsolete claims such as objectivity (Reinharz, 1992). More recently, a growing number of feminist scholars use quantitative methods (Chafetz, 2004), particularly survey approaches, demonstrating that survey research can be a valuable tool for transforming research into practical action, particularly in terms of legislation and policy reform (Miner-Rubino, Jayaratne, & Konik, 2007). Other scholars emphasize the need to abandon dichotomized thinking about qualitative and quantitative methods (Baber, 2004). Sprague (2005) argues that feminists need to increase their "methodological mindfulness." The important choice is not between quantitative or qualitative method, but "how the method is used, both technically and politically" (p. 27).

A recent iteration of the methods debate appears in a 2004 issue of *Journal of Family Issues*. Here Chafetz critiques highly descriptive, qualitative feminist standpoint work and argues that feminist researchers need to embrace theoretical testing. Responses to her critique varied, but all objected to the notion that feminist methods are not useful for building new knowledge. First, Baber (2004) pointed out that there are multiple kinds of feminisms and that interdisciplinary feminist methods open new pathways for understanding gendered social relations. Walker (2004) argued that theory informs method and that a feminist perspective, or any perspective, will guide the questions researchers ask and the answers they discover. Finally, Allen (2004) questioned the usefulness of emulating "an outdated model of the natural sciences" (p. 985). That is, classically trained researchers in the natural sciences have categorized and quantified elements of natural processes, building testable theories to predict future outcomes. Allen argued that this model has limited applicability in understanding or predicting outcomes for individuals

and families. Worse, the normal science model has a history of being used in the social sciences to pathologize those who did not or could not practice the cultural norms of middle-class, White America (e.g., female-headed African American families, gay men and lesbians, immigrant families). Thus, although feminist work will no doubt always have its detractors, sometimes by feminist practitioners (hooks, 1984), such critiques tend to sharpen feminist analyses, rather than to silence activist-scholars.

Some leading feminists (Lather, 2007; Smart, 2009) have called for methodologies that resist linear narratives and attempt to retain the complexities inherent in people's everyday experience. Walker (2009) revealed that unconventional representations of data are not seen in family studies journals because journal editors and reviewers are either unfamiliar with or unfriendly toward qualitative methodologies in general and toward reflexive feminist methodologies in particular. In fact, two articles published in the *Journal of Marriage and Family* on qualitative research methods (i.e., LaRossa, 2005; Matthews, 2005) explicitly advocate for conventional representation of data and findings, with the expectation that qualitative researchers should conform to prevailing, quantitative ideologies about knowledge production if they wish to be published in mainstream family journals. Despite these challenges, some feminist family scholars have successfully navigated the boundary between the use of innovative interdisciplinary methods and the conventional presentation of scholarship. Below we discuss two exemplary articles published in family science journals whose authors have transcended disciplinary boundaries and point to exciting methodological possibilities in feminist family science.

Adams's (2007) research on family rhetoric in nineteenth century texts is illustrative. She used feminist-informed grounded theory methods to juxtapose contemporary and nineteenth century feminist movements, demonstrating that so-called profamily public rhetoric is too often little more than racist, antifeminist backlash. First, from a critical feminist perspective, she read histories of American families and reports of

demographic change, pointing out that the contemporary profamily movement blames women's rights and gay rights movements in particular for the demise of the so-called traditional family. Next she focused her critique and findings on American profamily documents from the nineteenth century. Here she examined historical documents from the National League for the Protection of the Family (organized in 1881), a self-proclaimed "unbiased" group of academics, jurists, and clergymen who conducted research on marriage and divorce. Using grounded theory analysis, she found that nineteenth century profamily discourse linked the ideology of "family" with prevalent racialized ideologies of "nation." That is, using line-by-line coding, Adams saw close linkages throughout these historical documents between the importance of White, middle-class women's place in the home as mothers and wives and White women's patriotic duty to the nation. With concerns about population decline among Whites, and resonant with the rhetoric of contemporary White supremacists, writers for the National League for the Protection of the Family argued that married, White women had an obligation to reproduce the next generation of White Americans. Although Adams presents her findings in terms of themes, her example of textual analysis goes beyond a simple content analysis to develop a theoretically rich argument. She operationalized intersectionality by looking at how discourses about gender, race, and nationality function as antifeminist backlash in nineteenth century and contemporary profamily rhetoric.

Another example is work by Best (2006), who also used an explicit intersectional analysis in her investigation of the ways in which gender, class, place, and emergent adulthood structure family decisions and negotiations around driving. To obtain a rich understanding of family decision making, Best used multiple data collection strategies. She conducted in-depth interviews with 44 adolescents from diverse ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. Subsequently, building on what she learned from these interviews, she organized focus groups with college-aged young adults to further her understanding about power

negotiations among young people and their parents. One strength of Best's intersectional analysis is that she complicated class by emphasizing the struggles of middle-class families from a variety of ethnic and racial backgrounds as they construct the "elusive American dream" (p. 56); she highlighted this money-consciousness by providing direct quotes from young men and women (ages 16–24) whose voices are often silenced in research. Moreover Best called attention to how the particular culture or place, a northern California city and suburb, shaped family decisions about when and whether young adults are allowed to drive; that is the lack of comprehensive public transportation factored into family negotiations. Best's research avoided one problem of some scholarship, an overly narrow focus on the topic of research, and examined the multiple intersections of sociostructural processes. Similar to Adams, she used grounded theory analysis informed by feminist theory and methods that called her attention to these larger structural systems. Best was able to recruit an ethnically diverse sample, yet even those using White, middle-class convenience samples can incorporate an intersectional lens by highlighting how practices or processes they describe reinforce, challenge, or complicate racial or ethnic discourses and power relations (e.g., Adams, 2007).

Although the preceding discussion focused on work that used more interdisciplinary methods, in general, recent scholarship using an explicit feminist theoretical framework has tended to be rich in building mid-level theories. Regardless of the methods, these theories have addressed dimensions of family life with a few of these articles blurring the boundaries between theoretical and empirical pieces (e.g., Blume & Blume, 2003; Dykstra & Hagestad, 2007). For example, authors using methods typically not associated with theory building, such as thematic or content analysis, explicitly connected their findings to feminist family theorizing (e.g., McGraw & Walker, 2007; Nelson, 2008). Nelson, for instance, used content analysis of over 100 online evaluations of baby monitors to inform feminist theorizing about mothering. Similarly, Blume and Blume's (2003) theory-building article, using a single

case, investigated family gender discourse through deconstructing how discourses about sexuality, body image, and gender identity were co-constructed by an adolescent girl and her mother. Although these articles are very different in terms of qualitative data and analysis, their feminist theoretical framework mean that they explicitly build on a feminist body of social-scientific knowledge. Moreover, many authors not using an explicit feminist theoretical or methodological framework typically approached their topics sensitized to feminist advances in research. This sensitivity is most striking in studies dealing with household labor (e.g., Utz, Reidy, Carr, Nesse, & Wortman 2004), work and family life balance (e.g., Armenia, 2009), and intimate partner violence (e.g., Teaster, Roberto, & Dugar, 2006). Thus, in some arenas, feminist theorizing has become one of the received discourses about certain topics, suggesting that feminist family science is a nomadic theory that is also a methodology “in a state of constant challenge and continual reformulation” (Smart, 2009, p. 297).

Review and Synthesis of Feminist Empirical Research on Families

Over the past 30 years, feminist researchers have devoted considerable efforts to documenting the existence of a gender divide across a wide reaching array of social systems. It seemed essential to do so, in part, to convince others of its existence but also, given the feminist focus on social change, to identify possible avenues for eliminating this divide and ultimately moving beyond it.

Feminists draw strength from evidence that households and the economy are incontrovertibly linked; that families are the social institution wherein, both structurally and symbolically, this connection is solidified, challenged, and modified in ways distinctly related to gender. Paid and unpaid work, therefore, is front and center in feminist empirical inquiry. Hartmann (1981) argued, in fact, that the creation of gender meets the social purpose of identifying “two categories of workers who need each other” (p. 393). Ferree (1990), too, positioned the organization of labor

and gender as a “substantial portion” of what families do (p. 871). Paid work in the economy and unpaid reproductive labor within households—and the connection between the two—are therefore key to understanding gender relations (Ferree, 1990). Not surprisingly, feminist family researchers continue to devote considerable attention to studying gender in relation to both paid and unpaid labor, exposing the myth that, in families, there has been a sole provider and that the provider role is the province of men and documenting how the meanings of femininity and masculinity are linked to power and expressed through gendered labor (Berk, 1985). In reviewing recent feminist empirical work, then, we too focus on both paid and unpaid labor and the relation between the two. We also look at some recent scholarship that documents the relationship between gendered experience and health, and end this section by considering the ways in which empirical work is one type of feminist praxis.

Feminist Research on Gender, Family, and Work

Paid work. As noted above, feminist researchers attend to the direct connection between gender in the workplace and gender inside families. Huato and Zeno (2009), for example, point to the striking variation of income within couples by socioeconomic status and race and ethnicity. These racial and gendered gaps in income are rooted in occupational segregation and gender discrimination in the world of paid work. Couples with more family income and larger differences in wives and husbands’ education have larger gaps in spousal income. Minority husbands, especially African Americans, have much lower income gaps with their wives than do Whites. Such within-couple conditions influence wives’ choices regarding the relative allocation of their efforts to paid work and to unpaid family labor. Among Whites, for example, especially the more educated, large income disparities within couples solidify husband’s paid work commitment and the priority of housework and childcare for wives. Among African Americans, the similar incomes of both

spouses mean both are essential for family survival, cementing wives' labor force attachment and compelling more involvement of husbands at home.

Cha (2010) also shows an effect on household inequality when men extend their paid work hours to 50 hours or more per week. Arguing that gender ideologies prioritize men's paid work over that of women, she shows that, when husbands work long hours, as is typical in managerial and professional jobs, and especially when couples have children, wives have a higher likelihood of leaving the work force. This pattern is particularly susceptible to the ideologies of more educated social classes that encourage commitment to paid work and also subscribe to an ideology of intensive mothering (Hays, 1996). Given changes in market forces, the ideology linking men to the provider role can readily change dual-earner households to traditional households with men who are wage earners and wives who are homemakers. In the workplace, and given cultural ideas that favor their husbands' careers, such patterns put married mothers with high work commitments at a disadvantage. Many women, for example, are destined to miss work to care for sick children. Although stay-at-home fathers are featured prominently in multiple media outlets and in everyday discourse, their proportion in the population remains very small (Tucker, 2005).

Hook (2010) similarly affirms the importance of national context in explaining couples' decisions regarding household tasks across 36 countries. Where employees work long hours and where use of lengthy parental leave is evident, women do more of the inflexible household work and men do less. When public childcare is available, however, and when men, too, are eligible for parental leave, women do less of this "women's" work. The national context, in other words, influences couple's decision making regarding childcare and parental leave.

Transnational carework. Although there is a long tradition of international family studies, feminist perspectives have been in the forefront of unveiling the gendered, classed, and racialized nature of globalization. Gender is a key component when

considering the consequences of transnational family patterns for maintaining family relationships (Clark, Glick, & Bures, 2009). From binational marriages to transnational caregiving, women from developing nations, particularly in the Philippines, Sri Lanka, India, and throughout the Caribbean, are leaving their homes, their families of origin, and their spouses and children, to live and work in more affluent places such as the U.S., Hong Kong, Taiwan, Israel, and Middle Eastern nations (Mahalingam et al., 2009). Their work—often referred to as transnational carework—is to take care of the young and the old for pay: "indeed, in Israel the term *Filipina* is synonymous with a caregiver, usually for the elderly" (Mendez & Wolf, 2007, p. 653). Immigrating to another country to work as a domestic servant, nanny, or elder caregiver creates complex new family forms that challenge western ideas of what it means to be a mother, a father, or even a family (Mahalingam et al., 2009). A global feminist perspective on families means that "[w]e all have to be political economists now" (Mendez & Wolf, 2007, p. 656).

One of the key issues uncovered by a global feminist perspective is the contradiction between provider and nurturer roles played by women in transnational families. When a woman leaves her home and children to work in another country, she may frame her work, although it is domestic caring labor, as that of primary provider (head of household). She also may maintain as much connection as she can to her own children and the family members in whom she entrusts their care, for example, with weekly phone calls in which she asserts maternal authority and expresses maternal concern. These strategies allow some women to overcome feelings of despair at being separated from their children by reframing their roles as mothers to a mixture of both maternal and paternal roles, thereby defying traditional gender structures (Mahalingam et al., 2009).

Carework is quintessentially a feminist issue because providing and receiving care is predicated upon a gendered system—it is mostly women and less-privileged men who provide caring labor. Women have the burden of invisible labor, in that their reproductive work—bearing and rearing children, caring for aging spouses, providing

emotional labor, and doing housework—is expected but often goes unnoticed and unrewarded. Carework is simultaneously devalued yet essential to society (Ferree, 2010; Folbre, 2004). When fathers provide care, however, their work is often exaggerated and thought to be praise-worthy, whereas mothers' work is more likely to be stigmatized as “gatekeeping,” with women described as controlling fathers' access to and involvement with their children (Walker & McGraw, 2000). When older wives take care of dependent husbands, they are more likely to perform multiple aspects of carework and to receive less assistance from the broader kin network than older husbands who care for wives (Connidis, 2010). Yet, despite the costs, women's reproductive labor has been one of the only ways in which women have had access to socially sanctioned power, particularly in their family relationships (Di Leonardo, 1987; Hochschild 2003).

A feminist intersectional framework is also useful in research examining power in intergenerational relationships within the context of gender and immigration. For example, in their study of 15 second generation Chinese-American women's relationships with their first generation Chinese-American mother-in-law, Shih and Pyke (2010) examined the intersection of multiple relational and institutional contexts: the overt and hidden dynamics of power within intergenerational relationships in a racial ethnic cultural context. Critical of a uniform application of Confucian cultural ideals of “familism, gender and generational hierarchies, reverence for tradition, and filial piety” (p. 334) to all Asian American families, the authors examined a particular type of Chinese family relationships. They applied Komter's (1989) concept of hidden dimensions of power, where power dynamics and outcomes are seen as shifting between individuals within the context of broader societal dynamics. These hidden dimensions of power were applied to younger women's accounts of their interactions and conflicts with older women in relation to their domestic and parenting roles. Shih and Pyke found that when younger women want to reinforce their own authority in the household, they appeal to the power of their husbands, particularly when their husband's moth-

ers have access to power through childcare. Such an analysis reveals the benefits of a feminist intersectionality framework by combining concepts such as gender, age, racial-ethnic status, national origin, immigrant status, family structure, and relationships, with feminist analyses of power and carework, particularly emotional economies of entitlement, obligation, and gratitude. This integration provides a more complex explanation of women's intergenerational relationships than previously depicted by strictly cultural approaches in family scholarship.

Unpaid labor. Since the 1970s, feminist family scholars have focused on the disproportional labor of wives in heterosexual families, documenting gendered patterns and showing repeatedly that the best predictor of who does what in the household is gender (Walker, 1999). Recent literature in this area has shown a narrowing of the time commitment of wives and husbands, in part, because husbands are doing more at home but primarily because wives are doing much less (e.g., Bianchi, Robinson, & Milkie, 2006). Although there has been a considerable increase in men's time in childcare (e.g., Bianchi et al., 2006), childcare continues to remain largely the province of women (Bianchi & Milkie, 2010). Craig (2006) affirmed this pattern with valid and reliable panel data from Australian couples. She found compelling evidence that mothers' total time with children, time alone with children, multitasking, responsibility for childcare, and rigid scheduling reflect their greater responsibility for and involvement in childcare in the home. Both the reduction in employment by mothers with overwhelming demands (e.g., Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 2000) and Lareau's (2000) finding that fathers claim “my wife can tell me who [of my child's friends and their parents] I know” harken back to gender essentialism: that women are better suited to family work and that men are better suited to providing. A stunning finding emerging in recent years is the development for the first time of a substantial gap in couples' leisure time favoring husbands (e.g., Mattingly & Sayer, 2006). For example, full-time employed mothers in dual-earner households have fewer leisure

hours than fathers, even though fathers spend considerably more hours than mothers in the paid work force (Milkie, Raley, & Bianchi, 2009). Although the total workweek (hours employed plus hours of family work) is nearing equality within couples (Bianchi & Milkie, 2010), women have a disproportionate share of family work hours, men have a disproportionate share of paid work hours, and only men have leisure hours.

Thus, the uneven and unfair distribution of unpaid labor within the home persists. For example, Eriksson and Nemo (2010) showed, that even in countries in which government benefits to care for sick children are extended to both parents, how these benefits are actually used by couples is a reliable and valid proxy for the gendered division of labor within the home. Those who exert more effort in the labor force, typically men, often apply less effort at home (and are less likely to use government benefits)—and their spouses exert more (and are more likely to use government benefits). Using data from 18 countries, Thébaud (2010) demonstrated that in national contexts that valued the so-called masculine pursuits of paid work and earning income, gender expectations were salient in how couples worked out the distribution of household labor. When husbands are unable to out-earn their wives, their efforts at home reflect attempts to neutralize their inability to meet standards for providing rather than a simple resource-exchange perspective. Similarly, when the highest income men—historically those with very high expectations of male breadwinning—are secondary earners, they are in poorer health (Springer, 2010). In other words, ideologies about men and men's roles lead to health problems when men are unable to perform in the stereotypical way; that is as primary breadwinners.

Regarding childcare at home, the mainstream literature on fatherhood highlights the importance of fathers in children's lives and focuses on the role of mothers in limiting father involvement (i.e., gatekeeping). Feminist researchers, however, such as Sasaki, Hazen, and Swann (2010), show how dominant social norms place women in a bind between helping fathers develop a strong relationship with their children and meeting societal demands for intensive motherhood. Not surpris-

ingly, employed wives who see their employed husbands as skilled caregivers feel less self-competent when their husbands are more involved in childcare; such involvement by husbands implies that these wives are not meeting the standard of intensive mothering. Husbands' self-competence, however, is unaffected by their wives' childcare involvement, demonstrating that fathers are not judged by the same normative standards applied to mothers regarding involvement with children. It is not simply that mothers and fathers are judged by different standards, but that they hold themselves to different standards as well. The authors suggested that "employed mothers . . . seem to be trapped between their desire for help with childrearing and the threat to their personal competence posed by failure to meet socially constructed ideals of motherhood" (p. 71). Relative to fathers, mothers also experience more time pressures. And women in shift work, relative to similarly situated men, experience more sleep disruption (Maume, Bardo, & Sebastian, 2009). Much of this gender difference is linked to women and men's differential responsibility for paid work and unpaid family labor.

Assessing change and stability. Recently, following nearly 40 years of research and practice about women's labor in the context of a gender system, England (2010) assessed the evidence regarding whether and to what extent things have changed. She concluded that changes in the gender system are best characterized as uneven; the lives of some have changed dramatically whereas the lives of others have not changed very much.

England (2010) offered two reasons to explain such variation. First, she argued that both the individual characteristics and the work that tends to be associated with women continue to be undervalued both culturally and institutionally. Unpaid work such as homemaking and paid work such as carework, still performed mostly by women, have little social value. For this reason, England argued, we should not expect men to take up work in these areas because there is very little incentive for them to do so. Second, aspects of paid work dominated by men continue to have strong cultural and institutional value. Jobs that

tend to be performed by men pay well, thus providing an economic incentive that, along with the decline of discrimination in employment, helped to drive women into work traditionally seen as “men’s” work. Not all women, however, can take advantage of this incentive, though more educated women are in a better position to take advantage of reduced discrimination in the labor market. Working-class women, for example, have much less capacity to respond in ways that benefit them and their families (Bianchi & Milkie, 2010; Edin & Kissane, 2010). In contrast, middle-class women are better able to benefit from higher employment levels and from expansion into the province of men’s paid work, such as male-dominated professional and managerial positions. Thus, paid work has changed considerably for some women and less so for others.

England (2010) situated her conclusions within two distinct and influential “cultural and institutional logics.” One of these is *individualism*, a predominant value of equal opportunity that impels society toward equality for women and men, in paid work, in schooling, and in the opportunity to express one’s self. Individualism encourages upward mobility for women but has limited influence on ideologies and beliefs about women’s characteristics and about women’s work. The other is what feminists describe as *gender essentialism*, a belief that women and men are biologically different in traits, in abilities, and in interests. Gender essentialism tracks both women and men into gendered choices. England argues that gender essentialism leads young people to see others of their same gender and social class background—and presumably race and ethnicity—as appropriate social comparators. She sees moving up from a factory job to a teaching job as likely for working-class women—who may see professions requiring years of schooling, such as medicine or law, as unattainable—and for middle-class women, moving from teaching to historically male-dominated professions. Consider that middle-class women may have seen men in their families model highly paid professional work, whereas working-class women would not have this experience.

Together, the cultural and institutional logics of individualism and gender essentialism impel

women into male-dominated fields when they do not otherwise see an opportunity for individual achievement within a female-dominated field. Otherwise, particularly for women from working-class backgrounds, the way to achieve individual expression is through education into “women’s” fields, such as teaching or nursing. Women from middle-class backgrounds maintained their status in these occupations unless they moved into male-dominated professions such as medicine, law, and higher education. England points to the strength of gender essentialism by showing how, even within these male-dominated fields, middle-class women disproportionately chose those areas more likely occupied by women (e.g., in medicine, pediatrics; in law, family law; in higher education, psychology or sociology).

In England’s (2010) view, social structures do not align toward changing the gendered system. Ideas about equality that resonated with individualism did much to increase women’s education and occupational status, where there has been considerable social change. But beliefs about the essential differences between women and men remain strong, cementing women’s attachment to lower-paid female-dominated occupations and also to unpaid family labor, both of which are poorly rewarded economically but are seen as suited to women’s characteristics. Essentialist beliefs further decrease the likelihood of men’s participation in female-dominated paid and unpaid work, thus maintaining their lower market value (i.e., work done *by* women is worth less than work done by men).

At present, according to England (2010; see also Risman, 1998), any continuing or additional gender revolution is now stalled. Recent evidence shows that women are no longer making additional headway into male-dominated occupations, and that their rate of employment has remained stable. Further, despite significant efforts to increase women’s recruitment and retention in the most male-dominated college fields of study (e.g., science, technology, engineering, math), women are still less likely than men to make a long-term commitment to highly lucrative occupations such as computer sciences and electrical engineering (U.S. Bureau of Labor

Statistics, 2008) or even economics and political science (England, 2010).

In the realm of the personal, England (2010) is even more pessimistic, particularly in terms of heterosexual pairings. Men continue to initiate relationships and sexual interaction (England, Shafer, & Fogarty, 2008). Further, although both women and men are sexually active outside of committed partnerships, relative to men, women are judged negatively for such casual sex (Wood, Koch, & Mansfield, 2006). Indeed, women's sexual desire is regulated through the tool of sexual reputation (Baber, 2000), whereas casual sex is still a male prerogative (Risman & Schwartz, 2002). And men continue to be more likely than women to propose marriage as well as to marry at older ages (Sassler & Miller, 2007). With marriage, most women continue to change their surnames to those of their husbands, and children born to heterosexual married partners nearly uniformly receive their fathers' surname (Goldin & Shim, 2004; Gooding & Kreider, 2010). Whereas England noted tremendous incentives for women to achieve through education and occupation, there is little—mostly noneconomic—incentive for change in the personal realm. Such changes may lead to penalties for violating norms such as harsh judgments of women for casual sex. The combination of low incentives for change and penalties linked to norm violation solidify gendered behavior in the personal realm. In contrast, incentives of higher pay and higher status in the occupational realm are sufficient to neutralize social sanctions for norm violation.

Beliefs in gender essentialism are strongly held and begin even before birth. In her book, *Pink Brain, Blue Brain: How Small Differences Grow Into Troublesome Gaps and What We Can Do About It*, Elliot (2009) affirmed the power of essentialist ideas about gender. Although studies show consistently that infants, toddlers, and young girls and boys are similar in abilities, parents' (and others') gendered views have persisted for decades. Elliot argued these views translate into how girls and boys are treated, and, eventually, how they see themselves. She pointed to how the very small brain differences between young girls and young boys are both exaggerated

and viewed as important evidence of gender essentialism. These small differences should instead be addressed in ways that better prepare children for the worlds of school and adulthood in which women and men might best function similarly, a readily achievable goal given the plasticity of the brain.

Feminist Research and Health

Above, we focused primarily on issues related to paid and unpaid work but we would be remiss if we failed to mention exciting new areas of feminist scholarship that are contributing to the understanding of individuals and families. These areas of feminist research examine the assertion of power through bodies, dealing with physical health and well-being, or the lack thereof. Here, we highlight power differentials found in feminist research on the substantive topics of illness and abuse. First, a striking gender disparity in partner abandonment exists when a spouse has a serious medical illness. Glantz et al. (2009) showed that wives with cancer or multiple sclerosis were six times more likely (20.8% vs. 2.9%) to be abandoned by their husbands than were similarly afflicted husbands to be abandoned by their wives, especially when wives were older. As wives are likely to rely on their husbands for both income and health insurance, this gendered pattern of abandonment results in reduced quality of both health and life for women. Interestingly, the study itself was motivated by observation among neuro-oncologists that divorce among their patients seemed to occur only when the patient was the wife. The authors could find no reason to think the pattern would not also be evident across a range of other serious, life-altering medical conditions.

Second, feminists have made major contributions to the research on wife abuse and intimate violence. Pointing to literature showing that men with traditional views of gender who are out-earned by their female partners have higher rates of perpetrating wife abuse, Anderson (2010) postulated that such men may be more likely to victimize their wives and partners as

well as their children. For decades, traditional family researchers have been focused on gender symmetry in frequency of interpersonal violence, applying gender as an individual characteristic. Following Risman (1998), however, Anderson advanced feminist theory regarding intimate violence by proposing that feminists theorize interpersonal violence at the level of structure. Because of gender inequality, women and men occupy unique social locations. For this reason, the experience of interpersonal violence is different for women and for men. A structural approach enables feminists to explain why men's violence toward women is an effective way to control women's behavior because women experience it as humiliating and fear-inducing whereas women's violence toward men is seen as weak and ineffective (Romito & Grassi, 2007). A structural approach also explains why men are more likely to abuse women partners when their female partners occupy higher status positions and earn a greater portion of the couple's income (Atkinson, Greenstein, & Lang, 2005); that is men's violence is a way to perform masculinity. Thus, in Anderson's (2010) view, gender as a context matters more so than the context of the violent act. Furthermore, the study of women's violence toward men without the study of men's violence toward women is unable to show how gender matters in interpersonal violence. Structural theories also attend to intersectionalities and can do so using multilevel models that enable researchers to examine simultaneously characteristics of the individual and characteristics of the context (Anderson, 2005, 2010). They enable feminists to determine, not whether members of different groups have different rates of interpersonal violence but rather how inequalities result in the differential experience of "demands, opportunities and constraints . . . such that violence has different meanings and consequences for their lives" (Anderson, 2010, p. 735). Particularly, older women who report any experience with intimate partner violence report poor physical and psychological health in later life (Rivara et al., 2007).

Feminist Research on Families and Activism

Family studies share with feminism an origin in activist scholarship (Allen, 2000; Allen et al., 2009) and a content matter that attends to daily life experiences and that advocates for social change (Walker, 2000; Walker, 2009; Walker & Thompson, 1984). Family scholars deal with dynamic processes and structural relations as well as with the intersection between these micro and macro levels of analysis. Feminist family studies come together when feminist theory and research are applied to questions about the possibility of feminism to transform family life. Although feminism has not penetrated to the inner core of family studies, ways in which feminism has gotten through are instructive for its liberatory potential on multiple levels. Next we offer three examples of ways in which feminist research in family studies has an activist purpose and end.

A new perspective on the very patriarchal concept of hierarchy emerged from a feminist examination of family structure and process. Mack-Canty and Wright (2004) studied 20 self-identified feminist families, consisting of a diverse group of two-heterosexual parent families, single-parent families, and gay and lesbian families. Both parents and children were interviewed. The authors discovered common parenting practices derived from feminist values of challenging hierarchies and democratic decision making. As a result of these practices, feminist families fostered a sense of empowerment, where children were provided opportunities to think for themselves; to perceive sexism, racism, and other oppressions; and even to surpass their parents' own awareness of oppression to the point that they could "teach their parents a thing or two regarding isms" (p. 876). In a sense, families that were living their feminist values by instilling them in their children via overt parenting practices were practicing domestic activism, replacing hierarchy with shared responsibility and thus promoting social change.

Goldberg and Allen (2007) examined 60 lesbian birth and comothers' preferences and

expectations for male involvement as they were transitioning to parenthood. Most of the women had elaborated their views of male involvement in their child's life beyond the heteronormative family ideal of a live-in father. These expanded views included the presence of men they know, "men who will be involved not because of their embodiment of some father ideal but because they are good quality men" (p. 361). Lesbian mothers-to-be imagined biological fathers, male friends, brothers, their own fathers, donors, and other men in various kin and friendship categories they would consider to be "good quality role models." These mothers reframed fatherhood from a finite structure to a dynamic role, flexible with how family members related to each other and with what the mothers perceived their child might need. Fatherhood, therefore, was reconceptualized in a transformative way, consistent with activist feminism, in contrast to the absence of a feminist view of fatherhood in most of family studies. From a feminist lens, as with the activist mothers described by Naples (1992), we posit that deconstruction of the heterosexist ideal of fatherhood is a form of "activist fatherhood." Family itself is reimagined, and fatherhood is less an ideal than a reality of actual involvement provided by a spectrum of individuals who are connected in relationship and community.

Although the previous two examples showed how researchers make visible feminist practices within some families, feminist researchers can do activist family scholarship even with populations who are not consciously doing activist families. For example, McCann (2010) used a feminist family frame (integrated with life course and symbolic interactionist theories) to challenge stereotypes about working-class, midlife White women in Central Appalachia—the poorest region in the continental United States (Wood, 2005). She blended in-depth interviews, textual analysis, and autoethnographic data (insider/outsider perspective) to examine how aging, single women experience and construct intimacy and family life in the aftermath of the War on Poverty. McCann conducted intensive, life course interviews (Charmaz, 2006) with the women in her

study, asking them to be both descriptive and reflective about their close relationships at different points over their lives. This strategy encouraged the women to theorize about their relationships, which McCann later used to help build a mid-level theory about the meaning of family and intimacy in Central Appalachia. In the past, researchers have used middle-class, academic assumptions about family life to guide their (usually anthropological) research on Appalachian culture, and have pathologized Appalachian people whose family norms often strike an outsider as counter-productive to eradicating poverty. McCann provided not only a revised reading of earlier research, but also complicated monolithic constructions of "the Appalachian family" by focusing on the diverse ways that midlife single women "do" family and intimacy. Thus, McCann's project is feminist activist research in that it is part of a new generation of scholarship that challenges prevailing assumptions about poor and working-class families.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Rather than the presumption of distinct male and female sex roles as natural and normal, feminism has established the idea that gender is negotiated within the context of social relations, manifested in social institutions, expressed in interpersonal relationships, and experienced at the individual level (Ferree, 1990; Risman, 2004; Smith, 1987). Families are contested emotional and structural arenas where roles and relationships are often experienced as contradictory, and where rewarding and stressful feelings commingle (Baber & Allen, 1992; Dressel & Clark 1990; Hartmann, 1981). A feminist perspective presumes inequality that is always already present in social relationships, and where social justice must be vigilantly negotiated.

Most recently, feminist perspectives on intersectionality, interdisciplinarity, and internationality have collided to further broaden and challenge theory, research, and practice (Allen et al., 2009).

Rather than solely rely on gender as an explanation for difference, the concept of intersectionality examines multiple and shifting perspectives to reveal how social stratifications are reproduced in relationships and institutions. Thus, feminist work continues to generate knowledge by revealing the force with which structures such as sexism, heterosexism, racism, classism, ageism, and ableism are reproduced and maintained. Feminist perspectives allow us to demonstrate how families provide a key context for this reproduction at the same time that families offer great possibilities for changing the status quo.

This passion for scholarship that makes a difference—in peoples' lives and in the ability to shape knowledge—is often what propels feminist research forward, despite many obstacles. We could join with those who claim that there are too many risks to utilizing a feminist perspective in family studies, or that the time for feminist theory and research has come and gone. Surely we recognize that new scholars may struggle with how to position their work as feminist family scholars. For example, as more and more universities in the U.S. lose state and federal dollars, it may seem as if only those researchers who have “fundable” research agendas—read mainstream—are employable. Young feminist scholars may get caught in this bleak picture and choose to drop feminism in favor of more conventional work. At the same time, however, a feminist approach is a constant reminder to work through these struggles of dichotomous thinking; that is, feminist family scholars only ever struggle for legitimacy whereas conventional family scholars have it easy. Part of feminist praxis, then, is interrogating the inner critic who, using a purist mentality, too often thinks in terms of dualities. As we have described in many of the empirical examples provided in this chapter, feminist scholars are transforming the field with their groundbreaking work that is often on conventional topics. New scholars can also frame their unconventional feminist interests in terms with which more mainstream scholars and funding agencies can identify.

And, from the perspective of feminist scholars who have been working in the field for 3 decades,

we are struck with the resilience of gender problems still unresolved (e.g., unequal paid and unpaid labor) as well as the questions that are still being asked (e.g., what is unique about feminist methodology). At the same time, over these decades, the development of new ideas about intersectionality has irrevocably changed the standards with which issues of gender, race, class, and other structural dimensions must be examined. Just as it took many years of academic activism to transform our raised consciousness about diversity into new standards for improved samples, the complexity of intersectionality is now infiltrating scholarly work. The 2010 *Journal of Marriage and Family Decade in Review*, for instance, contains several applications of intersectionality generated by feminist research. As already noted, in her review article, Anderson (2010) specifically links violence in families to structural inequality inherent in gender, race, social class, and sexuality. Similarly, Ferree (2010) shows how research on carework should focus on how gender interacts with caregivers' other locational standpoints. Finally, Burton et al., (2010) point to critical race feminism as a way to draw researchers' focus to multiple systems of inequality in ways that advance knowledge about families of color.

Many new feminist questions are on the horizon, and we believe these to be among the issues driving the most exciting work in the field today. Feminist work on gender and its intersections connects with every other major social institution: family, economic, and political, and thus is the most interdisciplinary area within the family field. For example, rather than envisioning family structure in a heteronormative way, a new arena for feminist research on family relationships that cuts across families is to look at the context of couple relationships through a lens of power. Considering the combination of gender, sexual orientation, intimacy, and parenting from a feminist perspective—regardless of whether couples are of the same or other gender, married or cohabiting—an important question, then, becomes how power is distributed when one partner is seen as the primary caregiver of children: When family structure is deemphasized, the focus shifts to processes, thus allowing the possibility for new

ways of seeing how power operates complexly in family relationships.

Feminist perspectives raise the tough questions that force researchers to cross boundaries in informed, reflexive ways. A feminist lens is an uncomfortable one because it requires a shift from the safety of a distanced stance to one where the realities of what our research is doing to and saying about real people—the so-called “others” that we study—is exposed and must be examined. This exposure makes scholarship accountable. At issue, too, is whether one can fight social injustice using the very tools that cause social injustice—in this case family research. With reference to Lorde (1984), feminists ask, can the tools that have been used to cause oppression be used to bring forth liberation? And although some scholars lament the so-called stalled gender revolution, a way to reframe this approach is to see the very slow turning of the revolution’s wheel to be indicative of a true and lasting change.

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Stress Processes in Families and Couples

8

Yoav Lavee

How do families cope with natural disasters such as floods, earthquakes, or tornados that destroy their homes? How do they cope with chronic illness, life-threatening health problems, or the death of a child? How do families handle unemployment and prolonged financial hardship? How do they deal with normative life transitions such as the birth of a child, the launching of young adults, or retirement? How do daily demands and hassles affect couples and families?

Describing and explaining the ways in which people, as individuals and families, as systems of interacting personalities respond to stressful situations has attracted much scientific attention in the social and health sciences. Scientists within the fields of physiology, psychology, sociology, and family studies have investigated and developed theoretical models to address these issues. The goal of these efforts is to explain which people and families, under what conditions and with what capabilities, are adversely affected or successfully manage stressful situations. Despite variations in the foci of research, three major components have been included in all models: the *sources* of stress, such as the physical, psychological, or social conditions, and the stimuli arising from the internal or external environments; the *outcomes* of stress, such as the

physical, emotional, behavioral, functional, or relationship consequences; and the factors that mediate between them (Patterson, 1988). Most theoretical stress models in the social sciences agree that such mediators as personal, psychological, and/or community *resources* have significant roles in preventing adverse outcomes and can help manage turmoil. In addition, another class of mediators involves the importance of *appraisals* of stressful encounters for understanding the outcomes of the process of stress. These factors appear to have dominated the development of family stress theory and research for more than half a century.

The present chapter is devoted to the study of families under stress. Because the family is a system of *interacting personalities* (Boss, 2002; Burgess, 1926; Hill, 1958), family stress theory shares explanations derived from theoretical models having psychological and sociological origins, but also has unique characteristics beyond these disciplinary origins. We begin with a brief review of the emergence, development, and basic concepts of family stress theory.¹ We then review theory and research on interactional patterns in *couples* under stress, an area of study that has developed more recently and holds promise for the continuing development of family stress theory.

Y. Lavee, PhD (✉)
School of Social Work, University of Haifa,
Mount Carmel, Haifa 31905, Israel
e-mail: lavee@research.haifa.ac.il

¹A more detailed review can be found in the previous edition of this Handbook (Boss, 1987) as well as in other publications (e.g., Boss, 2002; McCubbin & Patterson, 1983; Patterson, 1988; Price, Price, & McKenry, 2010).

Family Stress Theory and Research

The Founding of Family Stress and Crisis Theory

The study of families under stress and theorizing about them can be traced back to the works of Angell (1936/1965), Cavan and Ranck (1938), and Koos (1946), who studied the effect of the Great Depression on families in the 1930s. A primary question that motivated these studies was which families, under what conditions, are adversely affected by stressful experiences. Hill (1949) built on these initial studies in his classic work on the family's response to war separation and reunion, in which he advanced the first major family stress framework: the ABC-X model of family crisis:

A (the stressor event) interacting with B (the family's crisis-meeting resources) interacting with C (the definition the family makes of the event) produces X (the crisis) (Hill, 1949, p. 29).

In this and a later article, Hill (1958) described the unique features of families that make them crisis prone: the average family, he argued, is "badly handicapped organizationally," poorly manned to withstand stress. Yet most families face troubles in the course of their life cycle and manage to work out procedures for meeting problematic situations.

Hill's theoretical formulation guided family stress studies for the next 3 decades. Numerous variables were introduced to explain differences in family response to stressful circumstances. Burr (1973) advanced the ABC-X formulation into a *bona fide* deductive theory by synthesizing theoretical discussions (e.g., Angell, 1936/1965; Hansen & Hill, 1964; and others) and research. First, he clarified the definition of crisis (the X factor), suggesting that it is a continuous variable, the *amount of crisis*, denoting a variation in the amount of disruptiveness, incapacitation, or disorganization of the family social system. He elaborated that "no crisis" does not mean that there are no problems in the system; it merely means that the problems are of a routine nature.

Next, Burr clarified the definition of the stressor event (the A factor) to denote any event that produces change in some aspect of the family social system, such as its boundaries, structure, roles, processes, goals, or values. Some of the stressor events produce a large amount of disruption in the system; others produce little change.

A major contribution in Burr's (1973) theorizing is the identification of variables and the formulation of formal propositions concerning the mediating and moderating factors between the source of stress (the stressor event) and the outcomes for the family social system. He synthesized the theoretical and empirical literature around two central concepts: *family vulnerability to stress*, i.e., factors that may impair the resistance capabilities of the family and increase its proneness to crisis; and *family regenerative power*, i.e., factors that help a family recover from crisis. Included in the former are variables such as the family's definition of the seriousness of the change (Hill's C factor), externalization of blame for the change, and the amount of time over which changes were anticipated. The family's regenerative power, which affects its level of reorganization, is influenced by such variables as internal family resources (e.g., marital adjustment, relative conjugal power, similarity of sentiments) and by external resources, such as the extended family. Some variables were theorized to influence both vulnerability to stress and regenerative power in opposite directions. Of these, *family integration* (cohesion) and *family adaptability* (i.e., the ability of the family to change its ways of operating with little organizational discomfort) received the most attention in subsequent research and theory (Lavee & Olson, 1991; Olson & McCubbin, 1982; Price et al., 2010).

The Double ABC-X Model of Family Stress and Adaptation Over Time

The next major step in the development of family stress theory is attributed to McCubbin and Patterson (1982, 1983). Based on observations of families responding to the absence of a husband-father who was a prisoner of war or missing in

action, McCubbin and Patterson extended the theory-building efforts of Hill and Burr into the Double ABC-X model. The model emphasizes the postcrisis adjustment and adaptation of families over time. Families deal with multiple sources of stress, both normative development and non-normative events, over periods of change and readjustment, described as the *roller-coaster* of family crisis and adaptation. The Double ABC-X model redefines precrisis variables and adds postcrisis variables in order to describe (a) the additional life stressors and strains, before or after the crisis-producing event, resulting in a pile-up of demands; (b) the range of outcomes of family processes in response to the pile-up of stressors (maladaptation to bonadaptation); and (c) the intervening factors that shape the course of adaptation: family resources, coherence and meaning, and the related coping strategies.

The pile-up of demands (aA factor) refers to the cumulative effect, over time, of pre- and postcrisis stressors and strains. It views stress as a process, a complex set of changing conditions that have a history and future, and views the family as dealing with a cluster of normative and nonnormative events rather than with a single stressor. Additional sources of stress, such as required role changes, prior unresolved intrafamily strains, and boundary ambiguity may all place demands on the family while it is struggling with a major stressor event.

The family adaptive resources (bB factor) refer both to existing and expanded resources developed and strengthened in response to the demands imposed by the stressor event and pile-up of demands. These resources can either reduce the effect of demands on the family or help the family adapt to the required changes. Family adaptive resources may include first *personal resources* or characteristics of individual family members that are potentially available to the family in times of need. Second are *family system resources* or internal attributes of the family unit such as cohesion and adaptability. Finally, *community resources* or capabilities of people or institutions outside of the family, on which fami-

lies can draw, primarily social support from formal institutions and informal support networks (e.g., the support provided by extended family, friends, colleagues, and neighbors).

Family perception (cC factor) involves not only the family's view of the stressor event, but also the meaning families attach to the total situation, including the pile-up of demands, the amount of change in the family social system, the resources and support available to the family, and the family belief system and worldview. The notion of family perception and meaning was criticized on the basis that perception is a cognitive process that resides within individuals and cannot be attributed to a social system (Hansen & Hill, 1964; Walker, 1985). Other scholars, however, argued that perception and meaning may be shared by family members, and that shared perception and meaning is in itself an important variable in the stress process (Ben-David & Lavee, 1992; Boss, 2002; Hennon et al., 2009; Reiss, 1981).

Family adaptation (xX factor) reflects the outcome of the family's efforts to achieve a new, postcrisis balance in functioning. McCubbin and Patterson (1983) described this concept as a continuum, ranging from maladaptation to bonadaptation, which reflects the degree of fit between three units of analysis: individual family members, the family unit, and the community of which the family is a part. At the positive end of the continuum, a fit between the demands and capabilities of any two units enables strong family integrity, enhancing the development of family members and of the family unit.

The process of adjustment and adaptation: The Family Adjustment and Adaptation Response (FAAR) model. In conjunction with the Double ABC-X model, McCubbin and Patterson (1983; see also Patterson, 1988) described a more elaborate model, the FAAR process. In this model, families achieve stability in the face of stressful life events across two phases: adjustment and adaptation. The adjustment phase is an attempt by the family to resist major disruption in its

established patterns of behavior and structure by using *avoidance* coping strategies to deny or ignore the stressor and other demands; *elimination* strategies to change or remove the stressor; or *assimilation* strategies to accept the demands into existing patterns of interaction. These efforts may lead to successful adjustment, or if resistance efforts fail, to maladjustment and crisis. After the crisis, the adaptation phase is geared toward restoring stability by making changes in the family's existing structure, modifying its established patterns of interaction, and consolidating the new patterns to achieve a new balance.

Family Resilience

Whereas early theorizing and research on families under stress focused on the deleterious effects of stressful events on families, more recent scholarly writings have shifted the focus to family *resilience*. The concept is rooted in studies on children who have strived under adversity (Cicchetti & Garmsey, 1993; Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990). Applied to the family, resilience is used to describe the strengths of families that seem to benefit from the challenges of adversity (Cowan, Cowan, & Schulz, 1996; Hawley & DeHaan, 1996; McCubbin & McCubbin, 1988; Patterson, 2002). Also included in the concept of resilience is the ability of families to be flexible in response to the pressures and strains of life (Boss, 2006) and to rebound from adversity strengthened and more resourceful (Walsh, 2006).

Families Under Stress: Concluding Remarks

The development of family stress theory seems to have reached a peak in the mid-to-late 1980s. Additional contributions during the 1990s and into the twenty-first century have focused on specific components within the model, especially on delineating and clarifying the mediating and moderating factors in family stress management (Boss, 2002).

Despite the abundance of scholarly literature, the basic assumptions and the major components

of the theory have not changed over the years. Nearly all research in this area has continued to be guided by the A, B, C, and X components of the model. Most often it supported the hypothesis that the extent of family crisis (variously operationalized as disorganization, dysfunction, dissatisfaction, etc.) or family adaptation can be predicted based on the precipitating events, the perception of the situation, and the resources available to the family.

The continued reliance on the ABC-X or Double ABC-X models in family stress research attest to its strength: it is simple, relatively easy to operationalize and test, and useful for explaining a wide range of situations affecting families—both normative transitions and unexpected, nonnormative or traumatic events. Even well-articulated and reasoned critiques of the model (or of research guided by it) have not significantly altered the line of research in this area.

In the past 3 decades, various nondeterministic, nonlinear, and systemic processes have been suggested as operating in families under stress (Boss, 2002; Hansen & Johnson, 1979; McCubbin, 1979; McCubbin & Patterson, 1983; Price et al., 2010). Burr and Klein (1994) noted, however, that these systemic formulations may not have been integrated into the mainstream theory because they conflicted with the basic positivistic assumptions of the ABC-X theory. The ABC-X model also fits well with linear statistical reasoning and is therefore easy to employ in the data analysis of quantitative research. Its weakness lies primarily in that it ignores interpersonal interactions altogether. Thus, the ABC-X model allows for the prediction and explanation of long-term outcomes, but it does not foster an understanding of the systemic processes that take place when the family faces a stressful event.

The generalized and abstract nature of the ABC-X model is most apparent in its focus on the *family* as a total unit. Unfortunately, family researchers have lacked adequate methodologies for studying and analyzing *family* phenomena under stress. Whereas theoretical models of family stress and coping describe the family as a unit, most research continued to focus on the individual (e.g., perception, distress, well-being, satisfaction)

as a unit of research and analysis. More recent developments in theory and methodology for the study of interpersonal interactions under stress offer another perspective to understand *interactional processes* in families.

Couples Under Stress: Theory and Research²

Several scholars (e.g., Boss, 1987, 2002; Menaghan, 1983; Walker, 1985) have stressed the need to consider subsystems within the family. Nevertheless, the marital unit, however central as it may be to the family's functioning, has received only scant attention. In family stress theory, only a few dyadic variables have been considered (e.g., marital adjustment, relative conjugal power, amount of consultation, amount of similarity of sentiments; see Burr, 1973), but they were theorized primarily as intervening factors, that is, as determinants of the family's regenerative power.

In some respects, in its generalized formulation as *family stress*, the theory may be adequate for explaining marital relations under stress (cf., Williams, 1995). Indeed, much of the research about the effect of stressful situations on couple relationships was guided by components of family stress theory and supported the claim that stressful events have a deleterious effect on marital relationships (Karney & Bradbury, 1995; Lavee, 1997). Negative associations between stressful situations and marital outcomes were found with regard to a variety of stressful life events and transitions, including income loss and economic distress, physical illness or psychological symptoms of a spouse, fertility problems, child's developmental disorders and disability, pregnancy loss, and death of a child.

In contrast, several studies have documented the resilience of couples, showing that stressful experiences may *strengthen* the relationship and

result in increased cohesiveness and a more tightly bonded partnerships. This has been found with regard to certain life cycle transitions, as well as coping with a serious illness of family members (Barbarin, Hughes, & Chesler, 1985; Dahquist et al., 1993; Gritz, Wellisch, Siau, & Wang, 1990). Other researchers have argued that the marital relationship outcomes may be more complex, involving different patterns of change. For example, Belsky and Rovine (1990) reported four patterns of change in marital relationship after transition to parenthood: accelerating decline, linear decline, no change, or positive change.

Relationships may also change in certain dimensions but not in others, or they may be negatively affected in some aspects and positively in others. For example, in a study of marital adjustment among couples with chronic illness, Carter and Carter (1994) found that marital cohesion was significantly higher than the norm, whereas the levels of consensus were significantly lower. In another study (Lavee & Mey-Dan, 2003), parents of children diagnosed with cancer reported a significant deterioration in their sexual relationship, but increased satisfaction with their affective communication, better role relationships, and an increase in mutual trust.

Couples may also experience waves of increased or decreased emotional closeness and marital cohesion at various stages of coping with a stressful encounter, with more effective communication and support some of the time and increased partner withdrawal at others (Lavee, 1997, 2005). In a series of studies on couples coping with various stressors, Burr and Klein (1994) found that marital cohesion "roller-coasted" in more than 50% of the couples, and the authors concluded that "considerably more variation is seen in the way family systems respond to stress than is generally recognized in the stress literature" (p. 123).

To summarize, although most studies indicate that experiencing stress has a deleterious effect on marital quality, studies also show a more complex pattern of relationship changes. First, stress may have a differential effect on various aspects of the relationship. Therefore, conceptualizing and measuring marital quality as a unidimensional

²Although I focus the discussion on the marital dyad, the processes discussed here may be valid for other forms of committed relationships as well, including cohabiting and gay/lesbian couples.

outcome variable may obscure important differential influences of stress on the marital unit. Second, there may be changes in the relationship along various stages of the couple's coping, including changes in interpersonal closeness and an array of interactional patterns. These findings suggest that a closer look is needed to understand what interactional and transactional processes take place in couples under stress, and what determines changes in relationships.

Explaining Interactions in Marriages Under Stress

The Vulnerability-Stress-Adaptation Model

Reviewing theory and research about changes in marital quality and stability over time, Karney and Bradbury (1995) concluded that crisis theory addresses some important changes in marital relationships that are not well explained by other theories. Crisis theory was criticized, however, for its failure to specify the mechanisms of change because its constructs have not been linked to specific processes within the marriage.

In response to these limitations, Karney and Bradbury (1995) presented a vulnerability-stress-adaptation (VSA) model (Fig. 8.1), which posits that stressful events, combined with the couple's enduring vulnerabilities, explain adaptive processes. These processes in turn affect and are affected by marital quality. Enduring vulnerabilities refer to background variables and traits that spouses bring to the marriage, such as perception of the family of origin, attitude toward marriage, social skills, personality, and others. The adaptive processes themselves need to be further specified.

Systems Perspective on Couple Interaction Under Stress

From the perspective of family systems theory, the question is not what variables affect an outcome, but rather what are the processes (rules of transformation) that take place between the components of a system (i.e., members of the marital dyad) when an environmental stimulus, namely, awareness of an event, enters that system. Systems-based analysis (Montgomery & Fewer, 1988) directs our attention to the effect that spouses have on each other, the fit between the spouses' behaviors, and the effect of this fit on the functioning of the marital unit. According to systems theory, the components of a system affect each other through a feedback and control mechanism, so that the output from one subsystem (member A) serves as input to the other subsystem (member B) and *vice versa*.

Unlike mechanical systems, human systems are self-reflexive (Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993), that is, they behave according to the *meaning* that the input has for them. Based on one's perceived meaning of the environmental input (stressor event) and on their internal rules of transformation, individuals output a signal to the other member of the dyad. Whitchurch and Constantine noted that this communication involves more than simply an exchange of information in the sense of literal content. "Human communication... facilitates humans' creation of meaning and their simultaneous activities of sending and receiving messages of symbolic content" (pp. 329–330). Kantor and Lehr (1975) maintained that the information processed by the system is *distance-regulation* information: family members continuously inform other members what constitutes proper and optimal distance in their relationships.

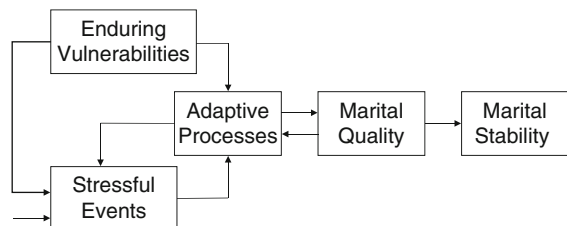


Fig. 8.1 The vulnerability-stress-adaptation (VSA) model (Karney & Bradbury, 1995)

The information is processed through *acts*, *sequences* of acts, and *strategies* (recurrent patterns of interaction sequences) that are meaningful only in the context of interdependent relationships (Kantor & Lehr, 1975). Acts, the basic units of interaction processes, are manipulations of the environment that have “meaning” within the context for others. “[They] function simultaneously as a signal to others, a response to an antecedent signal, and a signal to the self. In other words, the social act is not an isolated event, but a relation taking place in a specific field of shared experience...” (Kantor & Lehr, p. 12).

Thus, in response to a stressful situation (i.e., an input to the relationship system), each member (a) acts upon the environmental input (the event), (b) reacts to the other spouse’s reaction to the input, and (c) reacts to the other spouse’s reaction to his/her own reaction and so on. Kantor and Lehr (1975) suggested that these sequences of acts should be understood within the distance-regulating strategies that characterize the relationship. Because people, as “mindful components of living systems,” have memories of past experiences, interaction is continuous so that it fits with interactions that occurred previously and affects interactions to come (Montgomery & Fewer, 1988). When an event takes place, the spouses’ actions are based on each person’s idiosyncratic meaning attached to the event (including memories of interactions in other interpersonal systems) and on memories of past experiences with the spouse. Kantor and Lehr (1975) also maintained that

members of a system respond to each other’s verbal and nonverbal cues in a predictable way, “a fact that leads us to believe that members know the kinesic, motoric, or cognitive level the parts they are expected to play in family strategies” (p. 18).

Although strategies of distance regulation may characterize a system in a steady state, both the needs for closeness/distance and the strategies used to regulate them can change as a result of environmental input and of its meaning. For example, an anxiety-producing event may alter one’s need for closeness, which then shapes behavior so that distance is renegotiated. The partner’s reaction may be influenced by the first member’s behavior, but also by the partner’s own need for closeness or distance, which may or may not change in response to the new stimulus. This distance renegotiation may have different outcomes for the couple’s relationship.

A Process Model of Couple Stress Management

The study of couple stress management draws on several areas of scholarship, including psychological and family stress theories, communication, emotions, social support in close relationships, dyadic coping, and others. I use a *process model of couple stress management*, shown in Fig. 8.2, as a framework for integrating several theoretical models and research to describe couples’ processes under stress.

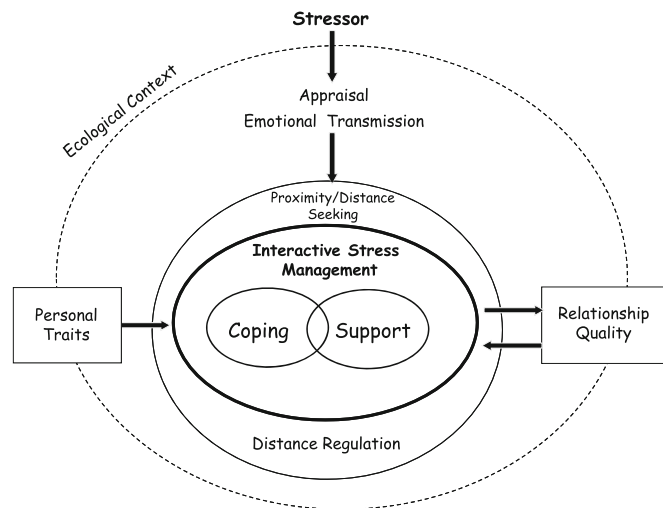


Fig. 8.2 Process model of couple stress management

At the core of the model is a process of *interactive stress management*, composed of two interrelated processes, coping and support. These processes are shaped by the partners' proximity-distance seeking, and more generally, by the couples' distance regulation, which are affected by enduring vulnerabilities, primarily personality variables and relationship quality, and may in turn strengthen or weaken the quality of the relationship in the long term. The process of stress management is also shaped in part by a larger ecological context, including the couple's cultural, environmental, social, and familial context.

Appraisal, Emotions, and Emotional Transmission

When couples or individual members of the couple face a stressful encounter, they first evaluate its meaning for them, individually or collectively (Boss, 2002; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Cognitive appraisal involves not only the event but also an evaluation of the resources at the disposal of the individual or couple. The stressful encounter also involves emotional reactions. Lazarus (1991) described stress as a form of emotion because events or situations that are perceived as stressful elicit a variety of emotions, including anxiety, fear, despair, and depression.

In the context of couple processes, stress emotions are communicated both verbally and nonverbally (Kennedy-Moore & Watson, 1999). The expression of emotions by one person often affects other people who are exposed to it, and the observer's emotions, attribution, and behavior are influenced by the expressed emotions (DeRivera & Grinkis, 1986; Hareli & Rafeali, 2008). Such patterns of emotional transmission in couples may explain how the emotions of one partner influence the emotional and behavioral reactions of the other (Larson & Almeida, 1999). The term *stress crossover* refers to the situation in which a stress emotion experienced by one spouse leads to emotions experienced by the other (Bolger, DeLongis, Kessler, & Wethington, 1989). Westman and Vinokur (1998) suggested that the crossover process

may involve two mechanisms: empathic reactions and an interaction process. *Empathic crossover* implies that stress is transmitted from one partner to another as a result of empathic reactions, that is, sharing another's feelings by placing oneself psychologically in that person's circumstances (Lazarus, 1991). *Interactional crossover* is explained by negative interactions, especially social undermining directed against the partner. In support of this conceptualization, Lavee and Ben-Ari (2007) found that negative emotions were passed from one spouse to the other more strongly among couples characterized by high-quality relationships than in distressed couples, suggesting that empathic reactions are more prevalent in high-quality relationships.

Emotions play an important role in other segments of the stress management process, including approach and withdrawal in coping and support.

Interactive Stress Management: Coping and Support

Dyadic-level stress in couples is conceived as "a process of mutual influence in which the stress of one partner affects the other" (Revenson, Kayser, & Bodenmann, 2005, p. 6). In the process model of dyadic interaction under stress (Fig. 8.2), we conceptualize the couples' interactions of coping and support as sequences of acts shaped by distance regulation, more specifically, by the partners' proximity and distance seeking. Although coping and support in couples under stress have been described as two separate processes, they have much in common and are conceptualized here as interrelated: dyadic support facilitates coping, and coping behaviors may be directed at seeking and providing support.

Dyadic Coping

Bodenmann (1995, 2005) presented a theory of dyadic coping, in which he expanded Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) stress and coping theory to systemic-transactional process in which both partners are involved. Bodenmann distinguished between *individual coping efforts* in the context

of couple relationships, where stress is mastered independently by each partner alone, and a *dyadic coping process*, in which both partners are involved in the coping process. Dyadic coping may take several forms: (a) *common dyadic coping*, in which both partners participate using strategies such as joint problem solving, joint information seeking, or sharing feelings; (b) *supportive dyadic coping*, in which one partner helps the other deal with such activities as helping with daily tasks, providing advice, helping reframe the situation, or expressing empathic understanding and solidarity; and (c) *delegated dyadic coping*, in which one partner takes over responsibilities in order to reduce the stress experienced by the other partner (Bodenmann, 2005).³

Several forms of dyadic coping have been identified. Coyne and colleagues (Coyne, Ellard, & Smith, 1990; Coyne & Fiske, 1992; Coyne & Smith, 1991) identified two broad classes of relationship-focused coping: *active engagement*, in which one partner involves the other in constructive problem solving and inquires about the feeling of the other partner; and *protective buffering*, in which one partner hides concerns, denies worries, and yields to the other partner to avoid disagreements. Similarly, DeLongis and others (DeLongis & O'Brien, 1990; O'Brien & DeLongis, 1997; Preece & DeLongis, 2005) described coping as an interpersonal regulatory processes aimed at enhancing or maintaining relationships, including *empathic coping*—attempts to perceive the emotional experience of others involved in the situation, and *interpersonal withdrawal coping*—behaviors aimed at keeping the partner from knowing about one's problem or feelings. Revenson (2003) conceptualized couples' coping as a congruence or fit between individual partners' coping efforts, noting that these efforts may involve either similar or complementary coping styles to reach the desired goals.

The common theme in all models of dyadic coping is that the dyadic relationship provides an essential context for viewing the efforts to manage

stress. They also share a common view of the relationship as a psychological and behavioral interdependence, in which the attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, and behaviors of each person in an intimate relationship affect those of the other.

Couple Support

Social support within couple relationships is closely related to the various forms of dyadic coping. Social support has been conceptualized as coping assistance (Thoits, 1986), and supportive relationships have been conceptualized as resources that can aid the individual's coping by providing instrumental assistance, emotional sustenance, esteem support, information, and feedback about the partner's coping choices (Cutrona, 1996; Revenson, 2003). Although individuals may receive support from various sources, spouses have been reported to be the most important source of support at times of heightened distress (Barbarin et al., 1985).

Support within the couple may be asymmetrical, with one spouse providing support to the other, or mutual, when both spouses provide support to each other (Lavee & Mey-Dan, 2003; Smart, 1992). Although spouses may provide each other different types of support (e.g., informational, tangible, emotional, esteem), it appears that emotional, nurturing support exchanged between partners is most significantly associated with couples' satisfaction with their relationship (Cutrona & Suhr, 1992). Emotional support from the spouse has been associated with an increase in closeness, whereas lack of support has been associated with a deterioration of the relationship (Hughes & Lieberman, 1990).

Pierce, Sarason, Sarason, Joseph, and Henderson (1996) described couple support on three levels: *schemata* of support, *availability* of support, and supportive *behaviors*. The first level refers to an individual's general attitude toward the self and others regarding social support. It takes shape in the course of the individual's development and contains internalized working models and expectations about support relations. The second level describes the sense that the spouse will be available and ready to provide support in times of need. It includes a specific conception of

³Bodenmann and others (e.g., O'Brien & DeLongis, 1997) also described negative forms of dyadic coping, including hostile, ambivalent, and superficial forms.

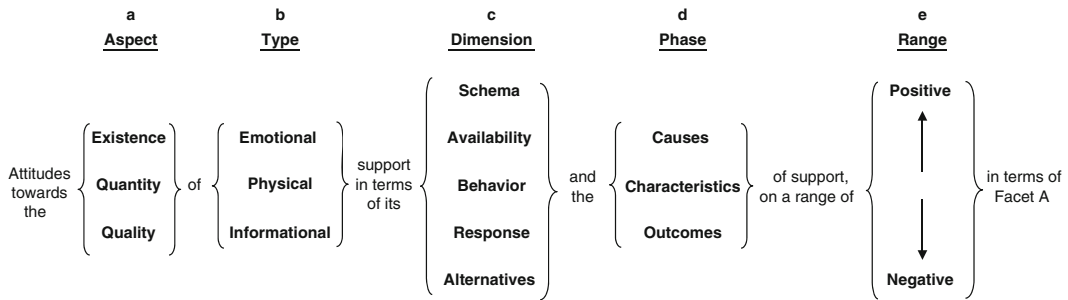


Fig. 8.3 Couple support: a mapping sentence

the relationship involving the interpretation of *potential* supportive behaviors (Pierce, Sarason, & Sarason, 1991). The third level refers to specific supportive behaviors in times of need. The assumption is that each of the three levels contributes to the interaction of the couple.

Support transactions are described as giving and receiving assistance within an exchange framework, in a cyclical process: providing support represents the individual’s reaction to the other’s need for support. The recipient tends to request support on the basis of previous support experiences, and in turn provides support to the assisting spouse, and so on. All supportive transactions rely on the sense of availability, and shape it in turn (Bradbury, Beach, Fincham, & Nelson, 1996; Fincham & Bradbury, 1992).

Based on theory and research on couple support, Gilad, Lavee, and Iness-Kenig (2009) developed a comprehensive definition of couple support using a mapping sentence (see Fig. 8.3).⁴ This definition served as a basis for constructing a detailed inventory for assessing *attitudes* about mutual support in couple relations, the sense of support *availability*, support *behaviors* of giving and receiving, the degree to which the support meets one’s needs, *responses* to received support, and preference for support from within the couple

⁴A mapping sentence is a tool used in *facet theory* to define the basic parts of the domain under investigation. It consists of facets representing the major conceptual components of a domain, each facet containing elements that define the variations within it, which together characterize the content universe. It then provides a template for the operationalization of the concepts (e.g., questionnaire items).

and from external sources. Smallest space analysis showed the various structures of the relations between elements of support among men and women living with and without disability, as well as a core element of reciprocal support in couples.

Coping and Support as Distance Regulation

Dyadic processes under stress involve an interplay between the stress signals, coping strategies, and support-seeking and giving of both partners, all of which may reflect strategies of distance regulation. Although couples tend to reach a certain level of intimacy and closeness that characterizes their relationship, dyadic closeness can fluctuate in response to interpersonal and external events (Ben-Ari & Lavee, 2007). In this “dance of closeness and distance” (Rosenblatt & Barner, 2006), the partners are closer at sometimes, farther apart at others.

Closeness and distance may also reflect patterns of dyadic coping—engaging vs. withdrawing from interaction (Story & Bradbury, 2004). As a form of relationship-focused coping (Coyne & Smith, 1991), active engagement includes attempts to engage in interpersonal interactions, whereas protective buffering includes attempts to withdraw from interaction. In a similar vein, *empathic coping* (Preece & DeLongis, 2005) represents dyadic closeness, whereas *interpersonal withdrawal* coping is manifested by decreasing closeness.

The process of distance regulation in coping and support is further described in the Sensitive Interaction Systems Theory (Barbee & Cunningham, 1995; Barbee et al., 1993; Barbee,

Rowatt, & Cunningham, 1998). This model assumes that the partners' emotional states influence the type of strategy used by both the seeker and the supporter in supportive episodes. The tactics used to activate social support may be direct or indirect, and it may be carried out verbally or by nonverbal means. In response, the partner's behavior may be avoiding or approaching, using problem-focused or emotional-focused support. The support seeker then reacts to the support-giver by either accepting or resisting the support in a verbal or nonverbal way. Emotions play a significant role in this process, because people in a positive mood tend to use more approach strategies than people in a negative mood, who tend to use more avoidance strategies (Barbee & Cunningham, 1995; Barbee et al., 1993, 1998).

This interactional sequence exemplifies the couple's distance regulation: direct requests are more likely to attract approach rather than avoidance strategies, whereas indirect forms of help seeking often lead to avoidance strategies by the supporter. Furthermore, support seekers more often employ direct support activation behavior following a supporter's use of approach behavior and employ indirect support activation in response to avoidant behavior. A partner's comprehension of the nonverbal behavior and the cues of the other partner have a significant effect on interpersonal interactions and the quality of the couple's relationship (Schachner, Shaver, & Mikulincer, 2005). Perception of a partner's choice to seek distance in times of stress as an acceptable coping strategy also has ramifications for the couple's relationship. One's interpretation of the partner's withdrawal as a need to be alone (*moving inward*) tends to have a positive effect on the relationship, whereas the perception of the spouse's withdrawal as signaling a wish to distance oneself (*getting away*) tends to create relationship distress (Lavee & Ben-Ari, 2007).

Such forms of approach and avoidance are not isolated in the course of couple relationships: couples "remember" previous interactions in stressful situations, and there are repeated sequences of interaction under stress (Kantor & Lehr, 1975; Montgomery & Fewer, 1988). Over time, partners may develop a sense of their wish to seek closeness

in times of stress (seek proximity), or to withdraw (seek distance).

Closeness vs. distance seeking can also vary by the type of stressor, its source (i.e., from within or from outside the couple), its severity and duration, and personal and couple characteristics (see Moderating Factors below). Research on couples facing critical life events shows various patterns of closeness and distance related to the partners' emotional reactions in times of heightened vs. low levels of distress, the degree of comfort with the partners' behaviors, and their approach or avoidance strategies in support seeking and giving (Lavee, 2005). Research on couples' coping with daily stressors, such as high levels of work stress, commonly predicted increased withdrawal from dyadic interactions (Lavee & Ben-Ari, 2007; Repetti, 1989, 1992; Roberts & Levenson, 2001; Schulz, Cowan, Cowan, & Brennan, 2004; Story & Repetti, 2006). Research on various sources of daily stressors (self-related, relational, and external sources; Lavee, 2010) revealed that, on average, daily stress is associated with decreased desire for physical proximity and perceived dyadic closeness on the given day. Moreover, the desire for proximity and dyadic closeness varies with the type of stress and whether the stress is experienced by the self (*actor effect*) or by the other spouse (*partner effect*).

Moderating Factors of the Stress Process

Two types of moderating factors that shape the process of stress managements in couples have been most commonly examined: personal resources and the couple's relationship quality. *Personal resources* include such attributes as sense of mastery, optimism, sense of coherence, and other background and personality attributes that were conceived as *enduring vulnerabilities*, the relatively stable intrapersonal characteristics in Karney and Bradbury's (1995) VSA model. Such characteristics play an important role in determining how stressful encounters are interpreted, reacted upon, and processed.

Neuroticism

Neuroticism is a personality trait defined by a general negative affectivity and a reduced positive emotionality in positive contexts (Bouchard, Lussier, & Sabourin, 1999; Keltner, 1996). It is considered to be a predisposition for negative feelings such as distress, frustration, and anxiety (Costa & McCrae, 1980) and is associated with decreased adaptive resources, including sense of mastery, self-esteem, and optimism.

There is ample evidence of the effect of neuroticism on couple relationships. Neuroticism was found to be negatively associated with various measures of marital adjustment, and the most consistent and powerful personality predictor of relationship outcomes (Bouchard et al., 1999). Karney and Bradbury (1995) suggested that the decline in marital quality associated with neuroticism may be explained in part by the effect of personality traits and by negative affectivity in particular, on the adaptive process: “[they] may exert longitudinal influence on marital outcomes through their effects on spouses’ ability to adapt to the challenges they encounter” (Karney & Bradbury, p. 4).

Negative affectivity may have an effect on various components of the stress process. It has been associated with experiencing life events as more stressful and with the spouses’ maladaptive attributions for relationship events (Bouchard, 2003; Karney, Bradbury, Fincham, & Sullivan, 1994); with negative emotional expressiveness (Lavee & Ben-Ari, 2004); with distancing/avoidance coping (Bouchard, 2003); and with decreased reciprocity of social support in couples (Karney & Bradbury, 1997; Pasch, Bradbury, & Davila, 1997).

Attachment Security

Attachment theory is concerned with the ways in which individuals regulate emotions and behaviors in their relationships with significant others (attachment figures), especially when they feel distress. Because the theory explains why and how individuals differ in their support-seeking and support-giving behavior under stressful situations, it sheds light on couples’ interactions under stress and on the various patterns of

change in marital relationships in response to stressful events.

A fundamental assumption of the theory is that individuals internalize their early experiences with caretakers by forming *internal working models* of their own self-worth and of their expectations for care and support from others (Bowlby, 1969). As cognitive-emotional schemata of one’s interpersonal world, the internal working models continue to regulate the individual’s tendency to seek and maintain proximity and contact with specific individuals who provide the potential for physical and/or psychological safety and security (Berman, Marcus, & Berman, 1994). Indeed, adult relationship researchers have provided robust evidence in support of Bowlby’s claim and that adults in romantic relationships manifest behaviors similar to the attachment styles identified in childhood (Hazan & Shaver, 1987).

Under stress and threat, the attachment system is activated and influences the adaptive process (Kunce & Shaver, 1994; Mikulincer, Gillath, & Shaver, 2002). Attachment security is associated with emotional regulation and control (Feeney, 1995), with the expressing emotions and sensitivity toward the partner’s emotional cues (Noller & Feeney, 1994; Schachner et al., 2005), with empathic reactions to others’ needs (Mikulincer et al., 2001) and with care-seeking and care-giving (Collins & Feeney, 2000; Feeney & Hohaus, 2001; Simpson, Rholes, Orina, & Grich, 2002). Secure persons tend to calibrate the amount of support to their partner’s needs, whereas avoidant persons provide support inversely related to the level of their partners’ distress, particularly when they or their partners experience greater distress (Simpson, Rholes, & Nelligan, 1992).

It appears that the combination of the spouses’ attachment patterns is important in explaining marital processes and outcomes (Ben-Ari & Lavee, 2005). Cobb, Davila, and Bradbury (2010) provided evidence that the attachment security of both spouses and their perceptions of the partner’s security play a key role in couple interactions and relationship outcomes: each spouse’s attachment security influences their partner’s perception of them, which in turn influences their support behavior and marital happiness.

Relationship Quality as Moderator of the Stress Process

Whereas most research investigated the effect of stressful situations on marital outcomes, the quality of couple relationships in itself plays a key role in the stress process. Distressed marriages are at increased risk of experiencing internal family stressors (e.g., children's problem behaviors, parent-child conflicts, physical and psychological disorders, alcohol and drug use). They are more likely to attribute negative intentions to each other's behavior, and their dysfunctional relationship may diminish their capacity to engage in effective problem solving, to provide support, and to adapt to stressful situations (Karney & Bradbury, 1995). In contrast, higher marital quality is associated with more supportive interactions, better fit in the spouses' coping efforts, and a stronger sense of "we-ness" in struggling with life challenges.

The Ecological Context of Stress Management

Until recently, the body of literature on stress in couples has not given adequate consideration to cultural variations, and researchers of cultural variations have largely disregarded the effect of stress on couples' adaptational outcomes. It must be recognized, however, that the couple is a social system that exists within other interdependent social systems (Revenson, 2003), and that every aspect of the couples' stress management is influenced by the sociocultural, religious, situational, and temporal context. Culture and the larger social context may play a role in how individuals experience daily hassles, including the occurrence of events, their appraisal, the coping strategies used, and the adaptational outcomes (Ben-Ari & Lavee, 2004; Lavee & Ben-Ari, 2008; Slavin, Rainer, McCreary, & Gowda, 1991). Cultural perspectives thus provide important insights into psychological and relationship processes (Oyserman & Lee, 2008).

Contextual factors, such as ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and the proximal environment, influence the *exposure to stressors* of individuals and couples by creating or alleviating threats,

demands, or constraints (Revenson, 2003; Story & Bradbury, 2004). Culture shapes the family's values and belief system, which influence the *appraisal and meaning* of the significance of stressor events, thereby predicting vulnerability to stress (Boss, 2002). Certain types of events may be perceived as stressful in widely different cultures, but they may also be shaped by living and social conditions that are culture-specific (Laungani, 1995, 2001; Scherer, 1997). The sociocultural context also affects *coping strategies and support* in couples in a way that reflects coping resources, culturally acceptable emotional expression, and preferred and acceptable coping behaviors (Hobfoll, Cameron, Chapman, & Gallagher, 1996; Revenson, 2003).

Families and Couples Under Stress: Concluding Remarks

This chapter began by describing the roots and development of family stress theory and its components. We noted that the development of family stress and crisis theory seems to have peaked in the mid-to-late 1980s, with only relatively minor additions and revisions thereafter. The ABC-X and Double ABC-X models have influenced much of the research in the field of family studies for more than half of a century. Until recently, however, we have gained only little understanding of what actually transpires in families in times of stress and of the interactional processes between family members.

Since the 1990s (and growing rapidly in the beginning of the twenty-first century), two developments in research and theory have contributed to a better understanding of the stress and coping process: (a) the study of family subsystems, particularly relationship partners, with a focus on relationship processes; and (b) the shift from studying the effect of major life events to managing daily hassles.

The Study of Couple Relationships

The theory development and research of couple processes under stress has benefitted from its

interdisciplinary nature. Whereas the study of family stress was dominated initially by sociological theory and research (and later by students of family studies), couple *relationships* have been studied by researchers in a variety of disciplines, including family science, social psychology, communication, philosophy, and others. A larger number of scientific associations, journals, and conferences have given a platform for presentation of research and theoretical models related to couple interactions in general and couples under stress in particular. This development has given us an opportunity to move from the study of variables predicting the *outcomes* of stressful events on couples and families to a closer look at the *processes* that take place when couples encounter stressful situations. It is the author's belief that what has already been learned about couple processes will serve in the future to fine-tune research and understanding of families as social systems.

Methodological Advances in Research Design and Analysis

The study of family stress has commonly focused on coping with major life events and transitions. As described above, the family stress and crisis theory was found useful for predicting which families, with what resources, and under what circumstances would experience crisis, or alternatively, rise to the occasion to adapt to the new situation and even flourish. One common problem in this type of study was that families (and couples) were often investigated *after* the event had occurred. Thus, typically researchers were able to associate family outcomes with theoretically derived predictor variables, but were unable to examine *change* in family functioning and well-being that was due to the stressor event and associated pile-up of demands.

More recently, there has been a growing interest in the effect of *daily hassles*, the small everyday concerns and challenges on more immediate dyadic processes (i.e., coping), and short-term relationship outcomes (Helms, Walls, & Demo, 2010). Empirical evidence from several studies has shown that such daily occurrences have

adverse consequences on people's psychological well-being and family relationships and that relationship functioning is more strongly associated with daily hassles than with critical life events (Bodenmann, Ledermann, & Bradbury, 2007). Additionally, whereas the focus on perceived relationship quality and stability in traditional stress research provide data on whether stress is generally associated with marital relationships, daily diary data allow researchers to examine more closely how fluctuations in partners' feelings about their relationships covary with daily stresses and strains (Karney, Story, & Bradbury, 2005; Thompson & Bolger, 1999).

The study of couple relationships, particularly relationship processes associated with daily diary data and other time sampling methods, have been accompanied by the development and application of more accurate research methods and data analysis approaches to the study of partners' interdependence and of the repeated sequences of effects that relationship partners have on each other when they encounter stress. Examples of such approaches include the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM; Cook & Kenney, 2005), the application of multilevel approach to the study of between-couples and within-couple effects across days (e.g., Laurenceau, Barrett, & Rovine, 2005), and the use of diary and related statistical methods to analyze various questions of interest in the study of marital and family processes (Laurenceau & Bolger, 2005). Review of research and theoretical articles in the past 5 years clearly shows that researchers are becoming more focused on understanding couple processes, and that the study of couples under stress is expanding rapidly.

A yet unresolved issue awaiting better clarification has to do with the link between short-term relationship processes (i.e., approach vs. avoidance, proximity vs. distance seeking) and relationship outcomes (i.e., dyadic closeness and distance) on one hand, and the long-term outcomes of relationship quality and stability on the other. Does greater dyadic distance in times of stress reflect relationship-focused coping that may strengthen the relationship over time? Does it reflect withdrawal from interaction that may

lead to relationship deterioration? For whom and under what circumstances?

Another important task for the years to come is a better integration of couple stress models with family stress theory and research. Continued focus on interpersonal processes in families who encounter stressful circumstances will move our understanding of family stress management a significant step forward. We are looking forward with great anticipation to what future trends will bring.

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Conceptualizing Cultural Influences on Socialization: Comparing Parent–Adolescent Relationships in the United States and Mexico

9

Gary W. Peterson and Kevin R. Bush

Parent-Adolescent Relations and Culture

A caution commonly given in basic social science classes is to refrain from using the word “always” to describe, draw conclusions about, and explain patterns of human behavior. Deeply rooted in the social science enterprise is the idea that any observations or conclusions about the social world should be couched in the language of *degrees of probability* as opposed to that of causality, absolutes, or inevitability. This much revered proscription against universality might be challenged, however, particularly when addressing the issue of this paper: “Does the culture or ethnicity of a social community influence the structure, meaning, and processes within families and, more specifically, within parent–youth relationships?”

As an answer to this question, we propose that parent–adolescent relationships, the focus of this chapter, must *always* be examined from a culturally or ethnically informed perspective. Unfortunately, this is a viewpoint that much of the social science industry, including those concerned specifically with parent–youth relationships, routinely violates (Peterson, Steinmetz, & Wilson, 2004, 2005a; Rogoff, 2003). Such errors become particularly

severe when research is first conducted on a single cultural/ethnic group, followed by culturally myopic interpretations that lead to overgeneralization across cultures about what was observed (Berry, Poortinga, Segall, & Dasen, 2002; Hill & Tyson, 2008; Kagitcibasi, 1996; Peterson, Steinmetz, & Wilson, 2005b).

This chapter, a review and conceptual analysis, challenges these tendencies toward excessive inferences across cultures by focusing on two closely related objectives concerned with parent–adolescent relationships in the United States and Mexico. Specifically, the first objective is to consider how cultural variation influences differences and similarities in the meaning of adolescent social competence in the United States and Mexico. In the broadest sense, social competence refers to a set of skills, traits, and behaviors that are reflective of adaptive individual and interpersonal functioning within a particular cultural context and perhaps, in some cases, across cultural contexts (Carlo & de Guzman, 2009). Social competence can be viewed as a form of social capital or socially adaptive benefits that the young gain from their relationships or connections with others (e.g., parents) during the process of socialization (Coleman, 1988; Portes, 1998). The second objective of this chapter then considers how cultural variation across these two societies results in differences and similarities in the socialization strategies that parents use (Carlo & de Guzman, 2009; Hill & Tyson, 2008; Peterson, Steinmetz, & Wilson, 2005a) to encourage or inhibit adolescent social competence. Such

G.W. Peterson, PhD (✉) • K.R. Bush, PhD
Department of Family Studies and Social Work,
Miami University, McGuffey Hall 101, Oxford,
OH 45056, USA
e-mail: petersgw@muohio.edu; bushkr@muohio.edu

a conceptual analysis seeks to provide a theoretical basis for cross-cultural understanding about how adolescent social competence is either fostered or impaired by parents in ways consistent with their cultural context.

Before addressing our specific topic, however, we first consider how ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1979, 1994, 2005) provides insight into how the general cultural values of a society have influence on such microlevels of the social environment as the parent–adolescent relationship. Subsequent sections then seek to explain why an understanding of the concepts *culture* and *socialization* is necessary for making statements about cross-cultural similarities and differences relevant to parent–adolescent relationships in the United States vs. Mexico. Following these initial sections, we define what is meant by the concepts *general systems of social values* (i.e., *individualism* and *collectivism*), *parental ethnotheories*, and *adolescent social competence*, particularly in reference to the mainstream or dominant culture of the United States. This is then followed by a review of the most common parental styles and behaviors that US parents use to either foster or hinder the development of adolescent social competence. Concluding sections of this chapter then conceptualize how these concepts apply to the mainstream or dominant cultural values, socialization goals, parenting approaches, and parent–adolescent relationships in Mexican society.

Ecological Perspective and Parent–Adolescent Socialization

An analysis of how cultural variation influences the meaning of adolescent social competence and how this complex of outcomes is socialized by parents requires an understanding of the interconnections among the social contexts that encompass parent–adolescent relationships. A theoretical perspective that can be used to address these issues is the ecological perspective proposed by Bronfenbrenner (1977, 1979, 1994; Tudge, Mokrova, Hatfield, & Karnik, 2009),

which is particularly notable for conceptualizing levels of the social context, both immediate and remote, within which families with adolescents are situated. The ecological approach is most notable for its analysis of four ecosystemic levels, the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem, through which general social-cultural institutions and values can be conceptualized as connected to and influencing such intimate levels of society as parent–adolescent relationships. More recently, Bronfenbrenner (2005) has added the concepts of micro- and meso-time to ecological theory, which brings increased attention to the timing and patterning of events in the longitudinal development of individuals and families. The attention given to macro-time (or what he referred to earlier as the chronosystem) captures the importance of the changing socio-historical context and makes the fit between ecological theory and the life course perspective very effective. Recognizing the issue of time and the ontogenetic changes associated with different periods of the life course makes ecological theory increasingly attentive to unique developmental issues of specific family stages, such as those characteristic of families with adolescent members.

As conceptualized within ecological theory, the most intimate ecosystemic level of human development is the family, the primary aspect of the “microsystem” that stands alongside other face-to-face interaction settings having proximal processes (e.g., friendship relationships, daily leisure activities, and school classroom settings) (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). Inside the microsystem of families (part of which is the parent–adolescent relationship), for example, parental socialization values function to shape these proximal processes, or parenting strategies that are thought to have consequences for both the varied and common aspects of adolescent social competence across cultures. Proximal processes are progressively more complex reciprocal interactions that evolve over time between an active, evolving focal person (e.g., an adolescent) and another human (e.g., a parent or parents) (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). Consequently, not only are parents viewed as influencing the development of adolescent social

competence through “socialization strategies,” but parents’ strategies, in turn, also are influenced by an adolescent’s success or failure to develop social competence (Kuczynski, 2003; Kuczynski & Parkin, 2007; Peterson & Hann, 1999; Peterson & Rollins, 1999). These reciprocal and proximal processes may either promote or constrain the adolescent’s development of social competence or the extent to which a *goodness of fit* is accomplished within their social context.

The next largest level of the ecosystem, the mesosystem, refers to various connections between microsystems such as the linkages between families and schools or the connections between adolescents’ relationships with both their parents and peers. Here the focus is not on aspects of the adolescent’s experience that are unique to each social setting (i.e., the parent-adolescent relationship or the adolescent peer group considered separately), but on how the linkages between these settings are mutually influential in either supportive or incongruent ways. An example might be whether or not similar disciplinary approaches are used with adolescents both by their parents within families and by their school professionals within school classrooms to encourage adolescent social competence.

The next largest level is the “exosystem” which involves the influences of larger systems that encompass and provide an immediate context for families (or other microsystemic settings) such as the neighborhood and community. These environments often provide varying degrees of challenge or support for parent-adolescent relationships, depending upon the extent to which adaptive or dysfunctional circumstances are prevalent. Important circumstances include neighborhood/community poverty, community employment opportunities, recreational activities, neighborhood crime, the availability of illegal and/or dangerous substances, effective law enforcement, and other circumstances that either protect or place the young at risk. These immediate circumstances of the neighborhood/community will influence parents’ socialization values, the availability of physical and social resources, degrees of parental resiliency, and the kinds of

parenting strategies that are used to foster adolescent social competence. These variations in parents’ values, resources, resiliency, and socialization strategies are important factors in determining the extent to which adolescents are either protected from or are resilient in the face of challenges to adaptive development.

Finally, the general level is the “macrosystem,” which represents the largest social contexts at the national, societal, or general cultural level. The macrosystem is the outermost level of the ecosystem which contains general societal level institutions (political, religious, economic institutions, etc.), cultural values, customs, and laws (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1979, 1994). From the standpoint of the macrosystem, the organizational pattern is systemic and hierarchical from the largest environments, or the macrosystem, to the successively smaller social environments that are encompassed consisting of the exosystem, the mesosystem, and the microsystem, much like a series of “matryoshka,” or Russian nesting dolls. The social-cultural effects of these hierarchically organized systems and their interconnections, in turn, is a cascading influence progressing from the most general to all the subordinate levels of the ecosystem.

Of primary importance is the systemic idea that no one social context can be understood in isolation from the others and that interconnections between the family and surrounding social contexts must always be considered (Goodnow, 2006). Hence, it is likely that “spillover” will occur among the various ecosystemic levels and will influence a developmental period such as when families have adolescent members. For example, if the prevailing macrosystemic culture assigns priority to the general cultural values of self-interest and individuality over other possible cultural values emphasizing group or collective interests (e.g., family or societal obligations), then parents should be inclined to act (at least in part) upon these values within the parent-adolescent relationship. Specifically, the parents’ socialization strategies would be more likely to focus on granting autonomy to the young as a specific way of expressing the general cultural values of self-interest and individuality. These general cultural

values would also likely be reinforced by parents' and adolescents' memberships in such interconnected aspects of the macrosystem as their own family histories (the microsystem), coexisting memberships in the workplace (mesosystem), schools, peers, and neighborhood/community (exosystem) locations. The result is that general cultural values from the macrosystemic level are conveyed both directly and indirectly down to the microsystem (or the parent–adolescent relationship) through a variety of exosystemic and mesosystemic connections and pathways. Depending on the extent to which these general cultural values are accepted and sustained within a particular culture, therefore, the values of self-interest and individuality will permeate the subsequent levels of the ecosystem. The result of this flow of influence from more encompassing system levels down to the family microsystem is the guidance provided for the particular versions of adolescent social competence and parental socialization strategies implied by the larger social context.

Culture: The Substance of Socialization

A basic assumption of this paper is that socialization and human development occur in a cultural context (Rogoff, 2003). Consequently, adolescent social competence and the socialization processes that foster or undermine the development of such qualities are subject to cultural meanings that have both common patterns and variations across social communities (Markus & Hamedani, 2007; Raef, 2006; Rothbaum & Trommsdorf, 2007). Most observers would agree, however, that *culture*, the *substance* or content of social meaning that permeates our daily lives, is one of the most difficult concepts for social scientists to describe and define clearly. Although characterized many ways, culture refers to the comprehensive heritage or human-made totality that distinguishes members of one group from another across and within societies (Herskovits, 1948; Hofstede, 1980). Included within this broad conception of culture, for example, are the ecological setting, the social structure, and the value orientations that provide the context for parent–adolescent relations.

Complex definitions of culture consist of the knowledge, norms, rules, practices, symbols, language, attitudes, beliefs, values, habits, and motivations that members of a group share with each other (Rothbaum & Trommsdorf, 2007; Trommsdorff & Kornadt, 2003).

A culture includes both the beliefs that constitute a culture's symbolic inheritance as well as the norms and moral standards that arise from these beliefs and are intended to shape the behavior of group members. The content of a culture's symbolic inheritance provides (1) the basis for the roles that individuals should perform (e.g., the role of parents) (Grusec & Davidov, 2007), (2) the meaning of the social positions that individuals (e.g., parents and adolescents) occupy with respect to each other, (3) the qualities of the young (adolescents) that are valued and defined as being "competent," and (4) what social behaviors that adults (parents) use in a particular social community to encourage or discourage this competence (Grusec & Davidov; Peterson et al. 2004; Peterson, Steinmetz, & Wilson, 2005b).

Culture can be viewed as a shared symbolic system that develops through interaction processes (Boesch, 1991; Bruner, 1996) and is concurrently changing and functioning as a source of guidance and order (Markus & Hamedani, 2007). Despite providing continuity across generations, cultural influence does not bestow precise templates for behavior nor guarantee exact transmission of meaning and social patterns from parents to the young. Cultural life is patterned and repetitive, but this structure does not eliminate malleability and uncertainty, particularly because cultures are both changeable and subject to substantial intra-cultural variation and individual differences (Maccoby, 2007). Cultural patterns change over time, sometimes slowly, but other times quite rapidly due to major historic events, including wars, civil conflicts, or major socioeconomic forces that are part of modernization and globalization (Trommsdorff & Kornadt, 2003). Consequently, we can view parents and adolescents as being shaped by and as products of cultural parameters, but, at the same time, a particular culture owes its very existence and continuity to the dynamic ongoing

interactions of the interpersonal world, among which are parent–youth relationships.

Parents and the young not only maintain existing culture, but also are creators of culture during everyday socialization experiences. Culture is most accurately portrayed, therefore, as being a system of structure and meaning that is both patterned and “in process.” People (e.g., parents and adolescents) act together in relationships to perpetuate and create their cultural life-ways as they socialize each other (Berger & Luckman, 1966; Mead, 1934). Complete transmission of the existing culture at any one time, therefore, would not allow for novelty, change, and responses to new situations, whereas complete failure to transmit culture would not permit sufficient continuity across generations. Neither of these extremes (i.e., complete failure to transmit vs. complete continuity) characterizes how culture helps to define specific attributes of social competence and the socialization approaches (i.e., behaviors, styles, discipline strategies) that parents use to encourage these ends within a specific culture. Instead, a middle ground position is most accurate, with the attributes of social competence and the socialization strategies used to encourage these qualities being both patterned attributes that are constantly subject to change and individual variation.

Socialization: The Process of Conveying and Structuring Social Meaning

If a culture is the *content* of our interpersonal existence, then socialization refers to a set of *interpersonal processes* through which culturally defined meaning is passed on to or *enculturated* in the young (Gonzales, Knight, & Birman, 2004). During adolescence, therefore, the development of social competence occurs as a result of the *process* of socialization—or the interpersonal dynamics through which a society reproduces itself and encourages the young to become functioning members of society (Elkin & Handel, 1988; Grusec & Hastings, 2007; Maccoby, 2007). We become functioning members of society

through processes of socialization involving mostly the mundane dynamics of everyday social life. Many of these interactional experiences, which are often taken for granted in the moment, are truly remarkable processes through which we either foster or inhibit the development of social competence by the young.

Socialization is a complex array of multidirectional processes involving the family as perhaps the most important influence that enculturates the young within relationships having mutual and systemic qualities (Kuczynski, 2003; Kuczynski & Parkin, 2007; Maccoby, 2007). Beyond family boundaries, a variety of socialization venues are the major social institutions and interpersonal settings in which individuals (i.e., adolescents) have direct or indirect experiences, including religious organizations, the workplace, schools, the mass media, government, neighborhoods, and communities (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Tudge et al., 2009). A pattern of dynamic interaction exists between developing adolescents and their social environments that include influential factors from different levels of social systems at the biophysical, psychological, and socio-cultural levels of the human experience (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1994, 2005; Lerner, 2002; Tudge et al., 2009). Neither specific kinds of socialization experiences, such as those within the parent–youth relationship, nor specific biological factors, such as genetic influences, can be isolated as the sole factors that drive human development and shape social competence. Instead, a combination of youthful socialization, biogenetic, and maturational factors contribute to the overall structure of adolescent development (Corsaro, 1997; Harris, 1998; Kuczynski, 2003; Lerner, 2002; Peterson & Hann, 1999).

Traditional conceptions of socialization within family relationships are dominated by the idea that the young are *influenced* by parents and other family members to internalize and become responsive to societal expectations (Inkeles, 1968; Parsons & Bales, 1955). Central components of this process of influence within families are socialization strategies (e.g., parental styles and behaviors) used by parents, either intentionally or habitually, to encourage (or discourage)

the young to function in adaptive ways. Acting in an adaptive manner consistent with cultural expectations or being “socially competent” designates the abilities of adolescents to adjust to their society’s major social contexts and expectations in a manner that avoids deviant or problem behavior.

Contrasting with this conception of socialization as a one-way process, numerous observers have countered with the idea that too much emphasis has been placed on how adolescents are shaped and guided by parents (and other social agents) to become members of society (Maccoby, 2007). According to this *deterministic* or *social mold* conception of socialization (Gavazzi, 2011; Kuczynski, 2003; Kuczynski & Parkin, 2007; Peterson, 2005; Peterson & Hann, 1999), the young are viewed primarily as passive recipients of parental influence (and the influence of other social agents). The most frequent assumption in social mold conceptions is that efforts by parents to influence their young either shape the behaviors of adolescents or become internalized by the young as “inner qualities” that govern their beliefs, attitudes, motives, and behaviors.

For a variety of reasons, the social mold perspective of parent–youth socialization continues to dominate research concerned with studying adolescents within the context of family relationships. The persistence of deterministic models of socialization is based, to a large extent, on pragmatic or heuristic needs of scientific methodologies to focus on limited aspects of the social context within any particular study. Because of such conceptual compromises, in turn, most scholarship on parent–adolescent relationships should be read with a balanced awareness that socialization is substantially more complex than the representations conveyed by one-way shaping or internalization processes. Instead, the internalization of parental values and social expectations requires active construction on the part of adolescents through bidirectional, if not more complex processes (Peterson, 2005; Peterson & Hann, 1999). Such complicating factors include the ideas that internalization of parental influence is achieved only in terms of several factors such as (1) the young person’s understanding of these

socialization efforts, (2) the beliefs, values, and expectations that parents and adolescents bring to a social context, (3) the degree to which the parent’s influence attempts are accepted by the young, (4) the kinds of behavioral responsiveness and temperament of the adolescent, (5) the adjustments in child-rearing strategies that parents make to accommodate the young person’s individuality, and (6) how the parent’s and adolescent’s beliefs, values, and expectations are reshaped through these interactions (Grusec & Goodnow, 1994; Peterson, 2005; Peterson & Bush, 2003; Peterson & Hann, 1999; Peterson & Rollins, 1999; Trommsdorff & Kornadt, 2003).

Instead of the flow of influence in one direction, the internalization of parental goals or parental shaping is more accurately viewed as complex processes of continuity, negotiation, and change. This dynamic process of coconstructing cultural meanings occurs during socialization experiences as adolescents and their parents share meanings and constantly experience developmental change in their attributes with respect to each other. Consequently, parent–youth socialization is a dialectical or mutual process in which continuity, creativity, and change are complementary components of a larger whole (Kuczynski, 2003; Kuczynski & Parkin, 2007; Maccoby, 2007; Peterson, 1995). This complex bidirectional process helps to define both the core elements of social competence and the child-rearing approaches that parents use to foster such outcomes.

General Cultural Values and the Parent–Adolescent Relationship

An important aspect of understanding parent–adolescent relations is to clarify how general cultural values serve as the basis for developmental goals that shape the behavior of parents and adolescents (Carlo & de Guzman, 2009). Consistent with this view, the concepts *individualism* and *collectivism* are useful means of conceptualizing general societal value systems that have commonalities and differences across cultures (Kagitcibasi, 1996; Rothbaum & Trommsdorff, 2007; Tamis-LeMonda et al., 2008; Triandis, 1989,

1995, 2001). Macrolevel value systems of this kind play a key role in shaping parental belief systems or goals for socialization that specify what qualities are valued outcomes for the young within a specific culture. These parental *ethnotheories* about culturally specific definitions of adolescent social competence also provide guidance for defining the corresponding socialization strategies used to foster these outcomes in the young (Harkness & Super, 2002, 2006).

In many, if not all, societies, two general value systems, *individualism* and *collectivism*, are often proposed as important sources for beliefs and expectations for how relationships in families and other microsystemic contexts should be conducted. Both of these general value patterns, when conceptualized at the societal level of analysis, can be used to characterize societies as leaning approximately either toward individualistic or collectivistic value systems (Hofstede, 1980; Killen & Wainryb, 2000; Kim & Markus, 1999; Rothbaum & Trommsdorf, 2007; Tamis-LeMonda et al., 2008; Triandis, 1995, 2001). The first of these, *individualistic* societies, can often be characterized as promoting the centrality of the *independent self* through commitment to beliefs in the private self, individual freedom, autonomous decision-making, and achievement values underscoring the importance of personal attainment based on self-interest. Though seldom characterized as a distinct “culture” as it should be, such beliefs or values are representative of the dominant majority within the United States, the middle-class European American mainstream (Perry, 2001; Rogoff, 2003).

In contrast, *collectivistic* societies promote the development of the *interdependent self* through commitment to conceptions of cooperation, mutual support, the maintenance of harmonious relations, and the primacy of group interests (Rothbaum & Trommsdorf, 2007; Triandis, 1995, 2001). Collectivistic values are supposed to be prominent in such societies as those of Asia (e.g., China, Japan) and Latino societies like Mexico, a focus of this chapter, in which cultural traditions emphasize stronger family bonds and greater respect for parental authority than is common within the dominant US culture.

Several points should be kept in mind before generalizing too much about the societal level values of individualism and collectivism within the United States and Mexico. First, most societal level values cannot be characterized as either *exclusively* individualistic or completely collectivistic, but probably coexist in varied degrees of balance across different cultures (Peterson, 2009; Rothbaum & Trommsdorf, 2007; Triandis, 1995, 2001). For example, although some evidence exists that the US leans significantly toward individualism (Kagitcibasi, 1996; Perry, 2001; Rogoff, 2003) and that Mexico tilts somewhat more toward collectivism (Cauce & Domenech-Rodriguez, 2002; Diaz-Guerrero & Szalay, 1991; Harwood, Leyendecker, Carlson, Asencio, & Miller, 2002), other observers caution that these differences represent only *somewhat* distinct balances between *both* of these general complexes of values and beliefs (Rothbaum & Trommsdorf, 2007; Wilson & Esteinou, 2011). Instead, the practice of characterizing societies as either individualistic or collectivistic is a broad brush description of general tendency, within which more precise analysis reveals subcultural variations, individual differences, and continuing social changes within every societal group, all of which aptly describe the diverse circumstances of Mexico and the United States. For example, a society like the United States, which is generally characterized as individualistic, also demonstrates at least a moderate emphasis on collectivism and group interests at both general societal and subcultural levels (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985; McDougall, 2004; Peterson, 2009). Correspondingly, Mexico, with stronger collectivistic traditions, also has notable patterns of individualism and pursuit of self-interest at both general and subcultural levels of society, particularly since social changes toward individualism are occurring with modernization (Wilson & Esteinou, 2011).

Both Mexico and the United States are complex societies characterized by substantial ethnic, regional, and socioeconomic diversity that manifest many distinctive combinations of individualistic and collectivistic orientations within each subculture. These general value systems also

coexist because the complex process of globalization has expanded rapidly. Consequently, individuals within a particular culture are influenced by differential degrees of individualistic and collectivistic values that apply to varied social circumstances (Esteinou, 2004, 2008; Killen & Wainryb, 2000; Spiro, 1993). Individualism and collectivism, therefore, are not mutually exclusive, but coexist in varying degrees within societies, sub-cultures, and as culturally defined expectations for the behavior of adolescents, parents, and other members of society (Kagitcibasi, 1996, 1997; Rothbaum & Trommsdorf, 2007).

A closely related issue is that ethnocentric judgments should not be made that individualism largely exists only within “modern” or “advanced” cultures and collectivism exists almost exclusively in “traditional” or “primitive” cultures. Moreover, there is no implication in the concepts individualism and collectivism that one of these value systems is “better” than the other. Instead, use of these two constructs simply takes note of the fact that healthy human existence at both the psychological and social levels of analysis involves balancing the interests of the autonomous self with powerful tendencies to be both connected and responsible to others. Each culture and ethnic group will find a particular balance between these general values that fits its ecological circumstances (Peterson, 2009, Chap. 1; Raef, 2006; Rothbaum & Trommsdorf, 2007). In most cases, both individualism and collectivism are positive attributes that, most likely, are complementary rather than contradictory societal attributes (Kagitcibasi, 1996, 1997; Peterson, 1995, 2009). If we remain cognizant of such complexities, the constructs individualism and collectivism are effective means of conceptualizing cultural similarities and differences in realistic rather than stereotypic ways, both at societal and family relationship levels.

Parental Ethnotheories and Adolescent Social Competence in the United States

The general cultural values of individualism and collectivism within a particular social commu-

nity provide the basis for more specific values and expectations that parents draw upon to determine the goals of socialization regarding what attributes and behaviors to encourage or discourage in adolescents (Goodnow & Collins, 1990; Harkness, 2008; Harkness & Super, 2002; Keller, Borke, Yovsi, Lohaus, & Jensen, 2005; Peterson, 2009; Peterson & Hann, 1999; Sigel, McGillicuddy-De Lisi, & Goodnow, 1992; Tamis-LeMonda et al., 2008). From parents’ perspectives, these *parental ethnotheories*, or beliefs and values about the goals of socialization, provide guidance for culturally specific conceptions of social competence or the outcomes of socialization that are valued (Eccles, 2007; Harkness, 2008; Harkness & Super, 2006; Keller et al., 2005; Peterson, 2005; Peterson & Hann, 1999). From the perspective of individualism, for example, such normative sources of guidance take the form of parental ethnotheories like “adolescents should be taught, as members of their culture, to be their own persons and to be responsible for themselves.” In contrast, a collectivistic parental ethnotheory would embody the belief that adolescents should be taught that “one’s personal welfare is largely determined by contributing to the overall well-being of their group.” Other closely related issues would be that the “interests of one’s family” should take priority over one’s “own personal ambitions (collectivism)?” or that “self-expression and individual demonstrations of emotion” should be encouraged over more “subdued expressions of the self” designed to communicate maturity, deference, harmony, and respect for authority (individualism).

Along these lines, parents of all societies have beliefs and goals (i.e., parental ethnotheories), based on general cultural values, which are aimed at instilling dimensions of *social competence* in their young and discouraging problem behavior as defined by specific cultural meanings (Bloom, 1990; Gavazzi, 2011; Gillespie, 2003; Peterson, 2005; Peterson & Bush, 2003; Peterson & Leigh, 1990). *A general definition of social competence, therefore, is a set of attributes and psychosocial resources that help adolescents adapt to their social circumstances and cope successfully with everyday life sufficiently to ward off problem*

behavior (i.e., *externalizing and internalizing behavior*) (Baumrind, 1991; Peterson, 2005; Peterson & Bush, 2003). As such, social competence encompasses multiple attributes that provide the young with abilities to function effectively in everyday social life and are also sources of resilience for warding off negative consequences during times of crisis and extensive challenge (Carlo & de Guzman, 2009; Keller et al., 2005; Peterson, 2005). Recent conceptions of social competence in the dominant culture of the USA and Western Europe identify some of its subdimensions as: (1) establishing a balance between autonomy and connectedness (or conformity) in reference to parents (and other adults), (2) developing an effective achievement orientation, (3) attaining psychological or cognitive resources (e.g., a positive self-esteem, identity achievement, and problem-solving skills), and (4) acquiring social skills with peers and other interpersonal relationships (Bush & Peterson, 2008; Peterson & Bush, 2003; Peterson & Hann, 1999; Peterson & Leigh, 1990; Peterson & Rose, 2003).

These aspects of social competence are sources of social-psychological *resilience* and well-being. These attributes assist adolescents to successfully cope with challenges and prevent developments that can lead to risk behavior (Carlo & de Guzman, 2009; Gillespie, 2003; Hauser, 1999). Consequently, the inverse or flip-side of social competence is *risk or problem* behavior, conceptualized here as either *internalizing* or *externalizing* attributes (Kuperminc, Wilkins, Roche, & Alvarez-Jimenez, 2009). Internalizing attributes are psychological disturbances of adolescents that focus on the self (e.g., depression, suicidal thoughts, and eating disorders). Externalizing attributes, in turn, are psychological difficulties that take the form of “acting out” against society (e.g., violent behavior, delinquent behavior, substance abuse, and conduct disorders in school) (Gavazzi, 2011; Meyer, 2003). Extensive involvements in externalizing and internalizing behavior, or the inverse of social competence, can be major obstacles to developmental progress during adolescence and early adulthood.

Most, if not all cultures, tend to emphasize the development of the same general dimensions of

social competence (i.e., balancing autonomy and connectedness, achievement, psychological resources, and social skills) to a considerable degree during the socialization process. However, substantial variation exists across cultures in the precise meaning and emphasis placed on each dimension of social competence. This is particularly true in the manner that socialization goals focus on fostering either individual interests (i.e., individualism) or those of the social group (i.e., collectivism) or some combination of both value complexes (Bush & Peterson, 2008; Carlo & de Guzman, 2009; Kagitcibasi, 1996; Peterson, 2005, 2009; Peterson & Bush, in press; Raef, 2006; Rothbaum & Trommsdorf, 2007). European-American families in the United States with adolescent members, for example, tend to focus on the promotion of autonomy (i.e., as an expression of individualism) rather than conformity and obedience (i.e., an expression of collectivism) as a high priority goal of adolescence. Although the importance of families (i.e., familism or collectivism) is a continuing theme in the United States, compared to more collectivistic societies, greater emphasis is placed in the United States on individual social mobility, personal autonomy, egalitarian relationships among family members, and the nuclear family rather than the complexities of extended family relationships (Kagitcibasi, 1996, 1997; Peterson, 1995, 2009; Rothbaum & Trommsdorf, 2007; Wilson & Esteinou, 2011).

Related socialization goals in the United States include individualistic conceptions of the self (e.g., self-esteem) reflecting such ideals as the importance of the private self, personal uniqueness, self-interest, and individual liberty (Kagitcibasi, 1996, 1997; Peterson, 1995, 2009; Rothbaum & Trommsdorf, 2007; Triandis, 1989, 1995, 2001). The focus of achievement orientations (e.g., academic achievement) in the United States is commonly that of pursuing personal attainment goals as an expression of self-interest in competitive contexts. Achievement is viewed largely as an outgrowth of an individual’s commitment to self-constructed goals based on one’s personal identity achievement (Eccles, 2007). Finally, in reference to social skills, assertive interpersonal

skills tend to be valued as a means of facilitating personal advancement within one's social relationships. Adaptive forms of social skills are those that tolerate moderate levels of interpersonal conflict at some expense to harmonious human relationships and deference to authority (Peterson, 2005; Peterson & Bush, 2003; Peterson & Hann, 1999).

Despite these general patterns in the dominant European American culture, it is also important to recognize that specific ethnic groups within the United States (e.g., Hispanic American and Asian American groups) place greater emphasis on collectivism. These islands of collectivistic diversity in the larger sea of individualism tend to emphasize close family connections over progress toward autonomy, personal achievement in the service of group interests, self-conceptions based on relationships with others, and social skills emphasizing the maintenance of harmonious relationships with others (Baca Zinn & Wells, 2000; Carlo & de Guzman, 2009; Grau, Azmitia, & Quattlebaum, 2009; Kagitcibasi, 1996, 1997; Peterson, 1995, 2009; Rothbaum & Trommsdorf, 2007; Triandis, 1989, 1995, 2001; Wilson & Peterson, 2000). Despite these complexities, the dominant culture of the US places greater overall emphasis on individualistic rather than collectivistic definitions of social competence (Kagitcibasi, 1996, 1997; Peterson, 1995, 2009; Rothbaum & Trommsdorf, 2007).

Parental Ethnotheories, Parental Styles, and Parental Behavior

Parental ethnotheories that define social competence, or the desired goals of socialization for the young, also provide guidance for defining parenting strategies that are used to either foster or hinder cultural definitions of these outcomes (Grau et al., 2009; Keller et al., 2005; Peterson, 1995, 2009). Once there is considerable agreement about what constitutes the goals and expectations for social competence in a particular culture, these desired ends of the socialization process provide parameters for how parenting should be conducted to achieve these outcomes (Carlo &

De Guzman, 2009; Peterson, 2005; Peterson & Bush, 2003; Peterson & Hann, 1999). The socialization practices prescribed by such beliefs systems include expectations for such things as how warmth is expressed, whether physical punishment is tolerated, the degree to which school work is monitored by parents, how youthful autonomy is encouraged or restricted, and many more. The overall idea, of course, is that cultural beliefs shape (1) the attributes of the young that are valued in a culture, (2) the parental beliefs about how to foster or discourage these desired goals, and (3) the actual socialization approaches used by parents to foster valued attributes in the young (Bush & Peterson, 2008; Peterson, 2005; Peterson & Bush, 2003; Peterson & Hann, 1999).

Based on extensive research in the United States, the first means of conceptualizing these appropriate socialization strategies, *parenting styles*, refers to configurations or collections of several parental practices and attributes. Each configuration or style is composed of a somewhat different pattern of child-rearing behavior such as control, warmth (i.e., support), communication, and rule enforcement. Styles also include particular parental attitudes and values (e.g., values emphasizing obedience to authority vs. values emphasizing autonomy) that are rooted in individualistic or collectivistic orientations as well as some combination of both traditions (Peterson & Hann, 1999; Peterson & Rollins, 1999). A second approach to conceptualizing parental socialization strategies is through *parental behavior*, which refers to specific or discrete dimensions of child-rearing actions that are often thought to be independent from or orthogonal to each other. These specific dimensions of parental behavior also convey social meanings that may, in part, originate in either collectivistic, individualistic, or some form of integrated value system (Peterson & Hann, 1999; Peterson & Rollins, 1999).

A continuing focus of research on parent-adolescent relations in the United States has been to identify how distinctive parental styles or behaviors contribute differentially to the development of social competence by the young as defined in terms of distinctly American values (Baumrind, 1978, 1991; Darling & Steinberg,

1993; Peterson & Hann, 1999; Steinberg, 2001). As specified previously, we will first conceptualize parental styles and behavior that either foster or hinder culturally specific forms of youthful social competence in the United States. Subsequently, these ideas are applied in later sections to the dominant patterns of parent–adolescent relationships in Mexico.

Parental Styles

The most widely known set of parental styles or configurations applied in the United States are those developed by Baumrind (1978, 1991, 2005) referred to as authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive approaches. *Authoritarian parents*, for example, use very strict and harsh control attempts to strongly encourage obedience by the young. Harsh or punitive behavior is used regularly by authoritarian parents to impose their will, whereas communication, reasoning, and affection are either used sparingly or not applied at all. Distinguishing features of authoritarian parenting include the arbitrary, highly intrusive, and hostile manner of child-rearing efforts that fosters distance between parents and adolescents. Authoritarian parents are not inclined to temper their intrusive and harsh efforts to exercise control by being supportive or emotionally responsive to the young (Baumrind, 1978, 1991, 2005; Collins & Laursen, 2004; Gavazzi, 2011; Peterson, 2005).

A second child-rearing style, *permissive parenting*, identifies parents who make few demands upon and rarely seek to control adolescents, either through punitive or more moderate forms of control. Permissive parenting is composed, in turn, of two subtypes referred to as *indulgent* and *indifferent* child-rearing. Indulgent parents are supportive, emphasize democracy, foster trust, but manifest few if any control attempts directed at the young. Indifferent or neglectful parents fail to use either support or control attempts and are best described as disengaged from (or disinterested in) their young. Thus, although both indulgent and neglectful parents share a reluctance to assert control over adolescents, they differ in their inclinations to be affectionate. Indulgent parents are supportive and emotionally close to children and

adolescents, whereas indifferent parents are emotionally distant from their young (Baumrind, 1978, 1991, 2005; Collins & Laursen, 2004; Peterson, 2005).

The third blend of attributes, the *authoritative style*, identifies parents who use firm control to implement a consistent set of rules. Authoritative parents value both autonomous self-will and disciplined conformity from their young. These parents use reason in an issue-oriented manner and apply rewards and punishments that are clearly related to the adolescent's behavior. Authoritative parents assert their positions as authority figures, but are responsive to efforts by the young to exercise influence and are open to changing their relationship over time in the direction of greater autonomy. These parents tend to encourage two-way communication, the gradual development of autonomy, and an atmosphere of warmth and acceptance that helps maintain their influence (Baumrind, 1978, 1991, 2005; Holden, 2010; Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Peterson, 2005; Peterson & Hann, 1999).

Recent research in the United States tends to support Baumrind's view that authoritative parenting fosters a collection of prosocial qualities in adolescents, often referred to as social or instrumental competence (Baumrind, 1978, 1991, 2005; Collins & Laursen, 2004; Peterson & Hann, 1999; Steinberg, 2001; Steinberg & Silk, 2002). Specific outcomes encouraged by authoritative parenting include autonomy, responsible compliance, self-assurance, creativity, and skill in social relationships (Baumrind, 1978, 1991, 2005; Fuligni & Eccles, 1993; Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, & Dornbusch, 1991; Steinberg, 2001). Compared to the general population of adolescents, youth who are raised in authoritative homes tend to perform more successfully in school and to relate more effectively to peers and adults (Steinberg; Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, & Darling, 1992). Although authoritative parents do focus some of their efforts on collectivistic socialization goals by (e.g., by encouraging responsible conformity), the long-term objective is consistent with individualism by affirming the importance of the private self, the development of personal achievement, a positive self-esteem

based on individual success, and encouragement of greater autonomy (Baumrind, 2005; Peterson, 2005; Steinberg & Silk, 2002).

Much of the existing research in the United States on the other styles of parenting (i.e., authoritarian, indulgent, and neglectful) indicates that negative adolescent outcomes are a more frequent result, though the specific outcomes vary with the particular style in question (Baumrind, 2005; Gavazzi, 2011; Peterson, 2005; Steinberg & Silk, 2002). Adolescents from authoritarian homes, in particular, are more inclined to be dependent, passive, conforming, less self-assured, less creative, and less socially adept than other adolescents. Compared to their contemporaries, youth from homes with indulgent parents tend to be more immature, irresponsible, and to conform more readily to peers. Recent research also indicates that indifferent or neglectful parenting tends to foster higher rates of impulsivity, involvement in delinquency as well as early experimentation with sexual activity and substance use (Baumrind, 1991, 2005; Fuligni & Eccles, 1993; Gavazzi, 2011; Kurdek & Fine, 1994; Lamborn et al., 1991; Steinberg, 2001; Steinberg, Lamborn, Darling, Mounts, & Dornbusch, 1994; Steinberg, Mounts, Lamborn, & Dornbusch, 1991; Steinberg & Silk, 2002).

A serious problem with parental styles is the complexity of their composition and the difficulty that researchers face in understanding the relevance of specific components (Peterson, 2005; Peterson & Hann, 1999; Peterson & Rollins, 1999; Pomerantz & Wang, 2009). Because parental styles provide a general context consisting of many parental qualities (Darling & Steinberg, 1993), it is difficult to identify precisely which aspect of a parent's child-rearing approach is the primary factor that truly influences a specific aspect of adolescent social competence or problem behavior (Lim & Lim, 2003; Pomerantz & Wang, 2009). A related issue is that none of the parental styles incorporate either all the dimensions of parental behavior currently identified in the research literature or the full range of variation in each of these dimensions. Consequently, the existing typologies have failed to adequately represent the many parental styles that are

conceptually possible in the overall population of parents (Peterson, 2005; Peterson & Hann, 1999; Peterson & Rollins, 1999).

Another concern has been some evidence pointing to a lack of cross-ethnic/cultural generality in the meaning, exact pattern, and consequences of the authoritative and authoritarian styles of parenting for such developmental areas of social competence as youthful academic achievement, respect for authority, and closely related outcomes. This "culture-specific" critique of parental styles is a response to findings indicating, for example, that authoritarian parenting has a greater negative effect on European American adolescents' academic functioning than it does for Asian American adolescents (Steinberg et al., 1994). From a culture-specific perspective, the greater emphasis in collectivistic Asian cultures on interdependence, harmony, and acceptance of authority may predispose the young of these cultural/ethnic groups to accept more intrusive or arbitrary forms of control. The use of authoritarian control may be more common in Asian than in the Western cultures and may be exerted by Asian parents more deliberately and more calmly with less negative effects than is true for European American parent-youth relationships. More dominating forms of control may carry different cultural meanings in Asian compared to Western societies and be viewed as normative for a responsible, even loving parent to demonstrate. In contrast, Western adolescents, from more individualistic cultures, are likely to take a more dim view of even less harsh (or less intrusive) forms of control than do Eastern youth from more collectivistic cultures. The consequence of these contrary meanings may be that Western adolescents will view themselves as "suffering" greater losses of autonomy (or individuality) than Eastern adolescents when parents use these forms of control (Chao, 1994, 2000, 2001; Dixon, Graber, & Brooks-Gunn, 2008; Fuligni, Hughes, & Way, 2009; Pomerantz & Wang, 2009; Wang, Pomerantz, & Chen, 2007). As described later, similar differences may exist for European American vs. Mexican conceptions of authoritative and authoritarian parenting.

Other evidence, in contrast, indicates that there is a substantial degree of generalizability across ethnicities/cultures in support of negative consequences being evident for authoritarian parenting in reference to negative effects on adolescent social competence (Barber, Stolz, & Olsen, 2005; Sorkhabi, 2005; Steinberg & Silk, 2002). Moreover, there is also a substantial degree of cross-cultural/ethnic evidence sustaining the positive effects of authoritative parenting for dimensions of social competence such as autonomy granting (Sorkhabi, 2005; Steinberg, 2001; Steinberg & Silk, 2002; Wang et al., 2007).

Parental Behaviors

The complexities and problems characteristic of parental styles have influenced many researchers to prefer the examination of specific dimensions of parental behavior in research on parent–adolescent relations (Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Gavazzi, 2011; Lim & Lim, 2003; Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Peterson & Hann, 1999; Peterson & Rollins, 1999). The most frequently studied child-rearing behaviors in the United States are parental warmth or support, autonomy-granting behavior, intrusive psychological control, reasoning, monitoring, and punitiveness (Cox & Harter, 2003; Gavazzi, 2011; Holden, 2010; Peterson, 2005). Each of these behaviors conveys significant social meanings that, for the dominant cultural traditions of the United States, either encourage or inhibit the development of a conception of adolescent social competence that leans in an individualistic direction toward emphasizing autonomy (Peterson & Hann, 1999; Peterson & Rollins, 1999).

Most prominent among these dimensions of socializing behavior studied in the United States is supportive parental behavior. In fact, perhaps the closest thing to a general law of parenting is that warm, supportive, nurturant, or accepting behavior by mothers and fathers is associated with the development of virtually all aspects of social competence by children and adolescents (Barber & Thomas, 1986; Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Peterson, 2005; Peterson, Bush, & Supple, 1999; Peterson & Rollins, 1999; Rohner, 1986, 2004, 2008). Parental *support* consists of behaviors

like touching, hugging, kissing, praising, approving, encouraging, and spending positive time with adolescents (Barber & Thomas, 1986; Fuligni & Eccles, 1993; Peterson, 2005; Rohner, 1986, 2004, 2008). Supportive behavior communicates that adolescents are valued, fosters close ties within the parent–youth relationship, and communicates confidence by parents in the adolescent's abilities. A large amount of research indicates that parental support is associated with several positive qualities of adolescents such as positive self-esteem, identity achievement, growing autonomy that coexists with sufficient conformity to parents, and long-term positive consequences for adult intimate interpersonal adjustment (Rohner, 1986, 2004, 2008). Adolescents who receive support or nurturance from parents often report lower amounts of anxiety, depression, and behavior problems (Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Peterson & Hann, 1999; Peterson & Rollins, 1999; Rohner, 1986, 2004, 2008). A particularly important quality of parental support is its ability to foster an adaptive balance between seeking autonomy and remaining connected to parents by European American adolescents, a pattern that captures a key dimension of social competence (Peterson, 2005).

Another important behavioral strategy that many parents in the United States use to foster adolescent social competence is *reasoning* or induction. Parents use induction or reasoning for appealing to the adolescent's concern for others, their desire to be mature, and their abilities to understand and voluntarily accept the parent's point of view (Baumrind, 1991; Hoffman, 1980, 1994; Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Peterson, 2005; Peterson & Hann, 1999). The use of reasoning helps adolescents understand why rules are necessary, why their misbehavior is unacceptable, how their behavior affects others, and how their actions might become more acceptable. Parents who use reasoning do not impose arbitrary authority on adolescents, but communicate respect for adolescents, their confidence in the adolescent's abilities to make good decisions, their capacities to voluntarily comply, and their growing autonomous abilities to make their own decisions (Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Peterson, 2005; Peterson & Hann, 1999).

Reasoning is a moderate form of control that legitimizes parental authority, communicates respect for an adolescent's viewpoint, is unlikely to evoke hostile feelings by the young toward parents, and gradually allows more autonomy through parent and youth discourse. The use of reason may be particularly important for appealing to abstract thinking abilities that are developing during adolescence. Parental reasoning often has been found to foster adolescent outcomes like moral development, internalized responsiveness to parents' expectations, moderate conformity to parents, and positive self-esteem. Exposure to parental reasoning provides adolescents with confidence to think for themselves and develop an autonomous system of self-affirmed values and expectations (Hoffman, 1980, 1994; Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Peterson, 2005). Similar to supportiveness by parents, therefore, parental reasoning encourages European American adolescents to develop a key dimension of social competence, that of internalized responsiveness and connection to their parents, while simultaneously allowing for youthful autonomy from parents to emerge (Peterson, 2005; Bush & Peterson, Chap. 13).

A third socializing behavior, *Monitoring or supervision*, refers to efforts by parents to encourage social competence through becoming aware of and managing their teenager's schedules, peer associations, activities, and physical whereabouts. Parents in the U.S. monitor adolescents to supervise dating and discourage early sexual relationships, prevent antisocial behavior and deviant peer associations, check to see that homework is completed, watch for the symptoms of drug use, and oversee the popular media accessed by the young (e.g., movies, television, books, the internet, and social media) (Barber, Olsen, & Shagle, 1994; Crouter & Head, 2002; Fuligni & Eccles, 1993; Patterson, 1986; Patterson & Capaldi, 1991). Monitoring designates the extent to which parents actively supervise adolescents' behavior and activities as well as are involved with and interested in their welfare. This is an aspect of firm but moderate control that avoids the exercise of intrusive control and depends on the degree to which positive parent-adolescent relationships exist so the young will share infor-

mation with parents (Crouter & Head, 2002; Kerr & Stattin, 2000; Smetana, 2008; Stattin & Kerr, 2000). Successful monitoring implies that parents must maintain a clear set of rules about the time that adolescents should be home, when they should return from peer activities, with whom they may associate, and places where the young are forbidden to go. The primary role of parental monitoring is to prevent the drift of teenagers toward problematic peer relationships, risk behavior, and deviant activities while not being intrusively restrictive. Consistent with a cultural emphasis on individualism, monitoring allows for the gradual development of autonomy and social competence within the context of continuing parental influence based on consistent rule enforcement and moderate control.

A clear outgrowth of individualism is *psychological autonomy granting*, or parental behaviors that designate the extent to which parents employ noncoercive behavior, democratic discipline, and encouragement for the young to express their individuality within families and beyond family boundaries (Gray & Steinberg, 1999; Peterson, 2005). Fostering autonomy in this manner often encourages self-worth, feelings of self-efficacy, self-confidence, and emotional functioning (Barber, 1996; Quin, Pomerantz, & Wang, 2009), all of which are consistent with social competence. During adolescence, the process of gaining autonomy retains the theme of constantly expanding explorations through increasingly more complicated behaviors within expanding social networks. Adolescents use parents, friends, dating partners, and other adults as sources of security and springboards for increasingly more elaborate excursions into the social world (Peterson, 1995, 2009). For example, most teenagers do not simply reject positive relationships with parents as they gain greater freedom from parental connections. Instead, teenagers often expand the number and complexity of their peer relationships, while maintaining close ties with parents. Greater autonomy is not achieved, therefore, as a "zero sum game" in which gains in self-direction necessarily mean losses in connections with parents. Instead, most adolescents report that they value making more of their own lifestyle

choices and desire to spend more time with peers, but without suffering dramatic declines in the love and respect they feel for parents. The development of autonomy and connectedness are not in conflict but, indeed, are compatible and essential aspects of human relationships that develop together as components of social competence (Laursen & Collins, 2009; McElhaney, Allen, Stephenson, & Hare, 2009). However, the balance between autonomy and connectedness in the European-American culture of the United States leans more toward the former than the latter.

The inverse of autonomy granting is *intrusive psychological control*, the prominent control dimension of overprotective parenting (Levy, 1943), or efforts made by parents that discourage individualism and the European American definition of social competence by intruding upon the psychological independence and emotional development of adolescents. Parents exercise intrusive control by invalidating adolescent's feelings, constraining verbal expression, withdrawing love, or attempting to induce guilt (Holmbeck et al., 2002; Levy, 1943; Parker, 1983). Frequent use of intrusive psychological control by parents has been linked primarily to internalized forms of youthful outcomes such as depression, withdrawal, loneliness, eating disorders, negative perceptions of the self, lower self-efficacy, and less effective identity development (Barber, 1996, 2002a, 2002b; Holmbeck et al., 2002; Parker, 1983). A logical consequence of intrusive psychological control is excessive adolescent dependence and inhibited autonomy, both of which are contrary to European American conceptions of social competence.

Parental punitiveness refers to arbitrary verbal or harsh physical attempts to influence the behavior and internal qualities of teenagers. Coercive control attempts of this kind are commonly viewed as a socialization strategy contrary to an individualistic conception of social competence by inhibiting autonomy and other adaptive outcomes. These actions involve the use of excessive force to impose the will of parents without the tempering influence of reason or more moderate forms of discipline (Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Peterson & Rollins, 1999; Strauss, 1994; Turner & Finkelhor,

1996). Punitiveness varies from arbitrary nagging, name-calling, and yelling in its verbal forms to corporal punishment (i.e., spanking) and/or violence (abuse) in its physical forms (Day, Peterson, & McCracken, 1998; Straus, 1994). Current evidence indicates that mainstream cultural norms in the USA are much less supportive of using physical punitiveness with teenagers compared to younger children and a number of countries, including Sweden, Germany, and the United Kingdom, have either banned or legally restricted its use (Ben-Arich & Haj-Yahia, 2008; Straus, 1994). Although normative change about punitiveness has occurred, an estimated 20–40 % of adolescents continue to receive physical punishment from parents with some regularity (Straus; Wissow, 2001). Physical or verbal punitiveness often leads to a variety of problematic outcomes, all of which are contrary to the development of the European American conception of social competence. Such problematic outcomes include hostile feelings, diminished internalization of parents' expectations, growing distance, and resistance to authority by adolescents (Buck, Vittrup, & Holden, 2006; Rollins & Thomas, 1979; Turner & Finkelhor, 1996). The use of physical punishment by European American parents may have declined recently, in part, because a form of adolescent independence often results that is rooted in growing separation from parents. This type of independence contrasts with an adaptive form of autonomy that is consistent with social competence and involves balancing self-determination with continuing positive bonds with parents (Laursen & Collins, 2009; McElhaney et al., 2009; Peterson, 1995, 2009).

The use of harsh, punitive behavior by US parents often contributes to such problematic outcomes as lower self-esteem, depression, less advanced moral development, lower success in school, but higher rates of substance abuse and delinquent activities (Eckenrode, Laird, & Doris, 1993; Eisenberg, 1989; Gavazzi, 2011; Straus, 1994). Problematic outcomes of punitiveness include excessive restrictions on autonomy and attempts to enforce excessive forms of conformity to parents' demands (Peterson & Hann, 1999; Peterson & Rollins, 1999). A prominent

meta-analyses of 88 studies by Gershoff (2002), for example, indicated that physical punishment resulted in only one positive consequence (i.e., immediate compliance) and five unintended negative consequences by the young (i.e., more aggression, delinquent behavior, greater risk of child abuse, diminished moral internalization, and reduced mental health adjustment) (Gershoff & Bitensky, 2007). Although mild forms of punitiveness do not always lead to serious adolescent problems (Baumrind, Larzelere, & Cowan, 2002), these results may not occur because parents use other practices (e.g., support or reasoning) that offset or dilute the worst effects of punitiveness. A balanced assessment of using mild and occasional spanking, however, may be that most studies finding negative consequences do so only with correlational rather than experimental evidence and may give too much credence to effect sizes that are quite small. Another possibility, for example, may be that an adolescent's difficult behavior may elicit punitive responses from the parents, with spanking then being a reaction to youthful behavior (a child effect) rather than a cause of adolescent outcomes. A further weakness of the research on punitiveness is the failure to distinguish between mild and serious forms of punitiveness. This deficiency may exaggerate the adverse effects on dimensions of social competence by mild or moderate forms of punitiveness (Baumrind et al.; Larzelere & Baumrind, 2010).

A compelling reason against the use of punitiveness, however, is the inability of some parents to control their anger, with the result being that mild punitiveness used initially by an angry parent may escalate rapidly into more serious coercive attempts, including physical abuse (Day et al., 1998). Research supporting this view indicates that the young often respond to parents' punitive behavior by "counterattacking" with their own punitive behavior, which, in turn, may contribute to escalating cycles of abuse and violence (Patterson, 1986; Patterson & Capaldi, 1991). Rather than risk the danger of such escalation, the most effective course of action by U.S. parents is to use alternative forms of discipline and control that are less arbitrary and coercive (e.g., monitoring, reasoning, or consistent rule enforcement).

The most compelling reason to withhold final judgment about the use of occasional and mild forms of punitiveness is evidence suggesting that harsh discipline may not have the same degree of negative consequences (e.g., heightened aggression and academic achievement) within ethnic-minority families as it does within European American families (Brooks-Gunn & Markman, 2005; Larzelere & Baumrind, 2010). Such findings suggest that the normative support for punitiveness may differ across cultures, convey varied meanings, and in turn, may have different consequences for adolescent social competence.

Mexican Culture, Families, and Social Competence in Mexico

The remaining goal of this chapter involves determining how well mainstream conceptions of general cultural values, parental ethnotheories, adolescent social competence, and socialization practices from the United States can be "translated" into the parent-youth relationships of Mexico. Initially, this will require some background information about the characteristics, changing patterns, and general values associated with Mexican family life.

An obvious issue is to acknowledge what a daunting task it is to conceptualize the dominant cultural values and social patterns of Mexico that define parent-youth relations in a society that is very complex and diverse. Mexican parents and adolescents live in a society characterized by extensive diversity in family structure, rural-urban differences, socioeconomic variation, varied ethnic identification, and a wide range of traditional vs. modern lifestyles (Esteinou, 2004, 2008). Similar to the approach used in the United States, therefore, the only reasonable strategy at this point is to characterize approximately the dominant cultural and parent-adolescent relationship patterns within Mexico, without contributing (hopefully) to excessive generalization and stereotypes.

Another obstacle is the limited research literature on Mexican families and parent-adolescent relationships. Much of the existing scholarship,

for example, addresses Mexican families and adolescents residing in the United States, rather than the native population of Mexico. A related problem is the failure of much of the existing scholarship to distinguish populations of Mexican origin from the more generic “Hispanic” or “Latino” identifications (i.e., composed of populations from greatly diverse cultures/societies in Mexico, Central America, and South America) (Baca Zinn & Wells, 2000; Castro, Boyer, & Balcazar, 2000; Harwood et al., 2002; Quintana & Scull, 2009). Because we must rely, in part, on scholarship having some of these problems for our conclusions, it is important to acknowledge the limits of the information base from which we make our observations. In fact, we attempt to draw most of our conclusions about parent–adolescent patterns based on research examining families that are either native to Mexico or are first-generation immigrant families (i.e., Mexican American families) who are Mexican in origin or are the least acculturated to the dominant US culture.

Transition and Continuity in Mexican Families

The immediate context of Mexican parent–adolescent relationships is a diverse array of Mexican family forms that have experienced many of the same socioeconomic forces for social change that US families have faced historically. Comparatively speaking, although rapid social change has occurred, some of these transitions have become prominent more recently and continue to remain less proportionately evident in Mexico than in contemporary US society. However, similar to social circumstances in the United States, many changes in Mexican families are a product of the general social forces of globalization, urbanization, and rapid economic transition, all of which have contributed historically to declines in rural traditionalism (Esteinou, 2004, 2008; Wilson & Esteinou, 2011). In terms of specific structural changes, these general social forces have contributed to declines in extended family relations, the growth of nuclear families,

reduced fertility rates, and rising divorce rates in contemporary Mexico (Esteinou, 2004, 2008; Welti, 2002).

A recent demographic trend has been the growth of dual earner families as women (i.e., married women and mothers) increasingly have become employed outside the home. These structural transitions of Mexican families are matched by shifts in general social-cultural values toward greater emphasis on individualism (i.e., as opposed to collectivism and familism) and increased egalitarianism in the roles assigned to men and women (father and mothers) within families (i.e., as opposed to traditional gender-role divisions) (Castro et al., 2000; Esteinou, 2004, 2008; Wilson & Esteinou, 2011). Particularly within urban areas of Mexico, a growing number of female adolescents no longer identify the roles of wife and mother as exclusively central to their identity development as in past times. Instead, much greater importance is placed on women’s educational and occupational attainment outside the home (Esteinou, 2004, 2008; Welti, 2002).

Traditional gender differences appear to be diminishing within middle class, urban families, in the sense that Mexican men are now having to share authority, decision-making, and are less exclusively in charge of financial resources than in the past. Women are expanding into roles beyond those having primary responsibility for everyday child-rearing tasks, domestic activities, and the arrangement of family social activities. This has led to decreases in patriarchal authority and greater involvement of men in fatherhood roles, particularly by more educated men from urban areas (Esteinou, 2004; Welti, 2002). Thus, although gender inequalities continue to be prevalent in Mexican society, compared to 3 or more decades ago, these differences have become less pervasive (Esteinou, 1996, 2004, 2008; López, Salles, & Tuirán, 2001). Especially for Mexican women from rural areas and lower socioeconomic circumstances, however, traditional gender-role divisions remain quite prominent in family life and more evident than within the dominant culture of the United States (Esteinou, 1996, 2004, 2008; Welti, 2002; Wilson & Esteinou, 2011).

Cultural Values, Parental Ethnotheories, and Social Competence

Despite recent trends toward modernism and individualism, the dominant social values of Mexico reflect goals and beliefs about family relationships that lean more toward collectivism in a relative sense than is true within the United States. This continuing prevalence of collectivism is evident in the form of traditional Mexican values emphasizing deference of the self to family interests, respect for authority, the centrality of family connections, the pursuit of achievement for family interests, and harmonious interpersonal relations (Updegraff & Umana-Taylor, 2010; Wilson & Esteinou, 2011). Although these traditional values, referred to as *respeto*, *familismo*, and *personalismo/simpatía* (see below), have been diminishing in Mexican culture, their influence remains prominent today, and especially in contrast with the more individualistic traditions of mainstream US society. These cultural values provide the basis for distinctive parental ethnotheories that, in turn, are used to define the culturally distinctive attributes of adolescent social competence in Mexico. Culturally defined conceptions of adolescent social competence, in turn, serve as goals that provide guidance for the socialization strategies that are necessary either for fostering or hindering these qualities (German, Gonzales, & Dumka, 2009; Harwood et al., 2002; Wilson & Esteinou, 2011).

Familismo and Social Competence

The first of these collectivistic values, *familismo*, refers to a system of beliefs that includes feelings of loyalty, reciprocity, responsibility, and solidarity towards members of one's family. Compared to the dominant individualistic values of the United States, these collectivistic values place less emphasis on socialization for autonomy and greater focus on responsiveness to family interests, a pattern having important implications for Mexican parental ethnotheories and a conception of youthful social competence (Carlo & de Guzman, 2009; Harwood et al., 2002; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 1996).

The high priority assigned to family connections in Mexico has been sustained by most

aspects of society, including religious institutions. The continued importance of familism in Mexico has been supported, in part, by long historic traditions of conservative religious values sustained by the Catholic Church. More recently, the rapid growth of Evangelical Protestantism among the Mexican populace has provided renewed institutional support for conservative family values that are rooted in a religious perspective (Esteinou, 2004; Wilson & Esteinou, 2011).

Specific aspects of familism include the importance of love, cohesiveness, and mutual obligations among family members. Compared to the individualistic leanings of mainstream US culture, the collectivistic emphasis of Mexican familism suggests that the self has a stronger component of being an extension of *la familia*, or the idea that a person's identity is deeply rooted in parental ethnotheories that emphasize the importance of family connections (Raffaelli, Carlo, Carranza, & Gonzales, 2005). The centrality of family ties, a key component of Mexican parental ethnotheories, provides a conception of adolescent social competence that underscores the importance of socializing the young to acknowledge parental authority (Baca Zinn, 1994; Harwood et al., 2002).

Although declining somewhat in recent times (Esteinou, 2004, 2008), traditional family networks often extended beyond family boundaries to incorporate even special friends and associates in the larger community. These expanded versions of cohesive family relationships often fostered a sense of youthful identification with one's larger community as an extension of family life. The traditional socialization experiences of Mexican youth emphasized "togetherness" or *cohesiveness* within families (Baca Zinn & Wells, 2000), with parents and other family elders expected to provide substantial supportiveness and to exercise considerable control over their young (Wilson & Esteinou, 2011).

Although extended family relations are declining in frequency in present-day Mexico, the values of *familismo* continue to be prominent in the general society, with particular strength being demonstrated in rural and lower-income populations. In general, Mexican adolescents continue to be raised in a broader array of family members

and within a more cohesive system of family relations than in the dominant U.S. culture. The continued centrality of *familismo* and closely related values have important implications for distinctive parental ethnotheories, conceptions of social competence, and the characteristic socialization approaches used by Mexican parents (Cauce & Domenech-Rodriguez, 2002; Grau et al., 2009).

Respeto and Social Competence

Closely associated with *familismo* is *respeto*, another collectivistic value that shapes parental ethnotheories, definitions of social competence, and socialization approaches. This general value designates the importance of showing respect, deference, special regard, and proper demeanor in reference to persons of higher status within their families and the larger community. Although substantial variation exists, compared to European American parents, the tradition of *respeto* indicates that Mexican parental ethnotheories are more likely to emphasize parental authority through demonstrations of respect and obedience from the young, while focusing less on fostering autonomy (Arcia & Johnson, 1998; Bulcroft, Carmody, & Bulcroft, 1996; Carlo & de Guzman, 2009; Delgado & Ford, 1998; Fuligni, 1998).

Although conformity by the young to their parents is emphasized more extensively in Mexico than in the United States, one must also be attuned to particular nuances of the Mexican emphasis on respect for authority to get a complete understanding of this belief system. Specifically, closely associated with the idea of *respeto* is the value placed on *confianza*, which emphasizes that trust, comfort, and security are part of this greater focus on hierarchical relationships. Such an emphasis on intimacy and closeness with *a persona de confianza* in family relations mitigates the tendency to view *respeto* as having a stridently harsh edge (Harwood et al., 2002).

A combined use of the concepts *familismo* and *respeto*, therefore, is that both provide a specific basis for parental ethnotheories that, in turn, have consequence for the aspect of social competence concerned with “balancing autonomy and connectedness.” Specifically, greater emphasis is placed

by Mexican compared to US parents on the importance of maintaining ties with family members and maintaining respect for parents and other adults. Compared to the dominant US culture, greater emphasis is placed in Mexican parent–adolescent relationships on the maintenance of continuing bonds with parents and conformity to their elders’ expectations. Consequently, the Mexican conception of adolescent social competence is focused less centrally on gaining autonomy from parents, a major goal of the dominant socialization patterns within the United States (Carlo & de Guzman, 2009; Peterson et al., 1999; Steinberg, 1990). This is qualified perhaps by the fact that gender differences may exist, with more emphasis being placed on fostering autonomy by Mexican boys as opposed to girls (Bush, Supple, & Lash, 2004; Raffaelli & Ontai, 2004).

Several studies on socialization within Mexican and Mexican American families have identified conformity to norms, obedience to authority, and respect for parents as socialization outcomes having the greatest priority (Arcia & Johnson, 1998; Baca Zinn & Wells, 2000; Buriel, 1993; Delgado & Ford, 1998; Diaz-Guerrero & Szalay, 1991; Frias-Armenta & McCloskey, 1998; Grau et al., 2009). Moreover, difficult economic circumstances in Mexico may have enhanced the traditional pattern of placing less emphasis on youthful autonomy and greater focus on the maintenance of parental authority. Specifically, Mexican youth appear to be expanding the traditional pattern of residing in their parents’ home until marriage combined with more recent tendencies to marry at a later age, two conditions that have lengthened the period of dependency by youth on parents. Faced with recent difficult employment markets, high living costs, and shortages of housing, Mexican youth have even less incentive to move toward greater economic and behavioral autonomy from parents (Welti, 2002; Wilson & Esteinou, 2011).

The Interdependent Self and Social Competence

Closely associated with this diminished emphasis on autonomy is the somewhat distinctive conception of the self in Mexican culture, an additional

component of social competence. Compared to the individualistic or private self-conceptions of mainstream US culture, the Mexican concepts of the self and self-esteem (i.e., important aspects of social competence) are deeply rooted in the concept of *familismo*, a more collectivistic perspective on the social meaning of the person. Thus, Mexican cultural traditions and practices, which are more family-centered, provide adolescents with their cultural sense of self and personal worth, particularly through feelings of family belongingness. A person's conception and value for the self are rooted in an overall sense of *nosotros* (i.e., "we-ness") that results from having values, beliefs, purposes, and traditions held in common with family members (Castro et al., 2000; Harwood et al., 2002; Triandis, 1989, 2001). Consistent with this particular form of the *interdependent self*, Mexican youth are more likely to gain a clear sense of self and self-esteem in relationships characterized by cooperation, mutual support, harmonious relations, and the primacy of the group over individual interests.

Personalismo, Simpatía, and Social Competence

Closely related to strong familism are traditional Mexican values emphasizing the distinctive qualities of interpersonal relationships, or additional values that provide a collectivistic foundation to parental ethnotheories and adolescent social competence. These values provide the basis for distinctive conceptions of adolescent social competence and corresponding socialization patterns aimed at fostering these outcomes. Specifically, we refer to the companion values of (1) *personalismo*, the importance ascribed to interpersonal relationships and (2) *simpatía*, the commitment to maintain harmony and avoid conflict in social interactions (Castro et al., 2000; Keefe, Padilla, & Carlos, 1978).

Compared to the dominant culture of the United States, Mexican culture places greater emphasis on being sensitive to the social nuances of everyday life and the importance of minimizing interpersonal conflict. Individuals are socialized to be sensitive to the feelings and needs of others, an inclination that fosters the development of

cooperative social motives, while inhibiting extremes of competitive behaviors based in individualism rather than group interests (Flannagan, 1996; Knight, Cota, & Bernal, 1993; Knight, Dubro, & Chao, 1985). This emphasis on the social domain is underscored by the term *bieneducado*, which means literally to be "well-educated," a concept referring, not only to a person's formal education, but also to his/her demeanor and ability to engage social situations in a manner that is not rude and does not convey disrespect (Castro et al., 2000; Grau et al., 2009). The traditional definition of Mexican youth who are considered "intelligent" places as much emphasis on being accomplished at collectivistic social skills as it does on cognitive abilities. Although the US definition of social competence leans toward individual assertiveness, moderate interpersonal confrontation, and the affirmation of one's individuality, Mexican socialization places somewhat greater emphasis on fostering harmony, avoiding conflict, being cooperative, showing respect, and opposing substantial competitiveness as components of social competence (Castro et al., 2000; Grau et al., 2009). Relative to the dominant culture of the United States, social competence for Mexican adolescents is likely to be defined somewhat more in terms of social skills characterized by cooperation rather than assertiveness for individual objectives.

Achievement and Social Competence

A Mexican view of adolescent social competence, compared to that of the United States, also includes the idea that a somewhat different meaning exists for achievement orientations by the young. Conceptions of achievement for Mexican adolescents challenge individualistic conceptions typical of the United States by linking personal attainment orientations more extensively to collectivistic (i.e., familistic) rather than individualistic values. Contrasting with motives rooted primarily in self-interest, Mexican adolescents are more likely than their U.S. counterparts to view academic achievement as an outgrowth of being responsible to and providing assistance to their families. Mexican adolescents are less likely than American youth to see a clear distinction

between seeking achievement for one's own self-interest and doing so for the welfare of their families (Fulgini, 2001; Valenzuela & Dornbusch, 1994). Similar to the United States, being socialized for achievement (e.g., educational or occupational attainment) is an important dimension of social competence, but one with more collectivistic connotations for Mexican youth than is common within US populations of adolescents.

Summarizing the Meaning of Mexican Social Competence

An overall result, therefore, is that both Mexican and US conceptions of adolescent social competence have a common focus on the same dimensions of youthful development: conformity (obedience) vs. autonomy, conceptions of the self and self-esteem, social skills, and achievement. The primary difference is that Mexican conceptions of social competence may be more extensively based in parental ethnotheories that lean in the direction of collectivism, whereas U.S. definitions are based somewhat more in terms of individualistic perspectives.

This link with collectivism does not mean, of course, that individualistic conceptions of social competence receive no emphasis in the socialization values of Mexican parents. Instead, only *in comparison* to the dominant U.S. cultural orientations, Mexican socialization values place *somewhat less emphasis* on autonomy, the private self, self-serving assertive social skills, and self-interested achievement. Mexican socialization beliefs tilt only *somewhat* more toward collectivistic conceptions of adolescent social competence by valuing obedience, the interdependent self, social skills that foster group (e.g., family) harmony, and achievement linked to strong family bonds (Baca Zinn, & Wells, 2000; Carlo & de Guzman, 2009; Castro et al., 2000; Grau et al., 2009; Peterson, 2005, 2009). Contemporary scholars support this complex view by indicating that the social forces of individualism, egalitarianism, and globalization are having greater influence in today's Mexican family life than in past times. These forces are viewed as encouraging increased emphasis, both today and in the future, on individualistic attributes of social competence as

desired outcomes of the Mexican socialization process (Esteinou, 2004, 2008; Wilson & Esteinou, 2011).

Mexican Parental Styles, Behavior, and Authority That Foster Social Competence

Based on the idea that Mexican conceptions of adolescent social competence are rooted more extensively in collectivistic values than the United States, the next step is to identify patterns of parental styles and behaviors aimed at fostering the development of these qualities within Mexican families. This task is complicated by the great variability that exists in Mexican parent–adolescent relationships and the transitions that are occurring away from traditional patterns emphasizing the dominance of parents toward more democratic approaches of child-rearing that allow for greater autonomy (Esteinou, 2004, 2008; Osorio Roman & Sánchez Mejía, 1996). These transitions in parenting are being driven extensively by the previously discussed influences of globalization, egalitarianism, and individualism that are growing sources of social change for Mexican families.

Despite substantial changes in parenting, however, the continuing prominence of collectivistic ethnotheories by Mexican parents may entail that the authoritarian child-rearing style and its featured parental behaviors (i.e., high punitiveness and low supportiveness) are more characteristic of Mexican parents than is true of U.S. parents. Based on the emphasis placed by Mexican parents on the importance of obedience and parental authority (i.e., through the importance of *respeto*), scholars have frequently concluded that Mexican parenting is more authoritarian than the dominant pattern in the United States, the authoritative style (Buriel, 1993; Busch-Rossnagel & Zaya, 1991; Diaz-Guerrero & Szalay, 1991; Esteinou, 2004, 2008). According to this view, the social position of Mexican parents is likely to command substantial authority in reference to the young, which would likely lead to the use of more direct forms of parental control. Moreover, such a hierarchical

authority structure may work against the use of moderate forms of control such as reasoning, monitoring, and nonpunitive forms of discipline (e.g., deprivation of privileges). Research supportive of this perspective indicates, for example, that Mexican parenting is characterized by greater emphasis on harsh, punitive behavior because of distinctive cultural beliefs about the positive consequences of these strategies for the development of children and adolescents (Frias-Armenta & McCloskey, 1998). Results from research on Mexican American samples are supportive of this pattern by concluding that Mexican-origin mothers tended to be more controlling, more nonverbal, and to use fewer verbal (reasoning) strategies than European American mothers (Grau et al., 2009). A frequent conclusion, therefore, is that authoritarian parenting (with higher levels of punitiveness), a style developed to describe a particular pattern of US child-rearing, would be an accurate way of characterizing Mexican parenting, particularly for those parents whose approaches remain consistent with traditional Mexican patterns (Esteinou, 2004, 2008; Harwood et al., 2002; Osorio Roman & Sánchez Mejía, 1996).

Other scholars, however, have questioned the application of the authoritarian parenting style to Latino child-rearing, a critique that may apply to the use of this concept in reference to collectivistic patterns of Mexican parenting (Carlo & de Guzman, 2009; Harwood et al., 2002). Specifically, the fact that Mexican parents tend to use more highly restrictive control does not mean that additional criteria of the authoritarian style have been met sufficiently to warrant such a classification. Instead, other foundations of Mexican cultural beliefs, *familismo* and *confianza*, both emphasize aspects of Mexican family relationships such as feelings of love, trust, security, and mutual obligation that carry a different connotation than is conveyed by the authoritarian style (Carlo & de Guzman, 2009; Harwood et al., 2002). Such attributes, it is important to recognize, do not convey the same sense of arbitrariness, distance, and growing hostility between parents and adolescents that is typical of authoritarian parenting in European American families

(Baumrind, 1991; Peterson & Hann, 1999; Rollins & Thomas, 1979). Instead of such a hostile form of control, the values associated with family life in Mexico (i.e., *familismo* and *persona de confianza*) communicate a sense of supportiveness and cohesiveness that is absent from the original conception of the authoritarian style in the United States (Baumrind, 1978; Rollins & Thomas, 1979; Peterson & Hann, 1999). Such an expectation for a different pattern is supported in a study by Hill, Bush, and Roosa (2003) who found that low acculturated Mexican American mothers tended to use a combination of acceptance and hostile control rather than one without the other. Moreover, Bush et al. (2004) found that measures of parental support and parental induction created among European American samples did not fit well for Mexican adolescents, and that a combination of items assessing positive induction (reasoning) and support (theorized to represent a higher order construct-labeled connection) worked best among their sample of 534 youth living in Mexico. The importance of these findings lie in how they are contrary to the classic pattern of authoritarian parenting used by European American parents which consists of using high hostile control without the tempering influence of acceptance or firm control attempts (e.g., induction).

If Mexican parenting is characterized both by high degrees of forceful control as well as supportive or responsive behaviors, it is less likely that the authoritarian label can be generally useful as a label that characterizes the most prevalent pattern (Hill et al., 2003). Perhaps a better name for this style is *traditional parenting* characterized by a demanding form of control plus substantial supportiveness that fosters feelings of security and loyalty. This pattern of parenting is common in both industrial and nonindustrial societies, particularly outside the West (e.g., China), but may also apply to Latino cultures such as those of Mexico and other Latin American countries (Fuligni, Tseng, & Lam, 1999; Whiting & Edwards, 1988). A traditional style of child-rearing is quite different from the authoritarian parent—that is, one who uses high control in a hostile manner and intensifies this harsh approach by failing to be responsive to or supportive of the young.

The common result of authoritarian parenting is that the young feel rejected, which is an outcome that makes them more vulnerable for the development of problem behavior (Rohner, 1986, 2004, 2008). In contrast, traditional parents may temper their relatively high usage of punitiveness or restrictive control by being supportive and accepting as a means of forging and maintaining positive bonds with the young. The use of high supportiveness in conjunction with high control by Mexican-origin parents also may ameliorate some of the adverse consequences of higher intrusive control in a manner experienced by European American adolescents (Gonzales, Pitts, Hill, & Roosa, 2000; Grau et al., 2009).

Baumrind (1999), the scholar who first conceptualized the authoritarian parenting style, has acknowledged this problem when attempts have been made to apply her authoritarian concept to other cultures in which traditional patterns of parenting have persisted. As a result, she proposed that the concept *traditional parenting style* be applied to parental approaches emphasizing high supportiveness coupled with a form of highly restrictive control that does not encourage discussion and debate with the young. The implication of these observations is that adolescent compliance or conformity to parents, a focal dimension of social competence in Mexico, may not result simply from the highly restrictive control of authoritarian parenting. Instead, compliance or conformity to parents' expectations may result from cultural beliefs emphasizing *both* the inherent authority of the parental role as well as the abilities of parents to provide support as a means of encouraging cohesiveness within family relationships.

Some scholars also propose that traditional parenting may involve a demanding form of control that differs in quality from the arbitrary, harsh control of authoritarian parenting and may convey distinctive meanings within Mexican parent–adolescent relationships than is true for the European American circumstance (Grau et al., 2009; Peterson et al., 2004; Peterson, Steinmetz, & Wilson, 2005b). Such distinctions involve the idea that high restrictiveness or punishment used by traditional parents may not be the same form

of control as the arbitrary patterns and hostile attitudes conveyed by authoritarian parents. The hostile control of authoritarian parenting often is used arbitrarily, occurs when a parent is angry, conveys rejection, and fosters distance in a relationship. Instead, the forceful control used by Mexican parents may simply reflect their efforts to firmly foster dimensions of social competence associated with family cohesiveness. Recognition that a supportive dimension and a less aversive form of high restrictiveness (or punishment) may be components of a traditional parenting provides an effective rationale as to why collectivistic dimensions of Mexican social competence are fostered in the young. Specifically, dimensions of social competence such as obedience, the interdependent self, social skills that emphasize harmony, and achievement linked to strong family bonds are likely to result from parental behavior that reinforces relationship cohesiveness between parents and adolescents. Relationship bonds of this kind are more likely to be fostered by a restrictive form of parental control that does not alienate the young or encourage distance in the manner of authoritarian child-rearing. For example, Bush et al. (2004) reported that Mexican Adolescent's perceptions of their parents as legitimate sources of guidance and advice, as well as viewing their parents as facilitating connection, lead to higher levels of teen's sense of familism. Cohesiveness within the Mexican parent–adolescent relationship may be encouraged by the inclination of traditional parents to be responsive, supportive, and to encourage cooperative activities. In contrast, the harsh and nonsupportive aspects of the authoritarian style used by some European American parents tends to foster distance and separation rather than cohesiveness within parent–youth relationships (Peterson et al., 1999; Ripoll-Nunez & Rohner, 2006).

Regardless whether authoritarian or traditional styles are the best characterizations of Mexican parenting, substantial changes also appear to be occurring in the manner that children and adolescents in Mexico are being socialized by their parents. The nature of parent–child/adolescent relations is changing substantially as traditional values such as *familismo* and *respeto* decline

gradually and the influences of individualism and egalitarianism increase within Mexican family life (Welti, 2002; Wilson & Esteinou, 2011). Corresponding changes in the parent–child relationship include diminished parental dominance, less inclination by parents to rely almost exclusively on giving orders to the young, and the greater involvement of fathers in the process of parenting. Greater emphasis is now being placed on communicating and reasoning with adolescents, or practices aimed at increasing relationship flexibility and fostering emotional closeness within parent–youth relationships (Bush et al., 2004). Obedience to parents is still an important goal of socialization, but greater emphasis is now being placed on negotiation, making requests, monitoring, and autonomy-granting than in earlier periods (Esteinou, 2004, 2008; Ingoldsby, Schvaneveldt, Supple, & Bush, 2004; Osorio Roman & Sánchez Mejía, 1996; Wilson & Esteinou, 2011). These changes in Mexican parenting also suggest that corresponding shifts in adolescent social competence may be occurring in the direction of more individualistic patterns similar to those found in the United States.

Before we can draw such conclusions about parent–adolescent relationships, however, more research is needed and care must be taken in proposing that parental styles, behaviors, or dimensions of social competence appear to be comparable across cultures. It is certainly possible that, despite the surface-level similarities, some qualities of the parent–adolescent relationship are not conceptually equivalent across cultures. Across different cultural communities, similar parenting behaviors or practices do not guarantee that exactly the same meaning is being conveyed and that the same consequences for youthful development will result (Peterson, Steinmetz, & Wilson, 2005b). Probably the best way of addressing such issues will be a multimethod approach involving a combination of quantitative and qualitative strategies. This will be the most effective way for researchers to identify both generalizable patterns and explore more deeply for the nuances of similar or different meanings.

Beyond Parental Behavior Toward Parental Authority

Despite some declines, the continuing influence of collectivistic values in Mexican family traditions suggests that future research will be too limited if it focuses exclusively on parental styles and behavior as the sources of parental influence. Instead, parental styles and behaviors seem best suited for understanding why parents influence adolescents in short-term situations of the moment and do not effectively capture why the young are responsive to parents based on perceptions of their *parents' authority* or their legitimate roles in the society. Traditional family values of Mexico, such as *familismo* and *respeto*, are not restricted simply to the examination of situational attempts to influence the young through child-rearing behavior used in specific circumstances. Instead, much of parental influence also results simply from the cultural interpretations of the social roles occupied by parents and how the cultural meanings assigned to fathers and mothers become translated into parental authority that may or may not be acknowledged by the young.

Although a great deal has been learned by studying parental styles and behaviors as predictors of adolescent development, it is time to expand beyond being so disproportionately preoccupied with these situational aspects of the parent–adolescent relationship (Steinberg, 2001). Preoccupation with parental styles and behaviors in parent–adolescent research may lead to underestimating adolescents' abilities to perceive and respond to the nonbehavioral aspects of parental influence. Specifically, the sophisticated social cognitive abilities of adolescents and the cultural meaning of *parental authority* (i.e., the meaning of the parent's role in the social world) provide adolescents with either the inclination to be influenced or not to be influenced by parents (Bush et al., 2004; Grusec & Davidov, 2007; Peterson et al., 1999; Peterson & Hann, 1999).

Both parental styles and behaviors seem best suited for examining parent–child relations with younger children and may have somewhat less utility with adolescents. Compared to younger children, adolescents have greater abstract

thinking capacities, more extensive memories of their relationships with parents, enhanced social perceptions of their parents' competence (or incompetence), and greater experience with the social meaning of parental roles that define motherhood and fatherhood. These sophisticated abilities allow adolescents to socially construct the *specific other* or assign complex meanings that define their parent's competencies, wisdom, authority, and trustworthiness. As a result, adolescents construct long-term interpretations of their relationships with parents in ways that are at least of equal importance to the behavioral influence attempts used by their elders in specific situations.

Adolescents, with growing acuity to perceive their parent's qualities, are increasingly capable of discerning whether or not parents are viewed as competent, wise, trustworthy, and reliable. These perceptions of parents are a product both of cultural meanings associated with parental roles in Mexican society and adolescents' long-term accumulated experiences with parents (Grusec & Davidov, 2007; Peterson, 2005; Peterson & Hann, 1999). These *social constructions* of parents' authority provide adolescents with abstract and summarized assessments of their parents' long-term influence across situations. Adolescents increasingly develop abilities to "size up" their parents' worthiness or unworthiness as social agents (i.e., their perception of parents' competence) and decide in complex ways the degree to which they will recognize and respond to their authority.

An important issue for future investigators is to examine the possibility that socially constructed perceptions of parental authority may have greater consequences for youthful development in cultures that emphasize collectivistic values, family bonds, obligations, and respect for elders (i.e., *familismo and respeto*). In contrast, cultures that emphasize individualism may have greater tolerance for youthful efforts to challenge parental authority and seek to renegotiate the traditional meanings of social roles occupied by parents and children. Additional research is needed, therefore, on the distinct influence of

parental authority (i.e., independent of parental styles and behavior) within cultures characterized by socialization values reflecting varied levels of individualism and collectivism (Bush et al., 2004).

Summary and Conclusions

The most important idea of this paper is that a society's culture has substantial influence on the conceptions of adolescent social competence and the socialization practices that either foster or hinder the development of these valued qualities in the young. General cultural value systems referred to as individualism and collectivism provide the basis for normative patterns of parent–adolescent relationships within both the United States and Mexico. Based on each society's general cultural values, more specific systems of values and beliefs provide guidance for family life and parental ethnotheories. These child-rearing beliefs and values, in turn, provide guidance for conceptions of both common and distinctive patterns of adolescent social competence as well as the corresponding socialization strategies that either foster or hinder these outcomes.

The predominant patterns of parent–youth relationships in the United States and Mexico have a common focus on dimensions of adolescent social competence consisting of (1) structuring a balance between autonomy and conformity in reference to parents, (2) forming a positive conception of the self, (3) developing adaptive social skills, and (4) pursuing achievement effectively. These dimensions of social competence are not static qualities, but identify common socialization goals that most cultures address as part of the socialization process. It is important to understand that, although cultures tend to address common dimensions of social competence, the specifics about the meaning each culture assigns to these dimensions may vary widely, in part, according to the particular culture's balance of general value orientations (e.g., some degree of balance between aspects of individualism and collectivism).

Despite the prevalence of common forces for social change in the United States and Mexico, cultural differences persist in the relative emphasis placed on the general value constructs of individualism vs. collectivism. Although differences are of degree and not mutually exclusive, compared to mainstream European American patterns, conceptions of adolescent social competence in Mexico emphasize obedience more than autonomy, the interdependent self, social skills that foster group cohesiveness, and achievement orientations that support family cohesiveness and harmony. In contrast, greater emphasis is placed within the European American conception of social competence on fostering autonomy rather than obedience, the private or independent self, social skills for individual advancement, and achievement aimed at personal attainment.

Corresponding differences in parental styles appear to exist between the United States and Mexico, with some observers proposing that the authoritarian style is more characteristic of Mexican than U.S. parenting. Other observers disagree that the authoritarian style, a typology developed specifically to study parenting in the United States (as well as other parental styles), can be readily applied to Mexican culture. Instead, Mexican parenting may be characterized by a traditional style, a pattern that is rooted in unique aspects of Mexican cultural heritage. Thus, Mexican parenting may be more accurately characterized as emphasizing a restrictive form of control that differs in cultural meaning from the harsh, punitive behavior of the authoritarian style prevalent in the United States. In addition, the supportiveness of Mexican parents may be another feature that distinguishes traditional parenting from the authoritarian style.

Another pattern is that Mexican parenting may be characterized as being in transition from a traditional or authoritarian style toward greater emphasis on egalitarian parental roles, more moderate forms of control, and higher degrees of parental responsiveness. Thus, although similarities may exist between commonly used parenting styles in Mexico and the United States, caution must be exercised when attempting to apply child-rearing constructs developed for research

on U.S. parent–adolescent relationships to the child-rearing circumstances of Mexico.

Finally, the collectivistic traditions of Mexican beliefs and values also suggest that too much research attention might be devoted to parental styles and behaviors at the expense of more culturally relevant variables. Specifically, greater attention might be focused on *parental authority* as a central aspect of Mexican parent–adolescent relationships—a construct implied by such social values and beliefs as *familismo* and *respeto*. Parental authority refers to the extent to which adolescents view their parents as being competent, wise, reliable, and trustworthy as key cultural meanings of parental roles in Mexican and US society. The best way to examine these and other related theoretical conceptions is through future cross-cultural investigations of parent–adolescent relationships within Mexico and the United States.

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Part II

Relationships, Processes, and Roles in Families

Catherine A. Surra and Jill M. Boelter

Classic and contemporary studies of mate selection share a common goal: to describe and explain how individuals in romantic unions choose one another as partners. Upon first reading, this definition may seem to imply that mate selection is concerned only with choosing a partner for a committed relationship, but the study of mate selection is much more varied and dynamic in its focus. A full understanding of mate selection requires attention to the development and maintenance of romantic relationships, including their very beginnings and endings and the ups and downs in between. In this chapter, we review research aimed at these topics and suggest ways in which they are and are not being addressed. Because other chapters in this volume are devoted to cohabitation and to gay and lesbian relationships, we concentrate on mate selection in heterosexual relationships, and we discuss cohabitation only as it pertains to contemporary dating relationships and mate selection.

To guide our literature review, we used the following definitions (see Surra, Boettcher-

Burke, Cottle, West, & Gray, 2007): Research on *dating and mate selection* concerns the processes by which individuals choose their romantic partners and the individual, relational, and contextual factors that predict whether relationships progress, maintain, dissolve, or change status over time. Throughout this chapter, we use the shorthand-term *developmental change* to refer to progress, maintenance, deterioration, dissolution, or status changes in relationships. The term *status* refers to the formal, socially agreed upon, and often legally determined state used to describe membership in romantic relationships (Surra et al., 2007). Statuses typically include dating, cohabitation, and marriage. Research on dating and mate selection also concerns the cognitive, affective, and behavioral properties of romantic relationships (e.g., commitment, conflict, or trust) and the factors that shape these properties, such as social network or cultural influences. More often than not the properties of relationships are thought to be universal; that is, they apply beyond dating relationships to marriages, friendships, and other close relationships.

A good understanding of dating and mate selection requires study of how properties of dating relationships, processes of mate choice, and developmental change in relationships are inter-related. Nevertheless, we probably know less now about dating and mate selection than we did 2 or 3 decades ago. One reason for the current lack of knowledge is because of trends in the way researchers are studying dating and mate selection.

C.A. Surra, PhD (✉)
School of Behavioral Sciences and Education,
Penn State University Harrisburg, W-351 Olmsted
Building, 777 W Harrisburg Pike, Middletown,
PA 17057-4898, USA
e-mail: cas87@psu.edu

J.M. Boelter, MA
Department of Human Development and Family Studies,
The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX 78712, USA
e-mail: jboelter@austin.utexas.edu

My colleagues and I studied the trends in the methods used to study dating and mate selection in articles published in psychology, sociology, and other fields between 1991 and 2001 (Surra et al., 2007; Surra, Gray, Boettcher, Cottle, & West, 2006). We found that the percentage of articles published on mate choice, out of the total published each year, declined over time from a high of 44% to a low of 16%, and the study of relationship properties increased over that same period. In addition, we found that researchers who study mate choice are more likely to distinguish one relationship status from another (e.g., cohabitation vs. marriage), but researchers who study relationship properties typically do not distinguish one status from another within their samples (e.g., daters from marrieds). Not too surprisingly, the study of mate choice is concentrated within sociology and the study of relationship properties is concentrated within social psychology and interpersonal communication. Thus, it is becoming increasingly difficult to tell how the properties of relationships might lead to developmental changes in status (e.g., cohabitation, marriage, or breakup). Studies of these topics are a compelling target for future research.

In this chapter, we concentrated on studies published since our previous reviews, from 2000 to 2009. Because the purpose of this handbook was to analyze “current research and theory about family relationships, family structural variations, and the role of families in society,” (G. W. Peterson & K. R. Bush, personal communication, Jan 2, 2009), we focused on sociological approaches to the study of dating and mate selection more than social psychological approaches. We do, however, illustrate how integrating the two approaches would greatly enrich scholars’ ability to explain racial, economic, and other variations in mate selection.

A Word on Nomenclature

Although many sociological studies contain information about dating and mate selection, the terms authors used to describe the unions they studied

often do not convey the applicability of findings to dating relationships. To make sense of the literature, we used our own nomenclature to convey the applicability of findings to dating and mate selection. In some cases, the terms we use here differ from those the authors themselves used.

What Is a Union? What Is a Dating Union?

We use the term *dating* to describe the nonmarital romantic unions that precede a variety of different types of unions, including cohabitation, marriage, and nonmarital partnerships that involve childbearing. We use the term dating without implication as to depth or length of involvement because of the great variety on these dimensions in dating relationships. Generally speaking, we reserve the term dating for romantic nonmarital unions that do not involve living together, but we demonstrate below that cohabitation in many cases is a form of dating. When we want to make a distinction between daters who co-reside and those who do not, we use the phrases *dating cohabitators* and *dating noncohabitators*.

We use the term *union* to refer to any type of romantic involvement, and we precede it with an adjective that describes the type of union, such as dating unions, cohabiting unions, and marital unions. This usage is a departure from recent usage in the literature. In sociological studies of mate selection, the word union typically is used to describe cohabitation and marriage, implying that no dating or no developmental process—indeed no relationship—preceded the formation of the cohabitation or marriage. For example, researchers often study the duration of cohabiting unions and the transitions into and out of cohabiting unions (e.g., Binstock & Thornton, 2003; Brown, 2003, 2004) without attention to the union that preceded cohabitation, and the phrase “not in a union” really means not in a residential union (Schoen, Landale, & Daniels, 2007). Although authors sometimes acknowledge that cohabitators were not observed the entire length of their unions (Binstock & Thornton, 2003; Brown, 2000), the language used draws theoretical attention away

from the significance of the developmental process that leads couples toward cohabiting, marrying, or bearing children. The various usages of the term union also make it difficult to understand methods and compare across investigations.

Information about dating is also found in studies of courtship, premarital relationships, singlehood, and unmarried parents, even though the relevance of such studies to mate selection may not be immediately obvious because usage of the term dating has all but disappeared in literature on the sociology of the family. The words “single” or “singlehood,” for example, have been variously used to label those who were unmarried (Lichter & Qian, 2008); were noncohabiting and pregnant (Manning, 1993); were not married or not cohabiting (Manning & Landale, 1996); those who had never been in a parental or nonparental residential union (Schoen et al., 2007); and daters who were and were not cohabiting (McGinnis, 2003). We found several other euphemisms for dating in the literature, including “noncohabiting partnered singles” or “noncohabiting singles” (McGinnis, 2003, p. 106). Another euphemism for dating is “visiting couples,” a term found in some articles that employ data from the Fragile Families Study that refers to unmarried parents who were romantically involved, but who did not live together (Carlson, McLanahan, & England, 2004; Gibson-Davis, Edin, & McLanahan, 2005). Cohabitators who separated, but remained romantically involved, have been coded and labeled as separated (Osborne, 2005), even though results for such couples are informative about ongoing dating relationships. Although the terms “courtship” and “premarital” are used to describe the period of relationships that precedes marriage, these terms imply that marriage is the only outcome of dating, and fail to capture the idea that some dating relationships lead to deeper commitments or marriage, but others do not. Thus, we reserve the terms *premarital* and *courtship* to refer to relationships that result in marriage.

In summary, researchers are studying romantic relationships that precede or exist outside of cohabitation, childbearing, and marriage. However, no single term is used to describe these relationships and the term dating has fallen out of

use, thereby implying that romantic relationships that occur outside of certain statuses are uninteresting in their own right or as precursors to cohabitation, child bearing, or marriage. In this chapter, we derive information about dating and mate selection from studies of individuals and couples who were romantically involved and unmarried, and we use the terms *daters* or *dating* to describe these unions.

Dating and Mate Selection

In the next section, we review demographic trends in dating and mate selection. This section serves to lay the groundwork for the review of empirical and theoretical literature on factors that affect dating and mate selection.

Demographic Trends in Dating, Mate Selection, and Marriage

Very few studies of nationally representative samples have examined characteristics and mate selection processes for daters. As a result, identifying recent trends in dating behaviors is difficult. As of 2008, there were 95.9 million unmarried individuals over the age of 18 (including those divorced and widowed), and 61% of them had never been married (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health) is one of the only investigations to provide information about dating patterns in a nationally representative sample. One analysis of data from Add Health showed that 63% of adolescents and young adults had not had a romantic relationship in the preceding 18 months (Crissey, 2005). The remaining individuals all of whom were in relationships were classified according to whether they were in a serious relationship with sex, serious without sex, a group-oriented relationship, a physically oriented relationship, or a relationship of low involvement. The most common type of relationship reported was serious with sex (37%) and the least common type was low involvement (7%). The distribution of relationships varied by gender and race. White

men were significantly more likely than Black men to have had a serious-without-sex relationship (23% vs. 11%), and a higher proportion of Black men reported low-involvement relationships than White men (12% vs. 7%). Among women, Whites were significantly more likely to have had a serious relationship with sex compared to all other racial groups. Black women were nearly twice as likely to have had a physically oriented relationship as White women (26% vs. 14%). Black women (10%) and women of Mexican-origin (8%) were at least twice as likely to have had low-involvement relationships as White women (4%).

Most individuals do eventually wed, although individuals are entering marital unions at a later age than earlier generations. As of 2008, 51.9% of individuals, or 123.6 million opposite-sex couples, in the United States over the age of 15, were married (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). Over the past several decades, the median age at first marriage has risen over 5 years for men and women. In 2008 the median age at first marriage was 27.6 for men and 25.9 for women. Comparable figures in 1960 were 22.8 for men and 20.3 for women (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). Although individuals are entering marital unions at a later age than earlier generations, it is still largely normative for individuals to marry by their mid-30s. By 2003, over half (52%) of adults age 25–34 had married (Fields, 2004), and 15.6% of men and 25.4% of women married before age 23 (Uecker & Stokes, 2008). Of those age 30–34, 72% had married (Fields, 2004). Projections are, however, that expected marriage rates will decline by approximately 7%, although nearly 90% of individuals still are projected to wed at least once over the course of their lives (Goldstein & Kenney, 2001).

Rates of marriage differ by race, gender, age, and education. Numerous studies have shown that Blacks were less likely to marry than Whites (e.g., Carlson et al., 2004; Lichter, Qian, & Mellott, 2006; Schoen & Cheng, 2006; Teachman, Tedrow, & Crowder, 2000; Uecker & Stokes, 2008), even after controlling for a multitude of explanatory variables. Black men were more likely to ever marry than Black women (Sassler & Schoen, 1999; Schoen & Cheng, 2006) whereas

White women had higher likelihood of ever marrying than White men (Schoen & Cheng, 2006). A study of marriage likelihood in the Add Health data indicated that Mexican American women were the most likely to marry by age 24 (41%), followed by White women (36%), and then Black women (17%; Schoen et al., 2007). Similar findings hold for ever married women (Teachman et al., 2000). Marital timing differs by age, race, and gender as well. Results from one study showed that Hispanic women age 20–24 were more likely than White or Black women to ever marry (Teachman et al., 2000). By age 37, however, Whites were roughly 5% more likely than Latinas and roughly 20% more likely than Black women to have experienced a first marriage (Lloyd, 2006). Another study showed comparable patterns of marital timing for younger White and Hispanic women (Uecker & Stokes, 2008). Among those who married by age 23, White (29.4%) and Hispanic (27.5%) women were more likely to marry than Asian (16.4%) and Black (10.6%) women. Hispanic men had the highest percentage of marriage by age 23 (24.3%), compared to White men (16.1%), Asian men (12.3%), and Black men (9.3%).

Marital timing and the likelihood of cohabitation and marriage vary with educational attainment, and gender and race modify the effects of educational attainment. Goldstein and Kenney (2001) estimated entry into first marriage for women. Using data from the 1995 Current Population Survey, the researchers assessed the effects of cohort and age differences among women in three cohorts (1950–1954, 1955–1959, 1960–1964) for those with a college degree and those who either did not or were predicted not to receive a college degree. Women with college degrees married at later ages than those without a college degree, but they became progressively more likely to ever marry (94% for the youngest cohort). Women without college degrees became progressively less likely to ever marry (89% for the youngest cohort). College graduates in the oldest cohort had similar rates of ever marrying as those without a college degree (89.8% vs. 91.5%, respectively). Thus, the influence of a college education on marriage rates seems to be

increasing for more recent cohorts. The gap in lifetime marriage rates for women with and without a college degree held for both Blacks and Whites (Goldstein & Kenney, 2001). Similarly, the likelihood of entering a marital vs. a cohabiting union was greater for White men with a college degree than for White men with a high school diploma (Oppenheimer, 2003), but for Black men, having a college degree increased the likelihood of entering either a marital or cohabiting union. White men without a high school diploma were more likely than those with a high school diploma to transition into marriage instead of cohabitation whereas the reverse was true for Black men. Findings obtained from marriage data in three states showed that Blacks with the lowest levels of education (i.e., less than a high school diploma) were more likely to never marry than to marry (Schoen & Cheng, 2006).

Economic Theories of Dating and Marriage

Theories and research to explain current trends in dating, cohabiting, and marital unions have concentrated on economic explanations. Three main theories dominate the literature: the theory of gender specialization, the theory of women's economic independence, and economic search theory. In addition, a fourth theory seems to be emerging that considers the effects of the pooling of coupled partners' economic resources on mate selection.

Theory of Gender Specialization

One theory of how economic characteristics affect mate selection is rooted in Becker's (1991) specialization theory or gains-to-marriage theory. The theory posits that men and women decide whom to marry on the basis of a complementary exchange of resources specialized on the basis of gender. Men's contribution to the exchange is economic resources. As a result, men's economic potential should affect their attractiveness as marriage partners, and more importantly, their likelihood of marriage. In exchange for economic benefits, women contribute child bearing, child care, and domestic help to the maintenance of the

home. Hence, women's potential for contributing economically to marriage should be a less important factor on the marriage market and should produce negative effects on their likelihood of marriage (Carlson et al., 2004; Xie, Raymo, Goyette, & Thornton, 2003). Becker has argued that, even when married women are employed, their domestic and child care responsibilities mean that they earn less than men and invest less in market capital so that the traditional gender-based exchange will prevail.

The hypothesis that men's economic characteristics predict transitions into marriage has received strong support. Men's economic characteristics, assessed as characteristics of marriage markets or of individuals, explain marriage behavior for both Blacks and Whites and for the poor and nonpoor, although results are more inconsistent when measured at the individual level than the market level. Measures of male partners' economic characteristics at the level of local marriage markets predicted the proportion of women currently married for both Blacks and Whites (Lichter, LeClere, & McGlaughlin, 1991) and among poor women (McLaughlin & Lichter, 1997). In racially mixed neighborhoods and in White neighborhoods, mean male earnings increased the proportion married for both Blacks and Whites, and in racially mixed neighborhoods, male nonemployment decreased the proportion currently married for Blacks (Lichter et al., 1991). The pool of economically attractive men (e.g., ratio of unmarried men employed full time to unmarried women) explained some of the Black-White differences in marital timing, particularly among women who were younger or expecting to marry within 5 years (Lichter, McLaughlin, Kephart, & Landry, 1992). Yet the delay of marriage was substantial among Blacks even when market-level and individual-level variables were included in models. The availability of unmarried men with incomes above the poverty line increased the likelihood of marriage among poor women (McLaughlin & Lichter, 1997).

Results for individual-level economic characteristics have shown that employment and education increased the likelihood of marriage for

single men (Sassler & Schoen, 1999), earnings for single men predicted marriage vs. staying single (Stewart, Manning, & Smock, 2003), and earnings for cohabiting men predicted greater likelihood of marriage vs. continuing to cohabit (Brown; 2000, Sanchez, Manning, & Smock, 1998). If their male partners worked during the previous year, nonpoor cohabiting women were more likely to marry, but partners' employment had no effect on the transition out of cohabitation among poor women, suggesting that male wages may not be high enough to promote marriage among poor women (Lichter et al., 2006). If their male partners had a high school diploma or some college, poor women were more likely to marry, but nonpoor women were more likely to dissolve their unions. Manning and Smock (1995) found that Black men's education did not predict exits out of cohabitation. With respect to employment, cohabiting White men's employment increased the odds of marrying and decreased the odds of separating, but it did not predict for cohabiting White women or Black men and women.

Smock, Manning and Porter (2005) reviewed 21 studies, three of which used non-US samples, to examine whether and when economic characteristics predict marriage. The large majority of the studies found that men's economic characteristics positively predicted transitions to marriage out of cohabitation, and, even more consistently, transitions into marriage out of singlehood. (Note that in some cases, samples of singles included only noncohabitators whereas in other cases singles were all unmarrieds, whether cohabiting or not.)

Theory of Women's Economic Independence

The theory of women's economic independence is related to specialization theory, but draws more on changes in women's economic potential. According to this theory, major changes in women's labor force participation, educational attainment, and earnings have eroded the influence of the traditional marital exchange in mate selection decisions (e.g., Gaughan, 2002; Xie et al., 2003; for summaries and critiques of the theory also see Oppenheimer, 1997, 1988), and have altered the

contributions men and women are able to make to the marital exchange posited by specialization theory. The reduction in manufacturing jobs has meant that men without a college degree have fewer options for earning wages that will support marriage and family, which, in turn, makes them less attractive on the marriage market (Cherlin, 2005). The increase in jobs in the service sector has had the opposite effect for women, providing them with viable sources of income. These trends have reduced the appeal of the gender-based marital exchange, and they have increased women's economic independence, their attractiveness on the marriage market, and by extension, their bargaining power in union formation. As a result, women have more degrees of freedom in their marriage decisions than previously. They may be motivated to eschew marriage altogether or to replace it permanently with cohabitation. Thus, the hypothesis derived from this theory is that women's economic independence will have negative effects on marriage.

Evidence in support of the hypothesis that women's economic independence reduces marriage behavior varies by level of analysis, and is stronger for variables measured at the marriage market-level than the individual level. When local labor market areas (multicounty units formed from commuting patterns) were the unit of analysis, the hypothesis that female economic independence would decrease the likelihood of marrying was supported, particularly for Black women (Lichter et al., 1991). For Blacks, the proportion of women employed and their mean earnings in the local marriage market were negatively related to the proportion currently married. In addition, receipt of public assistance significantly decreased the proportions of women currently married and ever married for both Blacks and Whites (Lichter et al., 1991). Among Latinas, market-level predictors (e.g., women's aggregate employment) decreased their likelihood of first marriage (Lloyd, 2006).

When indicators of women's economic independence are measured as individual characteristics, the evidence in support of the hypothesis is weaker, and often is opposite the hypothesis.

Consistent with the theory, Gaughan (2002) found that White women who were students and who had greater job prestige were less likely to marry. Likewise, women who received public assistance were less likely to marry (Fossett & Kiecolt, 1993; Lichter et al., 2006), but, contrary to the theory, so were those who were unemployed (Lichter et al., 2006). In addition, female employment and earnings increased the likelihood of marriage, perhaps because it increased their attractiveness as marriage partners (Lichter et al., 1992). Completing school and being employed part-time, as compared to being unemployed, increased the odds that women would form cohabiting and marital unions (Raley, 1996). Among poor women, employment increased the likelihood of marrying (McLaughlin & Lichter, 1997). For women in their late 20s, education and employment increased the odds of marrying (e.g., Sessler & Schoen, 1999). Among Latinas, some indicators, such as enrollment in school, showed, as the theory predicts, a negative relationship to transition to first marriage, but other indicators, such as educational attainment and number of weeks worked in the previous year, showed a positive relationship (Lloyd, 2006). After reviewing research on economic characteristics and marriage, Smock and colleagues (2005) concluded that the three studies that addressed only women's characteristics all showed positive effects on marriage.

Economic Search Theory

The third theory, called economic search theory, emphasizes the distinction between marriage foregone and marriage delayed by focusing on individuals' economic career development (Oppenheimer, 1988, 1997, 2000). The theory attempts to explain the demographic trend of the delay in marriage described previously. According to Oppenheimer, the decision to marry is the result of a process of discovering and evaluating the economic potential and career maturity of one's partner. Career maturity includes a clearly defined occupation, relatively stable employment, and income adequate to establish an independent household. The search process requires more time

now than previously because developing economic potential and reaching career maturity require more time now than previously for both women and men.

The time during which the search occurs is fraught with uncertainty that stems from unknowns about how each partner's economic future will play out (Oppenheimer, 1988, 1997, 2000). Uncertainty derives from several sources. There is the problem of trying to project future economic characteristics from present information, which is often incomplete and changing as careers evolve. Then there is the problem of deciding whether to commit to marrying at an earlier age, with the hope that economic adaptations will be forthcoming after marriage. Predicting later economic characteristics at a younger age has its advantages, including a larger pool of potentially high quality matches and avoidance of the rewards foregone with long searches, but uncertainty about future prospects is greater for younger individuals.

The theory focuses more on the economic potential of men than women because women are in a relatively weaker labor market position and their economic contributions to the family often are secondary to men's. The nature of the search process depends, however, on the degree of differentiation in gendered roles. In situations in which roles are highly differentiated along traditional lines, women's economic well-being is greatly influenced by men's economic characteristics. In these situations, which have prevailed historically, men are likely to be motivated to delay marriage until they are ready to assume the economic burden of a home and family. Women are more likely to marry at a younger age than men because women are more uncertain about their own attributes than are men. Also, in this situation, women may be employed early in marriage to facilitate men's early career development. In the case where women have strong attachment to the labor force and economic independence, the search period is likely to be more uncertain and lengthier. This is because women are able to finance their own more exacting search; opportunities for career adjustments after marriage are

lessened for both spouses, putting more of a burden on the premarriage search; and partners must try to predict each other's economic prospects.

According to economic search theory, cohabitation is one option for dealing with the uncertainty posed by a lengthy search process. Cohabitation is a means by which partners may gather more information while taking advantage of the convenience and intimacies that cohabitation provides until uncertainties are resolved. In this way, cohabitation may extend courtship or engagement prior to marriage or it may serve as an alternative to singlehood.

Several tests of economic search theory have garnered support for its basic premises, and it has proved particularly useful for explaining racial difference in rates of forming cohabiting and marital unions. For both Black and White men, the likelihood of entering a cohabitation or marriage was very low if they earned less than \$5,000 per year (Oppenheimer, 2003). Career immaturity, measured in terms of enrollment in school and whether the respondent was fully employed over a 2-year period, also predicted transitions into cohabitation or marriage. For Black and White men who were employed less than full time for 2 years, the odds of marrying were lower, and the deterioration of employment increased the likelihood of cohabitation. The effects of long-term employment prospects, as indexed by education, differed for Blacks and Whites. Whereas graduation from high school increased the odds of marriage for Whites, it decreased the odds of marriage for Blacks and increased the odds of cohabitation, a finding that may result from the poor economic prospects for Black men with high school degrees. Having a college degree increased the odds of marriage and reduced the odds of separation, but effects were stronger for Blacks. Women's educational attainment reduced the odds of cohabitation by about 21% for each additional year of education (Xie et al., 2003). The effects of 2-year work experience were strong for Whites, with less than full-time employment or a deterioration in employment associated with decreased odds of marriage (Oppenheimer, 2003). Estimated variables that

assessed the earnings potential of unmarried White men and women, which were calculated from information about gender, education, and likely work experience, showed that men's predicted current earnings, earnings over the next 5 years, future earnings, past earnings, and lifetime earnings all significantly increased the odds of marriage, but women's estimated earnings were unrelated to the odds of marriage (Xie et al., 2003). Earnings did not matter for transitions into (Xie et al., 2003) or out of (Oppenheimer, 2003) cohabitation, perhaps because high earners were selected out of this status to begin with.

Transitions to career maturity are more difficult for Black than White men, which may help to explain why marriage rates differ between these two subpopulations. Oppenheimer (2000) has shown that men's transitions to career maturity, measured in terms of years out of school, earnings above the poverty line, education, and full-time employment for a 2-year period, have been more difficult to achieve for Black men than White men born between 1979 and 1990. Findings for enrollment in school support the idea that marriage is delayed or foregone while individuals seek career maturity (Gaughan, 2002; Lloyd, 2006; Raley, 1996; Sweeney, 2002), but the results are stronger for Whites and Latinas than for Blacks (Oppenheimer, 2003; Sassler & Schoen, 1999). Studies often make no distinction between being a student and having an incomplete education, even though the two may have different effects. Schoen and Cheng (2006) used their measure of marriage propensities, which accounts for the numbers of unmarried men and women in the population, to investigate marriage rates in three states from 1970 to 1990. They found that the next to lowest marriage rate across gender and race categories was for those with an incomplete college education (13–15 years of education). They argued that this group may represent individuals who are selected out of the marriage market because of negative psychological or personal characteristics. Quitting college and working on a degree may capture different characteristics that need to be differentiated in studies of economic search theory.

The Effects of Coupled Partners' Pooled Economic Resources: A New Theory?

A new theory of the effects of economics on mate selection is emerging from some literature to address the complexities of contemporary mate selection for individuals at all income and educational levels. This emergent theory recognizes that increases in women's economic independence have made positive contributions to marriage. Indeed, a comparison of birth cohorts revealed that cohorts of women born between 1961 and 1965 have increased their earnings as well as their likelihood of marriage, compared to cohorts born between 1950 and 1954 (Sweeney, 2002). In addition, the emergent theory considers a more dyadic and interactive approach to mate selection. It focuses on the contribution of the set of coupled partners' economic characteristics to mate selection decisions, rather than individual characteristics. Becker (1991) argued that as women's employment continued to rise, the need for a specialized division of labor in the home would remain, although it would no longer be specialized by sex.

When sex is no longer the dividing line for who will contribute what to unions, two effects are apparent. First, the calculus that partners use to project economic potential becomes more complex and unpredictable. Male and female partners alike now need to weigh one another's potential economic and other contributions to the union. Moreover, each partner must consider the interactive mix of their combined economic characteristics. Such considerations not only weigh heavily with respect to career maturity and the standard of living the couple might enjoy by combining resources, but education and occupation also affect lifestyle considerations. Questions arise about division of household labor and child care, time together as a couple, transportation, and where to live to accommodate dual workers, to mention but a few. Thus, to say that as women's economic potential has increased so has their attractiveness as marriage partners greatly oversimplifies the implications of a dyadic approach to understanding economics of mate selection. Although several authors have recognized the need for such a theory (e.g., Lichter

et al., 1992; Lloyd, 2006; Schoen & Cheng, 2006), it has yet to be formulated.

The second effect is that, when the division of labor becomes less specialized by sex, the qualities of the relationship itself should become more consequential for union formation. When sex is no longer the guide for a division of labor, the criteria on which a division of labor is based need to be fashioned by the coupled partners themselves. In order to fashion a workable division of labor, partners must be able to negotiate and mesh their mutual occupational planning and development. Their ability to communicate about difficult topics, resolve conflicts, trust in one another, and their caring and willingness to sacrifice for the other become paramount. These properties of the relationship should figure more prominently into the calculus for deciding about economic potential. Indeed, these properties will affect negotiation of a division of labor, and partners' faith in their abilities to negotiate a division of labor and navigate economic circumstances. Their belief in their ability as a couple to negotiate all of life's demands, including economic obstacles, is critical to their assessment of whether they will be able to survive and to survive happily as a couple. All of these factors put more of a burden on coupled partners to assess the synergy of their relationship.

Only a few studies shed light on the effects of the combined economic characteristics of coupled partners on the development and formation of unions. The scarcity of research stems primarily from the fact that nationally representative data sets on union formation rarely have longitudinal data obtained from both members of couples in dating, cohabiting, and marital unions. The Fragile Families Study of unmarried parents is a notable exception. Carlson and coauthors (2004) examined the economic and other predictors of union status 1 year after children were born in a sample of 3,285 couples. Union status after 1 year was compared to no romantic involvement, controlling for initial union status. The researchers found that, when both partners' economic characteristics were included in models, positive economic contributions from both partners increased the likelihood of unions. Mothers with a high

school degree or higher had an increased likelihood of cohabitation and of marriage and mothers with some college had an increased likelihood of dating and of marriage. The effects of fathers' education were weaker, with the exception that some college education significantly reduced the odds of cohabitation. Father's earnings of more than \$25,000 increased the likelihood of marriage, and hourly wages increased the odds of dating and marriage for fathers and the odds of marriage for mothers. When men were earning between \$10,000 and \$24,999 the likelihood of remaining in a dating relationship was reduced, compared to no romantic involvement. Using essentially the same data, Osborne (2005) found that mother's education predicted marriage for cohabitators and mother's earnings predicted marriage for dating parents. The odds of marriage for dating parents were over ten times greater when mothers earned more than \$25,000 per year compared to those with no earnings, but fathers' earnings had no effect. Other findings from the Fragile Families Study showed that as a couple's household-level economic circumstance (the ratio of household income relative to the poverty threshold for family size) improved, the likelihood of marriage among cohabitators increased. Couples' combined earnings increased the likelihood of marriage among all unmarried parents (Gibson-Davis, 2009).

The data from coupled parents sampled in the Fragile Families Study suggest that cohabiting and dating partners who are in the throes of making decisions about how deeply to commit may be weighing the adequacy of their economic circumstances as a couple. When they are less than adequate, cohabiting and visiting couples may hold deeper commitment at bay until they become more certain about whether incomplete or uncertain economic circumstances are likely to improve. Whether the findings from the Fragile Families Study of unmarried parents apply to dating nonparents remains to be determined, as a theory of coupled partners' pooled economic characteristics becomes more fully developed.

Some findings support the idea that properties of relationships are consequential in partners'

assessments of how their economic situation affects their unions. A qualitative study of barriers to marriage among low income, romantically involved parents showed that financial concerns and relationship quality frequently were interconnected, as in cases where conflicts arose over finances (Gibson-Davis et al., 2005). Men's earnings of \$25,000+ more than doubled the odds of marriage after 1 year (Carlson et al., 2004), but the size of this coefficient was reduced to nonsignificance once qualities of the relationship, such as supportiveness and frequency of conflict, were entered into the model. Likewise, the effects of income-to-needs ratio and poverty thresholds on marriage among cohabiting couples were reduced when partners said that their chance of marriage was good or certain (Gibson-Davis, 2009). Such findings demonstrate that properties of relationships mediate the impact of economics on marital decisions, particularly in studies where the economic contributions of both partners are tested. Thus, whether and how relationship properties are integrated into studies is critical to understanding mate selection, a point that we explore more deeply later in the chapter.

As we have demonstrated, adequate tests of a theory of pooled economic characteristics would require data from both members of couples and couples who represent wide variation in relational involvement (e.g., daters at different depths of involvement, cohabitators, transitions into marriage from dating and cohabitation). In addition, the theory implies two possibilities for hypothesis testing. The first is that coupled partners' individual-level characteristics will interact to effect changes in progress in relationships or union status. Tests of interactions would enable researchers to ferret out whether, for example, marriage is delayed or foregone among couples in which both partners have low educational levels, as compared to couples in which one partner is high and the other low or both are high. The second hypothesis that needs to be tested is whether effects of joint economic characteristics on relationship behavior are mediated by properties of relationships that indicate high levels of functioning. These qualities include such constructs as the ability to resolve conflicts and communication

about difficult topics, rather than avoidance of them, relationship-specific trust, and willingness to sacrifice for the other.

The studies just reviewed have sampled couples, measured each partner's individual economic characteristics, and entered them into models simultaneously. One problem with this approach is that models did not account for the intercorrelation or interdependence of coupled partners' characteristics (see Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2006). In studies where both members of couples are included in models, statistical analyses should take into account the nesting of individuals within couples and the variance that stems from the intercorrelation of partners' characteristics. Failure to do so can create biased estimates of effects and their significance. Models in which both partners' characteristics are examined hold promise for developing and testing a theory of mate selection that encompasses the interplay of both partners' economic potential and the nature of their relationship.

Marriage Markets and Mate Availability in Dating and Mate Selection

Theories about the availability of suitable mates in the population help to explain mate selection patterns, particularly the declining rates of marriage among Blacks. The theory is that the marriage rate among Black Americans is lower than that of Whites because of limited availability of desirable marriage partners in local populations. Availability is typically operationalized as the sex ratio, or the number of marriageable men divided by the number of marriageable women, where marriageability is defined in terms of economic characteristics, age, race, or other variables that are thought to influence individuals' assessments of the attractiveness of potential mates. Marriageable characteristics usually are measured within local metropolitan areas or labor markets, areas that are thought to define those traveled by potential partners in their everyday lives. Assessments of local characteristics obtained from census data often are combined

with individual-level characteristics to investigate the independent effects of each. Under conditions in which the sex ratio is low, men are the scarcer sex, and should wield more power on the marriage market. Under conditions in which the sex ratio is high, and women are the scarcer sex, they will wield more power on the marriage market. Men and women wield different types of power, however. Women will have more dyadic bargaining power, giving them greater control over decisions to wed that have their basis in the quality of the relationship. Men's power is structural, deriving from control over political and economic resources. Marriage-market theories are believed to predict declining marriage rates among Blacks particularly well because such factors as incarceration and mortality reduce the availability of Black men on the marriage market (Fossett & Kiecolt, 1993).

The availability of marriageable partners appears to explain at least some of the lower marriage rates for Black than White Americans. After controlling for a number of individual characteristics, the racial discrepancy was partly explained by sex ratios, measured as the proportions of men who were employed full-time year round or who earn income above the poverty line (Lichter et al., 1992). The effect of available economically attractive mates was more powerful than the simple availability of unmarried partners. Likewise, Raley (1996) found that the ratio of employed men to all women increased both marriage and cohabitation over 5 years, and controlling for this ratio had the effect of reducing differences between Blacks and Whites in their likelihood of forming a union. The percentage of marriages among Blacks was higher where the sex ratio was higher (i.e., the ratio of Black men in the labor force to noninstitutionalized women aged 16 and above; Fossett & Kiecolt, 1993)

Sex ratios and other market-level indicators sometimes predict marriage for Hispanics and sometimes do not. Among Latinas, sex ratio indicators were associated with their likelihood of marrying for the first time within a given year (Lloyd, 2006). The larger the proportion of unmarried Black Latinas in the labor market area, the less likely Latinas were to marry for the first

time, but the greater was the proportion of men who were foreign born, who perhaps were more desirous of marriage, the more likely Latinas were to marry for the first time.

Marriage market conditions other than sex ratios also predict mate selection behavior. The educational concentration of mates in the marriage market, operationalized as the proportion of age-matched potential mates with at least as much education as the target individual, predicted the likelihood of marrying in any given year for men and for women (Lewis & Oppenheimer, 2000). These effects accumulated with age, demonstrating the effects of reduced pools of good mates as individuals age.

Homogamy in Dating and Mate Selection

Homogamy, or the degree of similarity between partners on their social backgrounds and personal characteristics, is thought to be one of the prime motivators for selecting a mate. According to theories of homogamy, having a partner who shares one's own characteristics increases the rewards derived from interaction by means of a number of mechanisms. It provides for the mutually rewarding exchange of behaviors, facilitates decisions about joint behavior, reduces conflict, and validates one's self-identity. In this section, we focus on homogamy on two of the most important background characteristics studied in the past decade, race and education, and on factors that predict deviations from homogamy in mate selection.

Demographic Trends in Homogamy on Race and Education

Current estimates indicate that 8.4% of all marriages and 15% of newly married couples are interracial or interethnic (Wang, 2012). Rates of interracial and interethnic marriage have increased greatly in the United States for the decades between 1970 and 1990 for all groups, measured in terms of endogamy (marrying within one's specific group) ratios by race, ethnicity, and

national origin. White ethnics (e.g., Italian Americans, Polish Americans) have intermarried the most; Blacks, the least; and Hispanics and Asians, in between (Rosenfeld, 2002; also see Qian & Lichter, 2007). In a three-state study, Schoen and Cheng (2006) found that from 1980 to 1990 about 95% of Blacks and Whites married within-race. Several studies showed a propensity for Black men to intermarry with White women at rates consistently higher than intermarriages between Black women and White men (e.g., Batson, Qian, & Lichter, 2006; Crowder & Tolnay, 2000; Schoen & Cheng, 2006). The pace of immigration, in part, seems to explain some changes in intermarriage (Qian & Lichter, 2007). The pace of intermarriage for Hispanic and Asian American populations declined with increases in immigration of foreign-born Hispanics and Asians. This trend suggests that as the population of foreign-born Hispanics and Asians increased, native-born Hispanics and Asian Americans selected more often to marry within their ethnic groups as opposed to marrying native-born Whites or other minority groups.

Since mid-century, researchers also have found support for increased educational homogamy (e.g., Mare, 1991; Schwartz & Mare, 2005). Schwartz and Mare found that the odds of being in an educationally homogamous marriage were at its highest from 1990 to 2003 and higher than any other time since 1940. Married individuals showed stronger evidence of educational matching than nonmarried opposite-sex and same-sex couples, but all groups showed significant matching (Jepsen & Jepsen, 2002). Although the traditional pattern in which women marry up educationally was still common, the propensity for women to marry up declined greatly over time and the propensity to marry an educationally homogamous mate increased over time, especially among Blacks (Schoen & Cheng, 2006).

Most studies have found that cohabiting couples are less homogamous with respect to race than marrieds. From 1990 to 2000, interracial cohabitation increased more than interracial marriage (Qian & Lichter, 2007). Blacks were twice

as likely to cohabit interracially as they were to marry interracially. Interracial cohabitations were much more likely between Blacks and Whites than they were between members of different Black populations (e.g., Puerto Ricans, West Indians; Batson et al., 2006; also see Blackwell & Lichter, 2000).

Findings for homogamy among cohabitators are less clear for characteristics other than race. Compared to couples who did not cohabit premaritally, those who did cohabit premaritally were more homogamous on education, but less homogamous on age and religion (Forste & Tanfer, 1996). Comparisons between current cohabitators and the recently married showed the same results, suggesting that homogamy on ascribed characteristics like age may be more likely for marrieds, and homogamy on achieved characteristics like education may be more likely for cohabitators (Schoen & Weinick, 1993). Contrary to these findings for education, Blackwell and Lichter (2000) found that cohabitators were less homogamous educationally than marrieds, although these differences were small at high educational levels.

Theories of Educational and Racial Homogamy

A common theory used to explain mate selection in interracial relationships is status exchange theory, which focuses on the exchange of equally valuable resources for social gain. The theory of the exchange of racial, educational, and other economic characteristics has been supported in several studies that have tried to explain Black–White intermarriage. Data from the PUMS showed that interracially married White women were more likely to marry someone of higher education than were White women in intraracial marriages (Fu, 2001; Gullickson, 2006). Moreover, Blacks with lower educational levels were less likely to enter an interracial marriage than those with higher educational levels (Gullickson, 2006), and White wives married to Black husbands reported less education than White wives married to White husbands (Fu, 2001). Crowder and Tolnay (2000) found support

for social exchange whereby Black men with higher income, education, and occupational prestige were more likely to be married to a White woman than Black men married to Black women. In a further demonstration of social exchange, Fu (2001) found that Black wives with lower levels of education had higher odds of being married to other Black men, compared to Black wives with higher levels of education who have higher odds of marrying a White husband. These findings suggest that race and education are exchanged on the marriage market by Black men and women. Fu found a similar pattern for Mexican Americans. Mexican American men with higher levels of education were more likely to marry White women with less schooling than were Mexican American men with lower levels of education. Overall, data suggest that being White is considered a higher social status that is exchanged for higher educational levels in a different race spouse.

Another theory that has been used to explain interracial relationships is structural assimilation theory. According to this theory, individuals will marry across racial lines if they share a structural characteristic, such as educational level. Education is thought to provide not only the resources that might be contributed by a potential marital partner, but also entrance into marriage markets of more privileged racial groups. Qian and Lichter (2007) argued that assimilation occurs in part due to increases in educational level, especially among minority groups, which helps minorities achieve access to other groups and increases the likelihood of interracial marriage. Consistent with the theory, for Asian Americans and Hispanics, intermarriage increased as couple members had higher levels of education. Among Blacks, however, race mattered more as a barrier to intermarriage than educational level. Another study showed no support for structural assimilation theory; there was no consistent link between Whites' education and intermarriage rates (Gullickson, 2006). Thus, structural assimilation theory has received mixed support, with findings dependent on the type of interracial pair.

The Role of Cohabitation in Dating and Mate Selection

In this section, we provide an overview of elements of cohabitation that are particularly relevant to dating and mate selection. Whereas much of the literature compares cohabitation to marriage and treats it as a marriage-like relationship, our goal is to review research suggesting that some forms of cohabitation are more dating-like.

Cohabitation as Dating

Several pieces of data point to the likelihood that cohabitation often is more dating-like than marriage-like. Cohabiting relationships, like many dating relationships, are short-lived and individuals often have multiple instances of them. About 50% of cohabitations last a year or less and only about 10% last 5 years or more (Bumpass & Lu, 2000; Lichter & Qian, 2008). A panel study of the first union trajectories of young White adults age 15–31 from the Detroit metropolitan area showed that about 25% of cohabitators experienced a separation or a marriage within the first 6 months of the union; by the end of the second year of the union, 73% had ended in one of these two ways (Binstock & Thornton, 2003). The rate of dissolution of cohabitations formed by age 24 is 52% (Schoen et al., 2007). Individuals often have multiple cohabitations and estimates are that from 50 to 70% of second or higher-order cohabitations dissolve, depending on the duration of the cohabitation (Hohmann-Marriott, 2006; Lichter & Qian, 2008). Cohabitators were unlikely to reconcile after a separation due to discord (Binstock & Thornton, 2003). Within 6 months, 10% were cohabiting with someone new and within 4 years 41% were living with someone new.

Other findings suggest that cohabitations are becoming more tied to dating and less tied to marriage. Data on women age 19–44 from the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH) and from the National Survey of Family Growth have shown that the percentage of women who cohabited premaritally with their husbands and with other romantic partners increased from 5% for the

1980–1984 cohort to 12% for the 1990–1994 cohort, and the percentage cohabiting with previous romantic partners who were not their husbands increased from 2 to 4% respectively (Bumpass & Lu, 2000). When compared to previous cohorts, the percentage of marriages formed out of cohabiting unions up to age 24 has declined, suggesting that, at least for younger individuals in contemporary relationships, cohabitation less often precedes marriage and is more dating-like than marriage-like (see Schoen et al., 2007, for comparisons). There is evidence suggesting that cohabitation for Blacks may be more of an alternative to marriage than for Whites. Oppenheimer (2003) used data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth to examine the yearly change in never-married males' union status across cohorts born between 1957 and 1965. For Whites cohabitation was more tied to marriage, whereas for Blacks it was more often a moderate to long-term substitute for marriage. During the interview year immediately following the year during which cohabitations were formed, 32% of White and 13% of Black cohabitators had married. At the third year following cohabitation formation, more cohabitations of Black than Whites survived (23% vs. 12%), but fewer resulted in marriage (51% vs. 22%). Many other studies have shown that Black cohabitators were less likely to marry than Whites, even after controlling for a host of explanatory variables (e.g., Brown, 2000; Lichter & Qian, 2008; Manning & Smock, 1995; Schoen et al., 2007).

Cohabitation as Searching for a Partner

Some cohabitations appear to be more dating-like, in the sense that they are part of the process by which individuals enjoy one another's company while, at the same time, ascertain the quality of their relationships and the suitability of their match. Cohabitation in this sense serves the same purposes as dating, and occurs during the earlier stages of dating, while casually or seriously dating and marriage is an open or distant question. Cohabitation while dating, compared to dating without cohabiting, provides more opportunities to share intimacies and companionship across a diverse array of activities and settings. In this way, it provides opportunities to observe and interact with the partner, and enables partners to

develop beliefs about the nature of the relationship. This form of cohabitation may also be a means by which partners enjoy the benefits of co-residence as they garner information about compatibility and the socioeconomic potential of the partner, while, as Oppenheimer (2003, p. 131) put it, “life is still somewhat on hold.”

The results from some studies support the idea that for some couples cohabitation is a tentative dating status and has become part of the process by which partners date and search for suitable mates. Of three relationship-specific reasons for cohabiting, desire for togetherness was rated the highest in importance and convenience the next highest (Rhoades, Stanley, & Markman, 2009). In a qualitative study, Sassler (2004) identified two groups of cohabitators that fit the profile of cohabiting as searching: (a) accelerated cohabitators, who experienced strong initial romantic attraction and moved in together within 6 months of the time they had begun dating for reasons that focused on convenience and finances; and (b) tentative cohabitators, who dated 7–12 months before moving in and were unsure whether cohabitation was right for them. Sassler concluded that quantitative studies have overestimated plans to marry among cohabitators, and argued that dating relationships continue to develop while cohabiting.

Other research has indicated that, rather than a test for marriage as some researchers have assumed, cohabitation may be a means by which partners maintain uncertain or troubled dating relationships while holding deeper commitments at bay. In these cases, cohabitations may provide a mechanism for maintaining relationships at lower levels of commitment while uncertainties about the quality of the relationship are resolved. Among low income individuals, cohabitation seems to provide an opportunity to test the relationship when financial and relationship uncertainties are pressing (Gibson-Davis et al., 2005). Casper and Bianchi (2002) identified two groups of cohabitators that resemble dating in uncertain relationships, which they called coresidential daters and trial marriages. These two groups had in common a moderate to high probability of dissolution and

uncertainty about their compatibility with their partners. Although testing compatibility or the relationship for marriage were the least likely reasons for cohabiting (Rhoades et al., 2009; Sassler, 2004), other findings suggest that testing out the relationship may motivate a subset of cohabitators. Rhoades et al. (2009) found that individuals endorsed testing the relationship as a reason for cohabiting, the more depressed were their partners, the more negative were interactions with partners, and the less confidence they had in their relationships.

Cohabitation in Committed Dating Relationships or as a Prelude to Marriage

For some couples, the decision to wed has already been made prior to entering a nonmarital cohabiting union. Even though reversals in the decision to wed sometimes occur, the search process is, by and large, complete for these couples. Cohabitation as a precursor to marriage was characteristic of one group of cohabitators who had definite plans to marry and a low probability of relationship dissolution (Casper & Bianchi, 2002). If cohabitation occurs after daters have committed to wed, it may be a more deliberate decision. Sassler (2004) found that some cohabitators were more purposeful about making the decision, talked it over, and waited 1–4 years from the time they began to date before moving in together. Cohabitations formed more deliberately once commitments are in place may be better for the long-term health of relationships than those formed without forethought or mutual decision-making (Stanley, Rhoades, & Markman, 2006).

The Role of Children in Dating, Cohabitation, and Mate Selection

One of the new developments in research on mate selection concerns the effects of children on transitions among singlehood, dating, cohabitation, and marriage (Goldscheider & Sassler, 2006). In this section, we review demographic trends and findings on this topic.

An increasing percentage of nonmarital births now occur to cohabiting women, about 40% of them (Cherlin, 2005). Among births to unmarried women from 1980 to 1994, births among those cohabiting increased from 29% to 39%; however, differences emerged by race whereby the increases were greater for Whites and Hispanics, but did not change for Blacks (Bumpass & Lu, 2000).

The Fragile Families Study is the first to provide information about nonmarried, coupled parents who were in dating and cohabiting unions and transitions in these unions. Cohabiting unions were the most stable of the nonmarital relationships; 60% of those who were cohabiting at the time of the child's birth were still doing so 1 year later and 15% had married (Carlson et al., 2004). Dating parents, operationalized as individuals who reported that they were romantically involved but living apart, had the most changeable relationship status, with almost half no longer romantically involved after 1 year. Among those who started the study as friends, 14% remained friends, 9% began to cohabit, and 1% married. Of those who had virtually no relationship at the start of the study, 65% still had no relationship after 1 year.

Nonmarital births appear to reduce the likelihood of forming cohabiting and marital unions, especially for Black women. Graefe and Lichter (2002) assessed marital transitions for Black, Hispanic, and White women between the ages of 15–44 who experienced a nonmarital childbirth compared to those who did not. Women in all ethnoracial groups were less likely to marry by the age of 40 if they had experienced a nonmarital childbirth. Black women were the most likely to have a nonmarital childbirth and the least likely to enter cohabitation or marriage after nonmarital childbirth. In another study, Black unmarried parents were less likely to marry than Whites and Hispanics 1 year after the birth of their child (Carlson et al., 2004). The effects of children also depend on whether a child was born into or conceived during cohabitation (e.g., Manning, 2004) and on the degree of men's involvement with their children (Stewart et al., 2003).

The residence and gender of children also are associated with union formation. Fathers with nonresident children were more likely to cohabit than to remain single, and less likely to marry than cohabit (Stewart et al., 2003). Men who were in coresidential relationships with children were almost five times more likely to marry a woman who had children than they were to remain single. Compared to remaining single, men who had non coresidential children were more likely to dissolve cohabitations. Cohabiting women who shared biological children with their partners had a lower likelihood of dissolving the cohabitation (Lichter et al., 2006). Mothers who had sons premaritally were more than 60% likely to marry the child's father than were mothers of girls, and the transition to marriage was faster for mothers of boys than mothers of girls (3.4 years vs. 4.6 years; Lundberg & Rose, 2003).

The Role of Relationship Properties in Dating, Cohabitation, and Mate Selection

As our review to this point has demonstrated, most sociological research on mate selection has focused on economic and marriage market characteristics as predictors of change in relationship status. Comparatively few studies have addressed how the properties of relationships themselves relate to relationship transitions, even though these properties are likely to be more proximal predictors of mate selection and change in relationship status than are the more distal predictors such as economic and market-level factors. By properties, we mean individuals' beliefs about and attitudes toward a specific partner and their relationship (e.g., relationship satisfaction, love for or trust in a partner), their estimates of its future course and commitment (e.g., plans to marry or chance of marriage), and the joint or separate behaviors that affect coupled partners (e.g., conflict). In this section, we examine the properties of relationships assessed in large surveys.

Relationship Properties and Transitions into and out of Dating and Cohabiting Unions

Many of the findings that pertain to relationship properties come from the Fragile Families Study or the National Survey of Family and Households. Indicators of relationship quality among parents strongly predicted transitions from dating to another union status or breakup over a 1-year period (Carlson et al., 2004; Waller & McLanahan, 2005). For unmarried parents who were dating, the likelihood of staying together or marrying declined as the frequency of arguments increased regardless of whether one or both partners reported frequent arguments (Waller & McLanahan, 2005). The likelihood of marrying increased if both partners reported sharing activities and the likelihood of continuing to date increased if only the female partner reported sharing activities. For both men and women, ratings of supportiveness were strongly associated with maintenance of or movement into both cohabitation and marriage, as compared to having no relationship (Carlson et al., 2004). For mothers, fathers' physical violence decreased the odds of mothers' staying in a dating relationship by 78% over breaking up. Fathers' reports of conflict reduced the odds of cohabitation after 1 year compared to having no relationship.

Estimates of the chance of marriage seem to be an especially powerful predictor of change in union status, perhaps more powerful than other relationship properties. A study of the effects of relationship quality on the transition to marriage among cohabiting parents showed that both mothers' and fathers' reports of the chance of marriage were associated with increased odds of marrying from Year 1 to Year 2, mothers' reports predicted marriage from Year 2 to Year 3, and the chance of marriage mediated the effects of father earnings on marriage likelihood (Gibson-Davis, 2009). Plans to marry apparently have less of an effect on marrying for Blacks than Whites (Brown, 2000). Among those where both partners agreed that they had plans to wed, 60% of Whites married compared to 20% of Blacks.

Other studies have shown that including estimates of the chance of marriage in models reduces the impact of other relationship properties, suggesting that the chance of marriage may exert its effect on change in union status through properties of the relationship. For example, the rate of marriage was 2.6 times higher among cohabitators with plans to marry than those without, but once plans to marry and costs and benefits of marriage were controlled, cohabitation no longer predicted likelihood of marriage (McGinnis, 2003; also see Waller & McLanahan, 2005).

Individuals in cohabiting unions generally report that their relationships were of lower quality than those in marital unions, although chance of marriage and other indicators of quality strongly moderate this effect. Cohabitators were nearly twice as likely as marrieds to report that their relationships were in trouble during the past year (Bumpass, Sweet, & Cherlin, 1991). Brown (2003) used data from Wave 1 of the NSFH to examine predictors of relationship quality in cohabiting unions of 10 years or less in length. Compared to marrieds, cohabitators reported less time spent alone with the partner in the past month, less happiness with the relationship, and a greater chance of relationship dissolution. Although researchers using data from NSFH have found that cohabitators have lower quality or less happy relationships than marrieds, these differences disappeared once plans to marry or other relationship properties were included in models (Brown & Booth, 1996; Nock, 1995).

The connection between plans to marry and relationship quality differs by length of union. In cohabiting unions of shorter duration, individuals with plans to marry reported less relationship instability, but in cohabiting unions of longer duration, individuals with plans to marry reported greater relationship instability (Brown, 2003). Declines in relationship quality with increasing duration were similar for marrieds and cohabitators, except that perceived instability increased with time for cohabitators, but not marrieds. In cohabiting unions of longer duration, unfulfilled plans to marry may generate dissatisfaction with the relationship.

Plans to marry also seem to buffer some of the declines in relationship quality that are characteristic of cohabiting unions. Brown (2004) used data from Wave 1 and Wave 2 of the NSFH gathered 5–7 years apart to examine how plans to marry and changes in plans to marry might alter observed differences between cohabitators and marrieds on relationship quality. On a number of indicators (e.g., happiness, intensity of conflicts), individuals who continued to cohabit over the study period had lower relationship quality than those who were married. However, cohabitators who had plans to marry at Time 2, but not at Time 1, and those who had plans to marry at both points in time did not differ from those who had married on relationship quality at Time 2. Those whose plans to marry disappeared between Time 1 and Time 2 did show expected declines in relationship quality. Brown interpreted these findings to mean that marriages may not differ from long-term cohabitations when cohabitators have plans to wed. Another interpretation is that some cohabitations contribute to a search process that is rooted, in part, in assessments of the relationship. From this perspective, plans to marry are part of the assessment of relationship quality that emerges from and is informed by cohabitation.

Agreement between Coupled Partners on Relationship Properties

Closely related to studies of the properties of relationships are investigations of whether partners agree about its properties. Agreement is indicative of mutuality between partners in the way they assess their relationships, and agreement should make it easier to make decisions about whether to advance or regress involvement in the relationship. In cases where coupled partners disagree, decisions about changes in status are likely to be problematic, and may depend on the beliefs of one partner that define or limit the direction of the relationship.

Findings from research generally are consistent with this analysis and suggest whose beliefs prevail in making transitions when partners do disagree. Agreement on estimates of the chance

of marriage to the partner predicted likelihood of marriage and separation after 12–18 months in a sample of coupled partners who were romantically involved but unmarried at the start of the study (Waller & McLanahan, 2005). If both partners reported a good or almost certain chance of marrying, couples were about seven times more likely to marry and two times more likely to continue their romance, compared to separating. For cohabiting couples, the odds of marrying were lower when neither partner reported plans to marry (Brown, 2000), and the likelihood of separating was greater at high levels of disagreement over beliefs about division of labor (Hohmann-Marriott, 2006). Among cohabitators, a pattern of disagreement in which the female partner held egalitarian beliefs, and the male, traditional beliefs, was associated with greater odds of separating over marrying or staying together (Sanchez et al., 1998). In another study of cohabitators, agreement within couples on six dimensions of relationships predicted separation more strongly than marriage and some evidence suggested that when partners disagreed, women's more negative evaluations predicted separation more strongly than men's more positive evaluations (Brown, 2000). Studies of the likelihood of marrying when cohabiting (Brown, 2000) or romantically involved (Waller & McLanahan, 2005), in contrast, indicate that decisions to wed are more responsive to the male partner's negative assessments of relationships.

Methodological Problems in the Study of Relationship Properties

Properties of dating relationships are likely to be one of the strongest predictors of whether relationships persist, become more or less involved, or change status. Although studies have demonstrated that economic and market-level variables predict relationship transitions, some research just reviewed has shown that relationship properties explain changes in unions status better than more distal variables and condition or mediate the connection between distal predictors and changes in status. Degree of commitment between

partners, for example, may help to ameliorate some of the impact of unemployment on the transition to marriage. Uncertainty about relationships (Cherlin, Cross-Barnet, Burton, & Garrett-Peters, 2008) and fears of divorce (Edin & Kefalas, 2005) figure into the relationship decisions of low-income women, and uncertainty and lack of trust may loom large in situations of serial cohabitation or multi-partner fertility. Yet national surveys typically have not incorporated measures of uncertainty or interpersonal trust. Instead, plans to marry, chance of marriage, supportiveness, and frequency or intensity of conflict are the constructs typically investigated, and other properties shown to be influential in studies from social psychology and communication typically are omitted from national surveys (see Campbell & Surra, 2012). As a result, researchers are constrained in their ability to answer questions about how trust, uncertainty, commitment, and other fundamental relationship properties operate in mate selection.

In addition, the measurement of those properties that have been assessed in national surveys sometimes is problematic. One problem is conceptual, and concerns validity of measurement, which stems from the mixing of levels of analysis when observing or constructing relationship variables. The literature on the theory and measurement of relationship properties makes a careful distinction between characteristics of individuals and characteristics of relationships (e.g., Kelley et al., 1983). Although properties of individuals and of relationships are likely to be correlated, they are not the same, and mixing variables from different levels of analysis muddies the theoretical interpretation of findings. In one example, substance abuse was conceptualized and entered into multivariate models as an indicator of relationship quality (Osborne, Manning, & Smock, 2007) when relationship theory would place it at the individual level. Substance abuse may be related to such relationship properties as conflict or trust, but it is an individual characteristic. Another example is the plans to marry question from the NSFH (e.g., Brown, 2000, 2003, 2004). A respondent reported whether (a) he/she thought they would never marry anyone; (b) he/she

thought he/she would marry someone; (c) he/she would marry his/her steady dating partner; or (d) he/she currently had definite plans to marry his or her steady dating partner. Option C and Option D ask specifically about plans to marry the current partner whereas Option A and Option B ask about whether marriage to anyone is likely. From the viewpoint of cognitive theory about close relationships, the first two are generalized beliefs about marriage and the last two are relationship-specific beliefs. Although these two sets of items are likely to be correlated, they measure different levels of analysis. Responses typically are dummy coded to create comparisons, but it is impossible to tell what the resulting variable says about a target relationship.

Another measurement problem that sometimes surfaces in large surveys is low reliability of measures, which will reduce the predictive ability of relationship properties thereby yielding misleading conclusions. Although reliabilities usually are not reported in survey research, when they are reported reliability sometimes falls far below conventional levels. Not too surprisingly, assessments that have only one or two items have lower reliabilities than those that have several items (e.g., Cherlin et al., 2008; Harknett, 2008; Osborne, 2005). Researchers who use secondary data analysis have to rely on the quality of measurement achieved within surveys, and surveys often do not have the luxury to assess relationship properties by means of the full-blown scales with demonstrated validity and reliability that are generally available.

Another issue is that national surveys rarely permit investigators to examine the full range of union statuses involved in relationship development. Dating relationships are particularly overlooked, even though the relational properties that are the seeds of relationship discord and failure may be planted early in partners' associations with one another. The way that these seeds play out to affect union transitions cannot be studied well, if at all, from the nationally representative data sets currently available. Daters are infrequently studied and, if they are, the measurement that is applied to daters differs from that applied to cohabitators. Although cohabitations that

resulted in marriage were investigated in NSFH, the study did not track marriage to steady dating partners, and instead tracked marriage to any partner (McGinnis, 2003). Even the newer Fragile Families Study asked cohabitators about their chance of marriage, but did not ask daters (i.e., visiting parents who were romantically involved) about their chance of marriage (Waller & McLanahan, 2005). Thus, cohabitation can be studied only in relation to marriage, not dating, making it impossible to track the development of relationships with these data sets.

Nonresponse of daters and the less involved also interferes with researchers' ability to track relationships at all levels of involvement. The Fragile Families Study did track daters, but nonresponse was greater among male partners who were not cohabiting (Waller & McLanahan, 2005), and response rates of coupled partners also were lower when they were less committed or likely to marry (Brown, 2000; Bumpass et al., 1991; Waller & McLanahan, 2005). Nationally representative studies would have to be explicitly designed to track more fully the transitions from dating to cohabiting to marital unions.

Conclusions

The study of contemporary mate selection faces greater challenges now than in the previous half century. The patterns by which individuals select mates have diversified along the dividing lines of socioeconomic status and race and ethnicity, and neither theory nor research has been able to keep up with or explain that diversity. In this chapter, we have focused on sociological findings from national and qualitative data sets that have highlighted different mate selection patterns within and across subpopulations. These studies have moved scholars closer to capturing and characterizing diversified patterns of mate selection. Answers about relationships within subpopulations are incomplete, however. What is needed in the future is the melding of sociological approaches with the study of relationship properties from social psychology and interpersonal communication within nationally representative

samples. Such investigations will further enrich understanding of the formation and maintenance of dating, cohabiting, and marital unions.

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Heather M. Helms

Nearly 50 years ago, when the first edition of the *Handbook of Marriage and Family* was published, family scholars underscored the central importance of marriage in individuals' lives and accordingly advocated for a better understanding of those factors that predict marital success and positive marital adjustment (Bernard, 1964; Bowerman, 1964). It is unclear whether these pioneering family scholars recognized as early as 1964 that they were on the precipice of significant social changes that would define the latter half of the twentieth century as a period of marital "deinstitutionalization" (Cherlin, 2004) or the "world-historic transformation" of marriage (Coontz, 2004). Prior to the *Handbook's* second edition in 1987, however, they certainly knew something was up (see Bernard's *The Future of Marriage*, 1972). Evidenced by marriage rate declines, increases in nonmarital cohabitation and childbearing, the postponement of marriage, and elevated divorce rates, marriage has become one of several legitimate options for organizing couple relationships and reproduction in the United States and other Western countries (Amato, 2004; Fincham & Beach, 2010). Whether or not these trends signify declines in the value of marriage or simply

reflect societal change has been hotly debated. Religious leaders, politicians, clinicians, and the federal government have all weighed in on the debate and have allocated significant resources to promote marriage as the ideal. Although skepticism remains about the utility of these steps (Huston & Melz, 2004; Karney & Bradbury, 2005), most scholars agree that the current coexistence of marriage with multiple forms of other relationship and childrearing options is unprecedented.

What has remained constant across these decades characterized by demographic flux is an unwavering endorsement of marriage as a desired goal (Axinn & Thornton, 2000), even among those individuals who may be least likely to marry (England & Edin, 2007) or are excluded from marriage (Walker, 2004). (Ironically, some have argued that it may be the very nature of contemporary expectations for marriage that have contributed to its fragility.) At the same time, scholarly attention to marriage not only remains strong but has nearly doubled in the past decade making a comprehensive review of this burgeoning literature virtually impossible within any single manuscript or book chapter. Clearly, marriage has been and continues to: (a) maintain symbolic importance for individuals living within and outside it, (b) be an important focus of scientific inquiry, and (c) generate significant public interest and debate. Simply put, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, marriage continues to matter.

H.M. Helms, PhD (✉)
Department of Human Development and Family Studies,
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro,
PO Box 26170, Greensboro, NC 27402-6170, USA
e-mail: heather_helms@uncg.edu

While scholars have acknowledged the complexity of marital relationships for decades, situating marriage in the context of other relationships and environments and systematically studying the links between them is a relatively new contribution from research conducted in the new millennium (Fincham & Beach, 2010). Made possible by methodological and analytic advances (see Chap. 3) and deemed essential for understanding the marital experiences beyond the White and middle class (Bradbury & Karney, 2004; Helms, Supple, & Proulx, 2011; Huston & Melz, 2004; McAdoo, Martinez, & Hughes, 2005), contemporary scholars are increasingly situating their understanding of marriage in context. Various theoretical perspectives have informed this expanse in focus including the Family Stress Model (Conger et al., 1990), the Vulnerability-Stress-Adaptation Model (VSA, Karney & Bradbury, 1995), Peters and Massey's (1983) Mundane Extreme Environmental Stress Model (MMES, Murry, Brown, Brody, Cutrona, & Simons, 2001), and most recently Huston's (2000) three-level model of marriage. Huston's model is perhaps the most comprehensive of these perspectives in that it integrates principles from several behavioral, social-psychological, and contextual theories that have been applied to marriage to inform an integrated, interdisciplinary theoretical model. Accordingly, Huston's model and more recent adaptations of it for diverse samples (Helms et al., 2011) provide a useful framework for the accumulation of empirical findings on marriage that have emerged in the past decade.

In this chapter, Huston's (2000) three-level model of marriage is introduced as a heuristic for future research as well as an organizational tool for framing the current review. Huston's model provides a roadmap of sorts for understanding marriage in the twenty-first century in that it does not necessarily depict a new way of viewing marital relationships (see Kelley et al., 1983), but integrates across a variety of theoretical perspectives to provide a more comprehensive model for the study of marriage than has previously been

explored. Using Huston's model as a guide, new areas of discovery are highlighted as well as research that characterizes central domains of inquiry that have not been written about extensively in other recent, major reviews. In taking this approach, the goal of this chapter is not to offer a singular empirical model to be tested or an exhaustive review of *all* research on marriage that has emerged since the 1999 edition of the *Handbook of Marriage and Family*. Instead, in this chapter, the value of a theoretical approach for highlighting recent and relevant advances in the study of marriage and for informing the types of research questions that should be addressed in future work is demonstrated. In so doing, the chapter lays the groundwork for future research to focus on the multilayered and interdependent contextual factors that characterize, maintain, modify, and interact with the marital experiences of diverse couples in the twenty-first century.

To provide a general overview of marital research conducted since the last publication of the Handbook, the chapter begins with a content analysis of the literature appearing in leading journals across disciplines that regularly publish in this area. Because other chapters in the Handbook focus on the partnerships of cohabiting and lesbian and gay couples (see Chaps. 11 and 26), this chapter is more narrowly focused on the experiences of heterosexual, married couples and reflects the substantive topics most frequently studied (i.e., marital behavior, stability, satisfaction, and other dimensions of marital quality). After presenting findings from the content analysis, Huston's (2000) three-level model of marriage is introduced as a frame for the current literature. In discussing each component of the model (i.e., marital behavior, individuals, and the macroenvironment) and the potential linkages between them, related literature from the past decade is reviewed and directives for future research are presented. Using Huston's model as a guide, the chapter closes with suggestions for future work, including recommendations for testing complex associations between elements of the model with diverse populations.

Scope of Review

To inform an understanding of marital relationships in the twenty-first century, scholarly work featured in 11 journals representing several fields that have historically published articles on marriage was identified including two interdisciplinary journals. In selecting journals for consideration, several criteria were used including an emphasis on marital research, journal impact (e.g., impact index estimates and/or an association with a professional society with a focus on marital relationships), and citation rates. The 11 journals selected were: *The Journal of Marriage and Family*, *Journal of Family Issues*, and *Family Relations*, representing family studies; the *Journal of Family Psychology* and *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, representing psychology; *American Sociological Review* and the *American Journal of Sociology*, representing sociology; *Communication Monographs* and *Human Communication Research* representing interpersonal communication, and the *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* and *Personal Relationships*, which are interdisciplinary journals that publish manuscripts on marital relationships from a variety of fields. To identify articles, the title and the abstract of each article published in these journals across the 10-year span of 2000–2009 were reviewed. Articles were included for analysis if they fit criteria for marital research; articles solely focused on dating, mate selection, or cohabitation were excluded unless there was a clear link with some aspect of marital relationships in the abstract. Articles with samples characterized by predominantly married couples or individuals and a smaller proportion of cohabiting partners were included if the substantive focus of the study involved some aspect of marital relationships. Using these criteria, 411 articles were identified, 24 of which were nonempirical. (Reference list is available from the author.)

A content analysis of each article was conducted to further inform the review. Articles were categorized into four primary substantive categories: marital behavior, marital stability, marital satisfaction, and marital quality-other. In cases

where article content spanned several categories, articles were coded for each relevant area of substantive focus. Because the marital behavior literature has been recently critiqued as heavily focused on marital conflict rather than more positive or affirming dimensions of behavior (Fincham & Beach, 2010), additional subcategories were employed to differentiate articles in the marital behavior category that focused on marital conflict, power/decision-making, discord, negativity, and hostility from those focused on marital warmth, support, forgiveness, and positive communication. After coding the substantive focus of each article, empirical articles were further coded based on sample characteristics (i.e., average age of participants, racial composition), research design (i.e., cross-sectional, longitudinal, and short-term longitudinal defined as time-series or daily diary approaches), and whether the sample was comprised of married couples or married individuals. Coding the 387 empirical articles in this manner made the analysis of general patterns across all articles possible as well an analysis of manuscripts by each of the five substantive categories. Results of the content analysis provide both a general overview of the nature of marital research in the first decade of twenty-first century and also make it possible to identify emerging bodies of work as well as unique or cutting-edge research. Therefore, although all of the 411 articles are included in the results reported for the content analysis, not all coded articles are integrated into the literature reviewed which is more narrowly focused on advances in the study of marital relationships and directions for future work.

General Patterns in the Marital Literature

Overall, the content analysis showed that the bulk of the marital research published in the past decade was quantitative with just over half of the studies employing cross-sectional designs with convenience samples of primarily White couples between the ages of 30 and 40, on average, with a focus on marital behavior. Specifically, 53% of

the articles reviewed focused on some aspect of marital behavior. The remaining literature was relatively evenly divided in its focus on marital stability (14%), marital satisfaction (19%), and marital quality-other (14%). The majority of empirical articles reviewed were quantitative in nature (96%). Of the qualitative articles that were published in the past decade, the majority (71%) focused on dimensions of marital behavior and included topics such as marital power, decision-making and equality, marital uncertainty, spouses' strategies for resolving intergenerational conflicts, and displays of commitment in marriage. Just over half of all studies reviewed were cross-sectional (54%). Longitudinal designs represented 41% of the work conducted in the past decade, and 5% of the empirical articles reviewed employed short-term longitudinal designs utilizing time-series or daily diary approaches. Regarding sampling, just over half (54%) of the empirical articles were based on studies utilizing predominantly White, convenience samples. Studies utilizing nationally representative samples, diverse convenience samples (<70% White), and studies without enough information to determine sample characteristics were relatively equally represented in the empirical literature reviewed (i.e., 10%, 9%, and 10%, respectively). International, non-US samples were utilized in 16% of the studies reviewed, and 1% of articles included convenience samples of African Americans. With one exception (see Leidy, Parke, Cladis, Coltrane, & Duffy, 2009), no within-group studies of marriage for Latino or other immigrant groups were identified across the 10 years of literature reviewed. Sixty-six percent of the empirical articles reviewed included samples of married couples, whereas 34% consisted of samples of married individuals. A third of the empirical articles focused on the marital relationships of spouses in their 20s. Just over half (51%) of the studies focused on the marital experiences of spouses aged 30–40 years, and less than 1% addressed the marital experiences of spouses aged 50 and over. The remaining studies (15%) did not specify the age of their participants.

Marital Behavior

Results of the content analysis showed that in the past decade, studies of marital behavior were largely published in family studies, psychology, and close relationships journals (99%). Similar to the general trends identified in the larger marital literature of the past decade, the majority of articles focused on marital behavior were cross-sectional (63%) studies of couples (70%), with a just over half of the studies (55%) utilizing predominantly White samples of participants averaging between 30 and 40 years of age (59%). This body of work was largely informed by self-report survey (69% of studies) and observational methods (17%) with the remaining studies equally divided between those incorporating daily diary (7%) and qualitative methods (7%). As suggested by others (Fincham & Beach, 2010), negative dimensions of marital behavior continued to be a popular line of inquiry during this first decade of the twenty-first century representing 55% of the articles published on marital behavior. Twenty-three percent of the studies focused on spouses' negative behavioral exchanges utilized observational methods to assess spouses' behavior in marriage. Marital conflict and related dimensions of discord (i.e., hostility, negativity, verbal aggression, demand-withdrawal cycles) continued to dominate the focus on negative marital behavior, but the decade also ushered in increased attention to intimate partner violence (e.g., Browning, 2002; Frye & Karney, 2006; Lawrence & Bradbury, 2007; O'Leary & Slep, 2006) and infidelity (e.g., Atkins & Kessel, 2008; Previti & Amato, 2004; Whisman, Gordon, & Chatav, 2007).

In contrast to past critiques suggesting that scholars have largely ignored positive marital processes in favor of a focus on marital conflict (Fincham, Stanley, & Beach, 2007), 45% of the articles sampled from the first decade of the new millennium focused on positive dimensions of marital behavior and included such varied topics as the provision of social support in marriage, forgiveness, affection, empathy, emotion work,

commitment, emotional responsiveness, sensitivity, and connectedness (e.g., Curran, Hazen, Jacobvitz, & Sasaki, 2006; Cutrona, Shaffer, Wesner, & Gardner, 2007; Fincham, Paleari, & Regalia, 2002; Gordon, Hughes, Tomcik, Dixon, & Litzinger, 2009; Laurenceau, Barrett, & Rovine, 2005). Furthermore, several studies focused on both positive and negative marital processes (DeLongis, Capreol, Holtzman, O'Brien, & Campbell, 2004; Fincham, Beach, & Davila, 2007) to better understand the relationship between them as well as their interactive effects on marital and personal well-being. Overall, this body of work addressing potential marriage-enhancing behaviors was largely survey based, with only 13% utilizing observational methods to study positive dimensions of marital processes.

Marital Stability

As in prior work, studies of marital stability in the past decade primarily examined factors predicting marital disruption in the form of divorce. A small group of studies also examined marital separation, with some scholars operationalizing marital disruption as either the occurrence of separation *or* divorce (Dush, Cohan, & Amato, 2003; Zhang & Van Hook, 2009) and others examining separation or the timing of separation as an independent outcome (Kurdek, 2002; Osborne, Manning, & Smock, 2007). Theoretically informed by interactional and process models of divorce (Gottman, 1993; Pasley, Kerpelman, & Guilbert, 2001), several scholars examined aspects of divorce proneness as outcomes of interest (e.g., thoughts of divorce; Amato & DeBoer, 2001) or moderators of the association between various predictors and marital disruption (e.g., disenchantment; DeMaris, 2007). Family studies journals (i.e., *Family Relations*, *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *Journal of Family Issues*) and the *Journal of Family Psychology* were the primary outlets (98%) for scholarship on marital stability. Slightly more than half (53%) of the empirical literature was based on studies utilizing samples of married

individuals (rather than couples), and 75% of the studies utilized longitudinal data. Sixty percent of the studies included diverse (e.g., Michigan Early Years of Marriage Study) or nationally representative US (e.g., NLSY, NSFG, NSFH, PSID) and non-US samples (e.g., National Family Health Survey of India; Bose & South, 2003) of spouses who were in their early 20s, on average, at Time 1.

Marital Satisfaction

Marital satisfaction, or spouses' subjective evaluations of their marriage, continues to be a topic of interest across academic disciplines. Although the *Journal of Family Psychology* published the greatest percentage of articles (33%) of any single journal sampled, the remaining body of research on marital satisfaction spanned disciplinary boundaries and was found in journals serving scholars in family studies, close relationships, communications, and sociology. Studies utilizing samples of married couples represented the bulk of the empirical literature on marital satisfaction published in the past decade (80%), with 63% conducted with predominantly White samples. Studies of younger married couples (i.e., in their 20s, on average) represented 46% of this body of work, and 40% of the research focused on couples in their 30s and 40s, on average. Research designs were equally likely to be cross-sectional or longitudinal. Marital satisfaction was treated as the outcome of interest in the majority of articles sampled with most studies operationalizing marital satisfaction as a global evaluation of how happy or satisfied spouses were with the marriage.

Other Dimensions of Marital Quality

The category of marital quality-other emerged during the content analysis to best represent articles that addressed spouses' subjective evaluations of or feelings about the marriage that didn't quite map onto global assessments of satisfaction *per se*. For example, some studies focused on

spouses' subjective feelings of belonging and love in the marriage (e.g., Claxton & Perry-Jenkins, 2008), whereas others operationalized marital quality as an overarching construct that included individual items assessing spouses' perceptions of a variety of interrelated aspects of marriage including satisfaction, behavior, trust, commitment, admiration, and perceptions of marital difficulties (e.g., Bryant, Conger, & Meehan, 2001; Davey & Szinovacz, 2004). Other authors purposefully examined unique patterns of association between predictor variables and several different dimensions of marital quality (e.g., marital love, feeling understood by one's partner, satisfaction with various domains of marriage) in the same study (e.g., Claxton & Perry-Jenkins, 2008; Helms, Proulx, Klute, McHale, & Crouter, 2006). Heeding prior calls for conceptual clarity regarding the construct of marital satisfaction (Bradbury, Fincham, & Beach, 2000; Huston, 2000), most scholars studying marital quality were careful to distinguish spouses' cognitive evaluations regarding the degree to which they were happy or satisfied with their marriages (i.e., marital satisfaction) from their characterization of marital behaviors or other beliefs about or feelings associated with their marriages or partners. Furthermore, when combining various dimensions of marriage into a single construct, researchers were careful to label the construct broadly, choosing terms such as marital success, quality, or solidarity, rather than marital satisfaction, to better reflect the multifaceted nature of their measurement. It should be noted, however, that authors who utilized this strategy did not address earlier concerns regarding the use of nonstandard measures and the extent to which their findings can be integrated with the larger literature (Bradbury et al., 2000). Most studies of marital quality were published in family studies journals (85%), and all were quantitative. Fifty-eight percent utilized samples of married couples, whereas 42% were studies of married individuals. Studies were evenly divided between those using White or predominately White samples and studies including diverse, non-US, or nationally representative samples (i.e., 48% and 47%, respectively). Cross-sectional studies predominated

(58%) as did studies of spouses in their 30s and 40s, on average (69%).

Summary

Results of the content analysis highlight the general patterns of publication in the past decade and show the study of marital behavior continues to be important to contemporary scholars. Most likely in response to earlier critiques, a focus on more positive marital transactions that are believed to sustain long-term marriages was found including such topics as marital commitment, forgiveness, and displays of affection. Interest in negative dimensions of marital transactions expanded in the past decade beyond marital conflict and problem-solving to include intimate violence, psychological aggression and control, and infidelity. Although these latter topics did receive some attention in past decades, the scope of the work failed to account for the complexity of these relationship phenomena or the contexts in which these problematic behaviors occur (Fincham & Beach, 2010). Advances in the study of marital stability were informed by process models of marital dissolution that moved the focus from simply predicting static marital status variables (i.e., separated, divorced, married) to better understanding correlates of divorce proneness (e.g., disenchantment with the marriage, thoughts of divorce, etc.). In addition, the extent to which various dimensions of divorce proneness moderated the associations between known marital risks and later divorce were explored. Previously treated as interchangeable constructs, the study of marital satisfaction and other dimensions of marital quality were conceptually distinguished in the past decade. The majority of scholars in the twenty-first century were careful to conceptualize marital satisfaction as spouses' global cognitive evaluations of how happy or satisfied they were in the marriage, whereas marital quality became the new umbrella term used to capture the variety of affective and cognitive appraisals that more fully account for the thoughts and feelings spouses have about their marriages.

With the exception of research on marital stability in which 75% of the studies were longitudinal and 60% utilized diverse, nationally representative, or non-US samples, studies utilizing cross-sectional methods and predominantly White samples characterized over 50% of the research reviewed for the content analysis. Studies of marital stability were more likely to employ samples of married individuals than were those focused on marital behavior, satisfaction, and marital quality. Most likely reflecting the dyadic nature of many of the research questions addressed in these latter content areas, the majority of studies that addressed some aspect of marital behavior, satisfaction, and quality were conducted with samples of couples (i.e., 58–70%). Whereas the study of marital behavior was predominated by cross-sectional research, a more even distribution of cross-sectional and longitudinal methods was found in the marital quality and marital satisfaction literature. Across all topics, and with only a few exceptions, the marital experiences of spouses over the average age of 50 were largely overlooked, underscoring the importance of future work on long-term marriage and romantic relationships in later adulthood (see Fingerman & Hay, 2002; Tucker & Crouter, 2008).

Huston's Three-Level Model of Marriage as a Frame for the Literature

An important theoretical contribution to emerge on the advent of the twenty-first century was Huston's three-level model of marriage. Huston's (2000) model emerged from a critique of the extant marital scholarship in which he asserted that marital researchers have typically focused on one dimension of a much larger causal system, resulting in an incomplete and perhaps inaccurate depiction of marriage. Juxtaposing research that focused on behavioral exchanges between spouses and their links with marital quality and studies that adopted a broader, macroenvironmental lens, Huston argued that:

The propensity of researchers to use either an unfocused lens or to zero in on narrow and isolated slices of the larger marital terrain has produced a

literature on marriage that provides limited insight into how marriages actually work. Such a state of affairs also has undermined the development of sophisticated theories designed to link the qualities and dispositions of the spouses to features of the marriage relationship and has hindered efforts to examine how the ecological context influences the details of couples' day-to-day married life. (p. 299)

At the crux of Huston's critique is the assertion that social scientists have failed to adequately anchor their work in theories relevant to everyday experiences encountered in marital relationships. Some have argued that this oversight stems from a preference for basic over applied research (Bradbury, 2002), individualistic disciplinary orientations (Berscheid, 1999), and biases that underestimate the effects of forces external to the couple for marital behavior, quality, and stability (Karney, 2007). Regardless of the cause, inattention to theory has been a recurring criticism of marital research since its inception in the early twentieth century as recounted in earlier editions of the *Handbook*. Calls for broader, more integrative frameworks to bridge basic and applied research as well as the lived experiences of married couples were underscored most recently by Carroll, Knapp, and Holman (2005) in the *Sourcebook of Family Theory and Research*. In a commentary of this work, Adams (2005) suggests that pointing out inadequacies in theory development is one thing; adequately theorizing the complexity of marriage is another. Fortunately, Huston followed his critique of the literature with a detailed account of an integrative conceptual framework for understanding marital relationships in the twenty-first century which has been further developed and refined for application to diverse couples in the new millennium (see Helms et al., 2011).

At the most basic level of his integrative model, Huston (2000) identifies three central elements to understanding marriage: marital behavior, individual properties, and the macroenvironment (see Fig. 11.1). Implied in his discussion of these interdependent factors is the assumption that they operate together to affect the course of marriage, and ultimately marital stability. The description herein reflects Huston's conceptualization of these three central elements

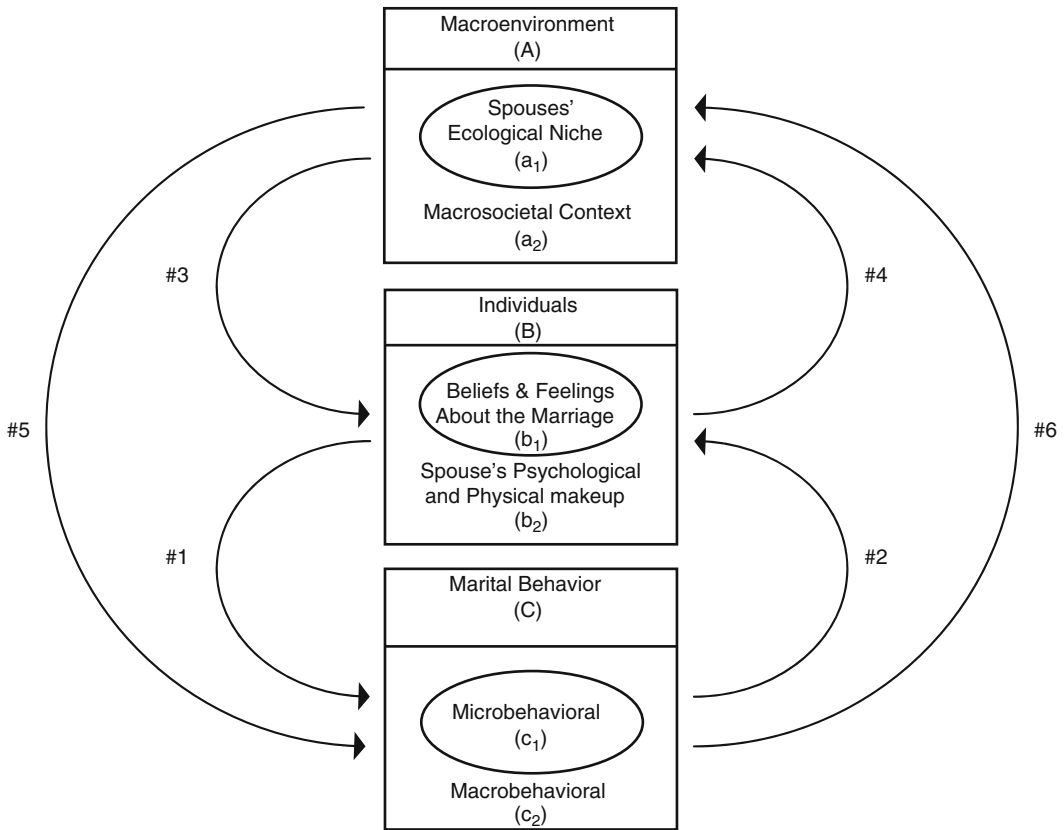


Fig. 11.1 Adapted three-level model for viewing marriage (From Huston (2000), p. 300. Adapted by Helms, Supple, and Proulx (2011) with permission of the author)

and incorporates minor adaptations to the model introduced by Helms and her colleagues (2011) in their application of the model to immigrant Mexican couples. In the pages that follow, the central elements and associated principles of the model are explained and further illustrated with current research. Rather than offering an exhaustive review of the literature, this approach highlights research that aligns with the conceptual model presented and calls attention to domains of inquiry that will be important to pursue in future work. In this way, an underlying goal of this chapter is to strengthen scholarly work on marriage in the twenty-first century by encouraging theoretically grounded research that accounts for the complexity of couples' lived experiences.

Marital Behavior (Box C)

Of central focus in the model, Box C, *Marital Behavior*, represents intra-dyadic behavioral exchanges and patterns that characterize marital experience and a great deal of the literature on marriage as reviewed above. Considered important for a thorough understanding of marriage and “the foundation on which careful descriptions of marriage relationships can be built” (Huston, 2000, p. 300) are (c₂) macrobehavioral patterns such as spouses’ companionship, leisure, the divisions of housework, and (for married parents) the division of parenting responsibilities and childcare, and (c₁) microbehavioral exchanges that include expressions of hostility, warmth, and

other communication patterns that are nested within macrobehavioral patterns of interaction (Helms et al., 2011; Huston, 2000). Huston underscores the nested nature of micro- and macrobehavioral interactions in the model and suggests that “macrobehavioral activities ... provide the larger ecological context within which microbehavioral marital behaviors are played out” (p. 306). Microbehavioral exchanges within couple dyads continue to dominate the marital behavior literature with less attention given to the macrobehavioral interactional patterns within which microbehavioral exchanges occur.

Usually examined in separate studies, scholars have yet to adequately explore how microbehavioral patterns of interaction are related to the macrobehavioral patterns of interaction in which spouses engage (or fail to engage). For example, how do microbehavioral interactions such as a couple’s ability to resolve problems with one another or effectively offer support relate to the amount of time they spend with one another (i.e., companionship), their individual and joint leisure pursuits and the manner in which they divide the everyday demands of caring for children and managing other household responsibilities? Could it be that patterns of daily activity, such as the division of housework, might predict spouses’ expression of negativity or warmth in a marital problem-solving task? Or perhaps the couples’ marital communication patterns may alter how much time they spend with one another or their willingness to share in family work including housework and coparenting. Contemporary advice columnists and popular press books endorse the view that spouses’ ability to get along is linked to the mundane, and yet, empirically, there is little evidence for this assertion, nor do we adequately understand the link. With an emphasis on understanding the everyday experiences of spouses’ marital lives, Huston challenges scholars to further explore this overlooked link and suggests that marriage will not be fully understood until they do.

Grounding their work in Huston’s (2000) three-level model of marriage, several twenty-first century scholars are leading the way in examining this promising area of research. For example, associations between marital conflict

(c_1) and spouses’ shared religious activities (c_2 ; Curtis & Ellison, 2002) and couples’ leisure (c_2) across the transition to parenthood (Claxton & Perry-Jenkins, 2008) have been the focus of recent inquiry. In addition, although scholars have been careful to acknowledge the possibility of a reciprocal causal relationship between micro- and macrobehaviors in marriage, to date this body of work has been theoretically framed as a test of the effect of macrobehavioral marital patterns *on* microbehavioral exchanges. For example, in their short-term longitudinal study of 127 married and cohabiting working-class couples transitioning to parenthood, Claxton and Perry-Jenkins examined how the prospective association between spouses’ individual and joint prenatal leisure pursuits (i.e., Time 1) predicted marital conflict 1 year postpartum (i.e., Time 4). The authors hypothesized that shared leisure would be negatively associated with conflict, and leisure activities engaged in alone or with people other than the spouse would be positively associated with conflict. Findings provided partial support for the hypothesized relationships and suggested that gender may moderate the association between micro- and macrobehavioral interaction. That is, for wives, more shared leisure with husbands prior to the birth of their first child predicted less marital conflict 1 year postpartum, whereas for husbands, more independent leisure prior to their firstborn’s birth was linked to marital conflict when the baby was 1 year old. Findings such as these offer empirical support for Huston’s theoretical assertion that macrobehavioral patterns of interaction in marriage set the stage for microbehavioral exchanges. Yet much remains unknown regarding the degree to which any number of micro- and macrobehavioral exchanges may be linked, including the exploration of more positive micro-exchanges in marriage. Furthermore, Huston’s premise that the link between micro- and macrobehavioral dimensions is reciprocal remains unexplored. Results supporting a reciprocal association over time between spouses’ macrobehavioral patterns of interaction and their subjective evaluations of marriage (b_1 ; e.g., marital satisfaction), however, suggest that further exploration of the reciprocal link between

macrobehavioral interactions in marriage and *microbehaviors* may be warranted (Crawford, Houts, Huston, & George, 2002).

Individuals (Box B)

Huston draws an important distinction between marital behavior (a relationship property) and spouses' individual characteristics, and their beliefs and feelings about their marriage and each other through his inclusion of box B. Because this distinction is often blurred in marital research, scholars miss an important opportunity to examine how spouses' individual properties and belief systems (Box B) are linked to their interactions in their marital relationship (Box C). By conceptually distinguishing marital *experiences* (Box C) from spouses' personal qualities and their beliefs, attitudes, feelings, and evaluations of their marriage (e.g., marital satisfaction and other dimensions of marital quality, Box B), Huston underscores the role of the individual in shaping and responding to marital experiences. In this way Huston lays the groundwork for greater precision in the empirical study of marriage and its measurement—an area of concern that has been voiced for decades (see Fincham & Bradbury, 1987; Kelley et al., 1983).

Entitled *Individuals*, Box B has two distinct, yet interrelated, components: (b_2) spouses' physical and psychological makeup including intrapersonal qualities such as their psychological characteristics, cultural and gendered orientations and values, family background, genetic makeup, and physical and mental health; and (b_1) spouses' feelings and beliefs about their marriage and one another in their respective marital roles (e.g., spouse, parent, provider). Huston further differentiates spouses' beliefs and feelings about the marriage (b_1) by distinguishing spouses' partner-specific cognitive schemas (e.g., attributions about spouses' behavior) from their more general evaluations of the marriage and feelings associated with it (e.g., marital satisfaction, feelings of love, and other dimensions of marital quality). Separating these constructs theoretically adds yet another layer of complexity and sug-

gests that partner-specific beliefs (e.g., attributions about spouses' behavior) and feelings or thoughts about the marriage (e.g., marital satisfaction) are reciprocally related and both are nested in the context of spouses' physical and psychological makeup (b_2).

In Huston's (2000) careful explication of spouses' marriage-specific beliefs and feelings, he differentiates more precisely among the array of psychological forces that potentially link spouses to one another than previously proposed theoretically or empirically in a single model. For example, Huston encourages scholars to think more broadly than the limits of marital satisfaction (e.g., spouses' global cognitive evaluations about marriage; b_1) and suggests that there is much to gain in predicting marital stability and longevity by examining a broader array of spouses' feelings associated with marriage and one's partner including love, commitment, understanding, admiration, respect, and trust (see Amato, 2007; Johnson, Caughlin, & Huston, 1999; Kelly & Floyd, 2006; Stets, 1993; 1995; Stets & Hammons, 2002). More recently, Huston and Melz (2004) and Fincham, Stanley, and Beach (2007) have suggested that positive and negative feelings and beliefs associated with the marriage can and do coexist and create emotional climates that are generally warm (i.e., high positive, low negative), distressed (i.e., low positive, high negative), stormy (i.e., high positive, high negative), or bland (i.e., low positive, low negative). This 2D view of the emotional climate of marriage expands the focus of the current empirical literature beyond distressed versus non-distressed couples to couples who may have emotionally neutral marriages or marriages characterized by the drama that unfolds when strong positive and negative feelings coexist (Huston & Melz, 2004). Capturing the array of feelings associated with marriage across dimensions can be challenging empirically (Amato, 2007), but instrument development and measurement studies have begun (Fincham & Linfield, 1997; Mattson, Paldino, & Johnson, 2007), and qualitative work is beginning to emerge that can further inform these efforts. Once links between these additional dimensions of marital quality and marital stability

are well established, understanding specific marital behaviors in marriage (Box C) that gives rise to marriage promoting feelings and beliefs (Box B) will be important to explore.

Huston underscores that spouses' relatively stable physical, psychological, and social attributes are intricately linked with their beliefs, feelings, and evaluations associated with their marriage. For example a history of psychopathology (e.g., Beach, 2000), marital functioning in spouses' families of origin (e.g., Amato & Hohmann-Marriott, 2007; Hetherington, 2003), premarital cohabitation (Stanley, Rhoades, & Markman, 2006; Tach & Halpern-Meekin, 2009), and early experiences in one's family of origin (e.g., Sroufe, Egeland, Carlson, & Collins, 2005; Umberson, Williams, Powers, Liu, & Needham, 2005) have all been linked to spouses' perceptions of marital quality. Clearly, links between spouses' personal qualities and their views of marital quality have been studied for decades and many are well documented (see Bradbury et al., 2000; Fincham & Beach, 2010, for reviews). By characterizing spouses' marital evaluations and feelings about the relationship and each other as an individual property nested within spouses' own psychological and physical makeup, however, the model makes explicit not only that a link exists between these constructs but suggests a reciprocal relationship between them. In short, Huston challenges scholars to explore not only the way in which husbands' and wives' personal qualities can color their perceptions of marital quality but also how spouses' beliefs and attitudes about their marriage and partner can influence dimensions of spouses' own and their partners' personal well-being and values.

Aligning with Huston's (2000) theoretical framework and made possible by methodological and analytic advances, the causal ordering of spouses' personal qualities and perceptions of their marriage and the possibility of bidirectional effects between them over time has been a focus of inquiry in the past decade. For example, in a recent meta-analysis of literature addressing the link between marital quality and personal well-being (i.e., assessed as both psychological and physical health), the longitudinal association

between marital quality and personal well-being was found to be stronger when well-being was treated as the dependent variable than when it was examined as a predictor of marital quality (Proulx, Helms, & Buehler, 2007). These results provided support for the marital discord model of depression which argues that marital dissatisfaction can lead to increased risk for depression by depleting important marital resources such as spousal support, warmth, dependability, and cohesion and increasing negativity in the marriage (Beach, Sandeen, & O'Leary, 1990). Support also exists, however, for individual differences in marital quality. For example, recent work utilizing a genetically informed twin design suggests that genetic factors may play a role in shaping spouses' marital quality (Spotts, Prescott, & Kendler, 2006). As suggested by Huston, many scholars support the proposition that links between individual characteristics and marital quality are bidirectional and recent tests offer support for this premise. For example, bidirectional influence between spouses' attributions about their partners' negative behavior and marital satisfaction was found in longitudinal studies of early marriage using growth curve analysis and cross-lagged modeling (Fincham, Harold, & Gano-Phillips, 2000; Karney & Bradbury, 2000). No support was found for the view of attributional style as a stable trait, and instead results suggested that the influence between spouses' negative attributions about their partner and their perceptions of marital satisfaction covary over time and exhibit bidirectional effects. Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, the strength of this association between spouses' negative attributions and marital satisfaction may be most robust for couples who later dissolve their marriages (Karney & Bradbury).

Another benefit of conceptually distinguishing spouses' individual properties (Box B) from their marital experiences (Box C) is that it underscores the possibility of within-couple incompatibilities and discrepancies in perceptions of marital quality as well as the potential for crossover effects from one spouse to another. Here, compatibility theories of marriage inform Huston's (2000) model and suggest that congruence in husbands' and wives' personal qualities

and perceptions of the marriage is important for a mutually satisfying relationship. Accordingly, Huston calls attention to the importance of the *dyadic patterning* of spouses' individual qualities and marital evaluations as well as the ways in which spouses exert influence on one another. In short, the interdependence, patterning, and potential crossover effects of spouses' personal qualities and their marital evaluations are emphasized along with potential within-couple variations in the "match" of spouses' qualities and views of the marriage and each other.

Underscoring the importance of a dyadic approach to the study of marriage, recent work has examined the prospective association between couple profiles of spouses' sex-typed personal qualities and attitudes toward breadwinning and husbands' and wives' perceptions of marital quality over time (Helms et al., 2006; Helms, Walls, Crouter, & McHale, 2010). In this work, common couple configurations based on patterns of spouses' sex-typed qualities and attitudes toward breadwinning were identified, specific couple profiles linked with risk for lower marital well-being were discovered, and insights into aspects of partners' personal qualities and beliefs that may be protective for their evaluations of marriage were emphasized. In addition, short-term longitudinal studies employing daily diary, computer-assisted data collection methods across a series of days and the Actor Partner Interdependence Model (APIM) as an analytic strategy (see Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2006) provide a unique opportunity to examine potential crossover effects between husbands and wives. The transmission of emotion from one spouse to another, individual factors that strengthen the transmission of emotions, and subsequent links with marital satisfaction have all been the focus of scientific inquiry in the past decade (e.g., Schoebi, 2008). With increased application of pattern analytic and person-centered approaches (e.g., cluster analysis, mixture models including latent class analysis, profile analysis, and growth mixture models), Huston's theoretical assertions regarding the importance of the patterning of spouses' individual characteristics and their links with marital quality can be better examined (see Whiteman & Loken, 2006). Furthermore, with

analytic strategies such as the APIM, crossover effects within marital dyads from one spouse to another can now be explored with greater precision than ever before.

The Macroenvironment (Box A)

Some fragile relationships survive forever because they never encounter a relationship-toxic environment, but some very strong relationships dissolve—not because they were not close, or committed, or loving—but because fate, or the partners' ignorance of the vulnerability of their relationships to external forces, or perhaps even uninformed governmental policy decisions put their relationships in harm's way (Berscheid, 1999, p. 265).

Perhaps the greatest contribution of the first decade of research on marriage in the twenty-first century is the increased attention to factors external to the marriage and individual spouses that play a role in supporting or undermining marital and individual functioning. Historically, the marital literature has focused on a relatively privileged and narrow slice of the population pie. As twenty-first century scholars began to examine the marital experiences of couples beyond the White and middle class, however, it became apparent that context does indeed matter (Fincham & Beach, 2010). More specifically, environments external to marriage were found to shape the content of spouses' interactions, their ability to interact effectively, their evaluations of marriage, and ultimately whether or not they remained married (see Huston & Melz, 2004; Karney & Bradbury, 2005).

The final element in the adapted model, the *Macroenvironment* (Box A), accounts for the various contexts in which individuals and their marital behavior are embedded, including (a_2) the larger macrosocietal context and (a_1) spouses' ecological niches (i.e., the social and physical settings in which spouses function on a daily basis) (Helms et al., 2011; Huston, 2000). In this box, spouses' ecological niches represent proximal dimensions of the social environment (e.g., parent-child relationships, relationships with extended kin, co-workers, friends, community members) and the physical environment spouses inhabit on a daily basis (e.g., housing, workplace, neighborhood, proximity to kin and work).

These ecological niches are nested within the larger macrosocietal context that includes socio-historical location, dynamic dimensions of culture such as norms and values endorsed by members of a cultural or subcultural group, and overarching socioeconomic conditions (e.g., laws, policies, physical resources, economic opportunity) that have the ability to either facilitate or inhibit individual development and marital functioning. The two components of the macroenvironment are interrelated in that the macrosocietal context can alter spouses' ecological niches and spouses' ecological niches are often the medium through which macrosocietal dimensions of context are articulated, reinforced, or undermined. Research in this area, however, has focused primarily on direct links between aspects of spouses' ecological niches (e.g., neighborhood conditions, social network support, the parent-child relationship) and other components of the larger model (e.g., marital behavior, marital satisfaction). Although effects of macrosocietal conditions are often implied in discussions of the links between marital quality and ecological niche elements such as neighborhood poverty and social capital, reliance on survey methods has limited empirical tests for Huston's assertions regarding the role of the ecological niche in challenging or channeling macrosocietal dimensions of context to marital behavior (Bradbury et al., 2000).

The social environment. In their decade review of the marital satisfaction literature at the dawn of the twenty-first century, Bradbury et al. (2000) concluded that to better understand marital behavior and spouses' perceptions of marital quality, researchers need to pay greater attention to the relationships and nature of support that both partners obtain outside, as well as inside, the marriage. As Huston (2000) stated,

Usually ... researchers focusing on the dynamics of marital interaction study couples as two-person units, as if they rarely spent time together as part of a social group ... the centrality of spouses in each other's day-to-day lives, as well as their joint and independent involvement with friends and kin, reveal much about the nature of the spouses' marital relationship (pp. 300-301).

An increase in research on the social contexts in which marriage is embedded has emerged in the past decade with studies focused on how marital quality and behavior are associated with husbands' and wives' interactions with in-laws, parents, close friends, and children. Support for bidirectional effects between marital quality and spouses' relationships with friends and extended family members has been found in longitudinal studies testing cross-lagged analytic models and further substantiated with qualitative accounts (Beaton, Norris, & Pratt, 2003; Bryant et al., 2001; Kearns & Leonard, 2004; Serewicz & Canary, 2008). For example, difficulties in extended family relationships have been shown to erode spouses' marital satisfaction and contribute to marital instability, even in relatively long-term marriages. In addition, the quality of these same marriages has been prospectively linked to conflict with in-laws for husbands, suggesting that husbands in long-term marriages that are satisfying are less likely to have difficulties with their in-laws than husbands in less satisfying marriages (Bryant et al., 2001). With the exception of the transition to parenthood literature that has demonstrated that marriages change with the addition of children (see Bradbury et al., 2000, for a review), surprisingly little attention has been given to the effects of children on marriage. Although Huston (2000) draws attention to the role of children in marriage by including them as a part of spouses' ecological niche, the model does not explicitly incorporate how children's personal qualities, or elements of parent-child relationships, may influence marital behavior and quality—a substantive area often overlooked in marital and family research. Underscoring the central role that children and parent-child relationships occupy in many couples' lives, contemporary scholars are attending to how and under what conditions children's personal qualities, parent-child relationships, and marriage are linked across the life course (see Crouter & Booth, 2003). This emergent body of literature has demonstrated how within-couple incongruence in husbands' and wives' differential intimacy and conflict with their first and second-born children covaries across the childrearing years

with spouses' reports of marital quality (Kan, McHale, & Crouter, 2008). Related studies also indicate how infants' sleep patterns and crying effect trajectories of their mothers' and fathers' marital quality across their first year of life (Meijer & van den Wittenboer, 2007). Other investigators have identified the associations of the simultaneous impact of multigenerational bonds (Bengtson, 2001; Cullen, Hammer, Neal, & Sinclair, 2009) and shared family rituals with husbands' and wives' reports of marital quality (Crespo, Davide, Costa, & Fletcher, 2008).

The extent to which husbands and wives garner support from social network members specific to marriage and parenting and subsequent links to marital quality have also been a topic receiving attention. The marital implications of parents' reliance on one another, kin, and other close associates as sources of advice, guidance, caregiving, and emotional support regarding the routine transactions of marriage and parenthood have been documented across social classes in predominantly White populations (Helms, Crouter, & McHale, 2003; Milardo & Helms-Erikson, 2000; Proulx, Helms, & Payne, 2004). Actively engaging social network members in discussions about marital and parenting concerns has been linked to spouses' reports of marital satisfaction, love, and stability—particularly for wives who are members of White populations (Helms et al., 2003; Proulx et al., 2004). Recent work also suggests, however, that the strength of this association may be most robust in ethnic minority and lower income couples who must navigate marital and family relations against a backdrop of economic disadvantage and marginalization (Helms et al., 2011). Integrating this body of literature with earlier work suggests that actively seeking out spouses to discuss concerns in the domains of marriage and parenting is an important predictor of marital well-being for wives, often overshadowing husbands' instrumental contributions to housework and childcare (Erickson, 1993). Using spouses in this supportive manner also may counteract the adverse effects of economic pressure on marital evaluations (Simons, Whitebeck, Melby, & Wu, 1994).

Acute and chronic environmental stressors. Of considerable focus in past decades has been the study of the impact of acute and usually traumatic stressors on couples' marital functioning (for a review, see Bradbury et al., 2000). These studies examined topics such as the death of a child, a natural disaster, or war and aspects of marriage that were affected by the event or buffered its impact. Unique to the twenty-first century is a focus on the marital experiences of married veterans returning from extensive deployments to Afghanistan and Iraq. Although the length of deployment was unrelated to marital dissolution for service members in most branches of the military (Karney & Crown, 2007), PTSD, depression, and anxiety following deployment did appear to be linked to marital satisfaction, and PTSD symptoms, specifically, predicted marital aggression (see Fincham & Beach, 2010, for a review).

Additional research complements this work by focusing on the way in which chronic, everyday stressors may interact with acute stressors to affect marital functioning. Defined as relatively minor ongoing stressors that occupy daily living (e.g., experiences at work, interactions with friends and family, physical environment stressors such as traffic jams and poor living conditions), chronic stressors were found to strengthen the association between acute stress (i.e., defined as major life events) and spouses' marital satisfaction over time suggesting that acute negative life events are more harmful to marriage when levels of chronic stress are high (Bradbury & Karney, 2004). Evidence of crossover effects between husbands' and wives' experiences of chronic stress and their partners' evaluations of marriage has also been found under certain conditions. For example, the everyday hassles that wives experience have been shown to effect their husbands' evaluations of marriage in marital contexts characterized by negative conflict resolution styles, whereas husbands' stress from daily hassles impacts their wives' marital satisfaction only when wives themselves report high levels of chronic, daily stress (Neff & Karney, 2007). Research focusing on these more frequent and continuous forms of stress suggests that such

everyday hassles may be more important determinants of marital quality than major, but less frequent, life events. Accordingly, the aggregate effects of everyday hassles have the potential to compromise marital and individual well-being and even increase vulnerability to major life events (Helms, Walls, & Demo, 2010).

Socioeconomic and work contexts. Historically, economic and work-related factors have received the most extensive attention as macroenvironmental contexts for marital functioning. Links between marriage and spouses' access to work-related resources such as income, occupational prestige, and social support have been documented (see Crouter & Helms-Erikson, 2000, for a review) for primarily White and middle class couples. In addition, the nature of work itself, including occupational complexity and self-direction, has been linked to the distribution of power in marriage and the way couples divide family work (e.g., Klute, Crouter, Sayer, & McHale, 2002). Additional studies have focused on the impact of short-term work stressors and tensions that spill over into marital life. Grounded in a dyadic approach, these studies draw attention to what we know about the transmission of work stress to marital functioning for men and for women, and whether husbands and wives respond in the same way to their spouse's experience of day-to-day stress on the job (Perry-Jenkins, Repetti, & Crouter, 2000). Seminal work on marriage in the context of economic stress by Conger, Rueter, and Elder (1999) demonstrated prospective links between predominantly White, rural spouses' perceptions of economic pressure and marital distress via individual distress. Furthermore, the association between economic pressure and individual distress was most pronounced for spouses with few social supports outside the marriage, underscoring the ways in which various macroenvironmental contexts may interact to effect individual and marital well-being.

The links between job loss, economic strain, and marital quality continue to be of interest to twenty-first century scholars (Howe, Levy, & Caplan, 2004). Adaptations of the Conger and

colleagues family stress model have been used with increasingly diverse populations via interactions of financial strain with other dimension of the macrosocietal context (e.g., racial discrimination, culture) relevant to families of color (Cutrona et al., 2003; Helms et al., 2011; Murry et al., 2008). As the larger work and family literature has shifted its focus beyond the predominantly White and middle class to an interest in the work experiences of working class, low-income and ethnic minority families (see Crouter & Booth, 2004), new content areas have emerged in the twenty-first century that show particular promise in furthering our understanding of the work–marriage link. For example, with the emergence of the 24/7 service economy, the effects of shift work and nonstandard schedules on marital relationships have come into focus with early work in this area suggesting that spouses who work nonstandard work schedules in part to balance the demands of work and family may experience unanticipated declines in personal and marital well-being (Barnett, Gareis, & Brennan, 2008; Presser, 2000). Although no published studies addressed the links between work contexts and marital relationships for Latino or other immigrant groups in the literature reviewed here, a body of work in this area is emerging. Contemporary scholars of immigrant family life suggest that the effects of structural inequalities including underemployment, physical demands of work, long work hours and racism in the workplace will be important areas of inquiry to explore to better understand the marital experiences of couples across the diverse demographic landscape of the 21st century (Updegraff, Crouter, Umaña-Taylor, & Cansler, 2007).

Community and neighborhood contexts. A final area of focus involves attention to those dimensions of the macroenvironment that are slow to change and can have far reaching consequences for the marital experiences of entire cohorts of couples. For example, the sex composition of local marriage markets has been studied to better understand how living in an environment with greater or fewer spousal alternatives is linked with

marital quality and divorce proneness (Trent & South, 2003). In part in response to racial disparities in rates of marriage and marital dissolution, there has been an increased focus on the community contexts in which African American marriages are embedded and their implication for marital well-being (Bryant & Wickrama, 2005; Wickrama, Bryant, & Wickrama, 2010). This body of work has explored the ways in which community adversities and resources influence whether and how couples form their relationships, the behaviors they engage in when married, their perceptions of marital quality, and the longevity of their marriages. Results from these studies suggest that living in communities characterized by economic disadvantage and high rates of residential mobility is harmful for African American couples' marriages (Bryant & Wickrama, 2005; Cutrona et al., 2003), whereas higher percentages of minorities in the community can potentially protect marriage via the informal supports community contacts provide to husbands and wives (Bryant & Wickrama, 2005). As evidenced here, most promising in this line of work are those studies that consider the interaction of multiple dimensions of couples' macroenvironments and the mechanisms through which community level adversities and resources operate to either protect or undermine marital functioning. For example, in a nationally representative study of midlife married and cohabiting partners, Voydanoff (2005) found that the protective effects of affective community resources (i.e., sense of community, neighborhood attachment, and support) were linked to marital satisfaction via the reduction of tensions related to the competing demands of work and family. The extent to which spouses are exposed to racially based discrimination in their communities is another potential mechanism explaining links between community context and marital experience (Cutrona et al., 2003).

Summary and caveats. The vast majority of studies that consider the links between marriage and spouses' ecological niches and the larger macrosocietal context emphasize the impact of the macroenvironment on marriage (e.g., path 5) and downplay the active role that spouses play in

selecting their environments (e.g., path 4; path 6). The choices spouses make independently and jointly in such areas as education, jobs, workplace, children, friends, extended family contact, geographic location, housing, community involvement, etc., are in part based on their own individual properties (Box B) including their psychological predispositions, physical and mental health, and family background. Spouses' individual differences also play a role in how they respond to and the extent to which they engage various dimensions of the larger macroenvironment, and, consequently, their marriages are likely to be differentially affected by otherwise similar contexts (e.g., paths 3–1). No sophisticated statistical model can completely remove the presence of naturally occurring selection effects, nor can all possible variation due to individual differences be controlled. Because these factors are intertwined in the everyday lived experiences of couples, statistically removing them from the equation is ill advised. Instead, Huston (2000) offers a conceptual model that incorporates the complexities of the selection process into and out of various dimensions of the macroenvironmental context as well as individual differences in the links between the macroenvironment and marital functioning and, in so doing, underscores this often overlooked, yet important, research domain.

Linking Marital Behavior, Individuals, and the Macroenvironment to Inform Future Research

Perhaps the greatest contribution of Huston's (2000) model is the attention to the multilayered, interdependent causal pathways (i.e., paths 1–6) within and between each element of the model. Both the direct and indirect paths to and from marital behavior remind us of the complex and dynamic nature of individuals, marital behavior, and the macroenvironment and provide a useful visual heuristic of the bidirectional links that potentially exist. In addition, the focus on potential moderating and mediating variables rather than simple main effects is particularly applicable to

the study of marriage in the twenty-first century — a time when the most important advances are likely to come in the form of understanding how multiple sources of influence interact. Huston's conceptual framework provides guidance for contemporary marital researchers asking complex questions that require moving beyond a focus on one or two predictor variables (see Bradbury, 2002). Perhaps most importantly, the model pathways provide specific guidelines for how a variety of factors may interact with marital behavior or perceptions of marital quality, and in so doing, avoid the inevitable criticisms that arise when researchers simply add more predictor variables to the mix without carefully thinking through the relationships between them (Karney, 2007).

As demonstrated by paths 3 and 5, individuals and marital behavior are embedded within a larger macroenvironmental context and can be directly affected by macrosocietal trends and historical events as well as the daily activities taking place in spouses' ecological niches. For example, as the onset of the first major economic recession in the new millennium intersected with a push for more responsible use of natural resources, national news featured the closing of the Pilgrim's Pride chicken processing plant in Siler City, NC. The plant employed 830 workers, the majority of whom were immigrant husbands and wives from Mexico (Yeong, 2008). High feed costs attributed to increased federal subsidies for ethanol blenders were cited as the primary reason for the plant closing. The closing of this chicken plant devastated the Latino community in Siler City and is just one example of how changes in the macrosocietal context (i.e., increased federal subsidies for alternate fuel sources) have a direct impact on couples by altering the ecological niches (e.g., the workplace) in which they function and on which they are dependent for economic stability.

In addition to these direct influences demonstrated in the model, macroenvironmental factors often exert indirect influence on the marital relationship via their effects on the husband, the wife, or both partners (path 3 to path 1). In the example presented above, the stress of job loss on the husband, the wife, or both is likely to produce anxiety and depression which, in turn, leads to increased

marital conflict (Conger et al., 2002). Spouses' personal qualities may moderate the impact of the macroenvironmental stressor, however, by buffering or exacerbating the effect on the marriage. For example, the effect of job loss on spouses' marital behavior may be attenuated by personal characteristics such as high levels of self-esteem, or amplified if either the husband or wife is already distressed about the marriage, has a propensity towards violence, or is in poor health (McKee-Ryan, Song, Wanberg, & Kinicki, 2005).

Alternatively, the macroenvironmental context may demonstrate its greatest influence on individuals via difficulties created in their closest social ties, such as those found in marriage (path 5 followed by path 2). In this sequence of paths, marital behavior can be treated as either a mediator between macroenvironmental conditions and individuals or as a moderator in its potential to diminish or amplify the effects of stressful conditions on spouses' personal qualities and perceptions of marital quality. In support of these theoretical propositions are results showing direct effects of the marital relationship on physical and mental health, as well as studies demonstrating how particular marital behaviors and strategies eliminate, reduce, or magnify direct associations between stressful contextual conditions and family members' physical and psychological well-being (e.g., Proulx et al., 2007; Wickrama et al., 2010).

Anchored in recent work documenting how negative marital exchanges alter dimensions of spouses' physiological makeup that are important for long-term health (Robles & Kiecolt-Glaser, 2003), research emerging at the close of the first decade of the twenty-first century offers empirical support for marital behavior operating as a key mechanism linking macroenvironmental stress and individual well-being. For example, in a study of the marital experiences of 540 newly married African American couples, the link between husbands' perceptions of community disorder and spouses' depressive symptoms was explained by spillover (within spouse) and crossover effects of spouses' hostile marital exchanges (e.g., wives' hostile behavior to husbands' well-being and husbands' hostile behavior to wives' well-being) (Wickrama et al., 2010). Furthermore, partial

mediation was supported for wives' hostile marital exchanges and both spouses' physical health. These results suggested that the stressors incurred by husbands' perceptions of adverse community conditions may affect both spouses' physical health via wives' expressed hostility in the marriage. In contrast, spouses' psychological well-being is compromised by both their own and their spouses' negative marital behavior. This promising early work examining the complex links between multiple dimensions of the three-level model of marriage underscores that the marital dyad can be a critical point of entry for macroenvironmental stressors. Accordingly, the marital dyad serves either as a buffer against or a conduit for the transmission of stress to spouse's personal well-being and evaluations of the marriage.

Clearly both bidirectional and circular relationships between multiple layers of context are underscored in Huston's (2000) three-level model for viewing marriage. Although difficult to explore empirically, Huston acknowledges that individual properties influence the choices spouses make personally and as a couple regarding their physical environments. Moreover, in the collective, individuals and marriages alter the norms, laws, and policies characterizing the macrosocietal context (see path 2–4 and path 1–6, respectively). For example, financial contributions sent by Latino immigrants to family members residing in Mexico account for a substantial and increasing segment of the economy, representing 2.5% of Mexico's gross domestic product and ranking as the second largest source of foreign income after crude oil (World Bank, 2005). The practice of reserving and remitting income to extended families in Mexico begins as an individual or dyadic decision with direct implications for spouses' own ecological niches. Not only are immigrant couples' own ecological niches impacted by remitting funds, but the ecological niches occupied by recipient families in Mexico are affected as well. Finally, the collective result of this process is a macrosocietal change in the economic landscape of the receiving country.

Forward thinking scholars of marriage and other close relationships have a long history of posing complex questions and pushing the

envelope of what researchers can explore empirically. At the advent of the twenty-first century—a time of significant variation in marital and family life—Huston proposed a conceptual model to assist contemporary scholars in formulating research questions, launching programs of research, and advancing the study of marriage through a model that conceptualizes the myriad factors that interact with the marital experiences of diverse couples. A fundamental strength of Huston's (2000) model lies in its attention to the multilayered, interdependent, and causal pathways linking constructs across macroenvironmental, individual, and marital domains. His approach is necessarily complex as it attends to both within and between couple variations in marital behaviors and qualities nested in multiple layers of context. Paradoxically, this conceptual strength poses pragmatic challenges for researchers in that testing circular and bidirectional patterns of association require longitudinal—and often dyadic—data, sophisticated analytic strategies, and adequate statistical power. Methodological advances in the past decade outlined by Acock and Washburn (Chap. 3) and others (e.g., Fincham & Beach, 2010; Kenny et al., 2006; Kurdek, 2003; Sayer & Klute, 2005; Whiteman & Loken, 2006) have utility for testing more complex associations as demonstrated in some of the recent studies reviewed here. Although advanced analytic strategies for examining dyadic data and testing causal pathways make the application of the model more probable with adequate data, it is impossible for any one study or empirical test to address the multiple associations between marital behavior and the other dimensions of context outlined in the model. Instead, the model offers a guiding framework for researchers to focus on subparts of the larger causal system in a theoretically informed manner or to build a program of research that methodically examines different aspects of the model, one study at a time. Of equal import, the model crosses disciplinary boundaries and encourages scholars to be mindful of avenues of inquiry outside their academic comfort zones when approaching their own programs of research on marriage. In these ways, scholars can advance a

theoretically informed and ecologically valid understanding of marriage in a manner that, at the very least acknowledges, and at best attends to the complexity inherent in Huston's model and the lived experience of married couples in the twenty-first century.

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Living Together Unmarried: What Do We Know About Cohabiting Families?

12

Fiona Rose-Greenland and Pamela J. Smock

Introduction

Heterosexual cohabitation has become a normative feature of the life course. The prevalence and incidence of cohabitation have risen considerably in the past three decades. In fact, it is now so commonplace that researchers have moved beyond debates about its transience as a trend. Most marriages and remarriages begin as cohabiting relationships, and the majority of young adults has cohabited or will cohabit at some point in their lives (Smock, 2000). Moreover, most young adults in the United States now view nonmarital cohabitation as an acceptable relationship form (Axinn & Thornton, 2000; Scott, Shelar, Manlove, & Cui, 2009; Thornton & Young-DeMarco, 2001). The incidence of cohabiting partners with children is increasingly widespread, too: two-fifths of cohabiting couples are currently raising children and nearly half of these couples have a joint biological child (Kennedy & Fitch, 2009, p. 15).

F. Rose-Greenland, PhD (✉)
Department of Sociology, University of Michigan,
3001 LSA Building, 500 South State Street,
Ann Arbor, MI 48109, USA
e-mail: frose@umich.edu

P.J. Smock, PhD
Department of Sociology and Population Studies Center,
University of Michigan, 426 Thompson Street,
Ann Arbor, MI 48106, USA
e-mail: pjsmock@isr.umich.edu

While marriage continues to be viewed as desirable and important, with large numbers of adults expressing support for marriage and intentions to marry, recent research demonstrates that cohabitation has unmistakably altered the marriage and childbearing processes (Guzzo, 2009; Manning, Longmore, & Giordano, 2007; Musick, 2007).

Rising levels of cohabitation, alongside new data collection efforts to measure and understand it, have resulted in a steady increase in social scientific studies on the topic.¹ Recent work has helped to clarify our understanding of several aspects of cohabitation. For example, the documentation and analysis of differentials across population subgroups demonstrate that there is no single model of cohabitation. Variations have been made easier to identify and study through quantitative data from a number of representative samples that contain information about cohabitation. Researchers' methods have evolved, too. The collection and analysis of qualitative data from cohabiting partners is increasingly widespread, as is the application of diverse theoretical

¹One measure of this is the number of scholarly articles on cohabitation appearing in peer-reviewed social science journals. Using the online search engine Proquest, we searched for articles containing the words "cohabitation," "cohabit," or "cohabitor" in their titles or abstracts. In all of the years prior to 1994, 114 articles on cohabitation were published; between January 1994 and August 2009, nearly 1,000 such articles were published.

frameworks from other social scientific fields. Finally, a growing share of the scholarly literature focuses on unmarried partners with children, and on the impact of parental cohabitation on children's well-being. In short, the research record underscores the point that cohabitation is as complex as it is common.

Cohabitors come from many ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds, and hold a wide variety of views on why they cohabit and what their cohabiting relationships mean to them (Edin, Kefalas, & Reed, 2004; Smock & Manning, 2004; Waller & McLanahan, 2005). Where early research focused on cohabitation as a phenomenon largely restricted to the socio-economically disadvantaged, more recent work examines cohabitation patterns of adults from a range of class and income profiles.

Along with the increased focus on diversity in cohabitators has come recognition that there is diversity in *forms* of cohabitation, or the cohabiting family itself (Brown & Manning, 2009; Sassler, 2004; Smock, Casper, & Wyse, 2008). Although researchers agree on a basic definition of cohabitation—two adults living together as a couple without being legally married—this definition leaves scope for great variety. What does it mean to live “as a couple”? How can this be measured accurately when cohabitators themselves express differing views on what it entails? As for the “without being legally married” clause, laws have changed tremendously in the last 30 years such that cohabitators are permitted to merge resources and property in such a way that they are linked as though through marriage (Garrison, 2008). Common law marriage is legally recognized in 11 states and the District of Columbia. Particularly where cohabitators state that they wish to stay with their partners but have no intention of undertaking a formal marriage vow, how does this change the long-standing assumption that cohabitation operates as a trial run for marriage or effectively serves as a premarital relationship phase? In fact, as will become clear later in this chapter, there is strong evidence to suggest that many cohabiting couples will not eventually marry. These and other questions have prompted social scientists' efforts to produce more nuanced portraits of cohabitators and cohabitation.

This chapter reviews recent research on cohabitation in the United States, focusing on studies published from 2000 through 2009. It is divided into four major sections. We begin by providing basic information about patterns, differentials, and trends in cohabitation. We then turn to several areas of inquiry that have become particularly prominent over recent years. These areas include variation in cohabiting along lines of race, ethnicity, age and social status; the linkages among nonmarital cohabitation, marriage, and divorce; the role of economic resources in cohabitation; measurement problems faced by cohabitation researchers; and childbearing and children in families headed by cohabitators. In the third section, we demonstrate how theoretical frameworks can provide greater insight into the existing research on cohabitation. A conclusion presents an overview of the strengths, weaknesses, and significance of the existing literature, and makes recommendations for future research directions and applications of what we have already discovered about cohabitation.

There are some topics we do not cover. We write from a demographic and sociological perspective, so we draw mainly from those areas of research. So, while we touch on issues of relationship quality at various points in this chapter, we do not provide a focused discussion of the experience of living in a cohabiting union, an area of inquiry situated in the broader framework of family psychology and gender studies (see, for example, Cunningham, 2005; de Ruijter, Treas, & Cohen, 2005; Gupta, 1999; Kenney, 2004, 2006; Maher & Singleton, 2003; Meadows, 2009; Rhoades, Stanley, & Markman, 2006, 2009; Sassler & Miller, 2006; Treas & de Ruijter, 2008). Discussion of same-sex cohabitators is also beyond the scope of this chapter (see Hull, 2006; Jepsen & Jepsen, 2002; Kurdek, 2004; Patterson, 2000).

Basic Facts About Cohabitation

In 2009, the U.S. Census Bureau reported that 6.6 million American households were headed by heterosexual cohabiting couples (Current Population Survey [CPS], March 2009). Data from 2002 demonstrate that over 60% of women

ages 25–39 have cohabited at least once, in contrast with approximately 48% just 7 years earlier (Bumpass & Lu, 2000; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2006). Increases in the proportion of women who have ever cohabited are evident for all age ranges included in the National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG), a recurring nationally representative survey of those aged 15–44. For example, among women 40–44 years old, 45% reported having cohabited in the 1995 NSFG compared to 54% in the 2002 NSFG (Kennedy & Bumpass, 2008).

Another important observation is that fewer people are marrying without cohabiting first. During the 1960s and early 1970s, about 10% of marriages were preceded by cohabitation. By the early 1990s, 57% of first marriages were preceded by cohabitation. The most recent available data concern marriages occurring between 1997 and 2001; 62% of persons marrying during these years had previously cohabited (Bumpass & Lu, 2000; Bumpass & Sweet, 1989; Kennedy & Bumpass, 2008).

Three further trends are worth emphasizing. First, living together has become the modal path by which coresidential relationships are formed. Of the coresidential couple relationships initiated between 1997 and 2001, 68% were cohabiting relationships while just 32% were marriages. Conversely, between 1990 and 2001 the percentage of marriages begun *without* prior cohabitation experience dropped from 43 to 38% (Kennedy & Bumpass, 2008).

Second, while cohabitation has become common in most population sub-groups, there are some key differentials. This is an issue we discuss in some detail below. Data suggest that people who hold strong religious convictions are less likely to cohabit. Social class, which many researchers proxy with measures of educational attainment, also matters. People who are socio-economically disadvantaged are more likely to cohabit: data from the 2002 NSFG suggest that 45% of 19- to 44-year-old women who are college graduates have cohabited compared to 64% of those who had not completed high school (Kennedy & Bumpass, 2008). As regards race and ethnicity, cohabitation rates are similar among Blacks, Whites, and Hispanics. However, there

appears to be a small to moderate differential based on nativity among Hispanics. Among women aged 19–44, 56% of U.S.-born Hispanics report cohabiting compared to 49% of their foreign-born counterparts (Kennedy & Bumpass). Statistics on cohabitation rates among Asian-Americans are more difficult to obtain. There are few data sets with sufficient sample size to discuss Asian-Americans' family forms. Sub-group variations make generalizations difficult (Xie & Goyette, 2004). Census Bureau reports tend to place Asian-Americans in the category "all other races, non-Hispanic"—which means that they are categorized with Native Americans and Pacific Islanders. A 2002 report suggested that 8.3% of women who never married, aged 15–44, in this race/ethnicity category had ever cohabited, and that 23.4% of married women had. This is in contrast with 8.9% of never-married white women and 26.3% of white women who had ever married (CDC, 2002, Table B).

Finally, cohabitation often involves children. The 2009 CPS indicated that some 2.5 million unmarried cohabiting couples had at least one biological child in the household, comprising approximately 38% of all cohabiting couples. Roughly half of these are the biological children of the cohabiting couple and the other half are children of one of the partners. One study suggests that between two-fifths and one half of children born in the early 1990s will spend some part of childhood in a cohabiting-parent family (Bumpass & Lu, 2000; Kennedy & Bumpass, 2008). Indeed, 40–50% of all births considered to be nonmarital are to cohabiting couples.

Major Research Questions About Cohabitation

We organize our discussion of current research around five main questions. We focus on these because they are prominent in studies of cohabitation and/or were published during the period covered here (2000–2009). The five capture a wide range of cohabitation research, from cohabitation measurement to motivations to cohabit. As the phenomenon becomes more widespread, scholars and policymakers are attempting to

understand better the needs, motivations, and long-term prospects of cohabitators and their families. Recent research places cohabitation in a broader social context and tries to analyze how this relationship form impacts—positively and negatively—the people who are part of cohabiting couples and households.

1. What are the best approaches for defining and measuring cohabitation?
2. How are cohabitation, marriage, and divorce related at the individual level?
3. What does cohabitation mean to—that is, how is it understood and evaluated by—members of various population sub-groups?
4. How does cohabitation affect childbearing and the well-being of children?
5. Why do people cohabit?

What Are the Best Approaches for Defining and Measuring Cohabitation?

In the early phase of research on cohabitation (1970s), studies were typically based on samples that were not representative of the general population (e.g., college students) or that comprised undefined populations (Smock, 2000). Comprehensive data sources, including the CPSs and the Decennial Census, did not directly measure cohabitation until the 1990s, and it was necessary for researchers to infer cohabitation status based on information on household composition (Glick & Spanier, 1980). Casper and Cohen (2000) show that the older indirect measure leads to underestimates of particular sub-populations, especially cohabiting households with children, and develop an improved, adjusted indirect measure.

Richer information, going beyond prevalence and basic characteristics of cohabiting-couple households, was first provided by the 1987–1988 National Survey of Families and Household (NSFH) and the 1988 NSFG. As time went on, numerous other large surveys also began to do so.

Today's scholars thus have access to more accurate measurement of cohabitation rates and a broader array of cohabitators' characteristics. Some of these data are collected by large surveys,

including panel surveys in which respondents are followed over many years and interviewed about their relationship experience at regular intervals. These survey data allow us to examine the impact of factors (or variables) of interest on a particular outcome, while controlling for other variables. If a researcher wants to understand the possible connection between, say, premarital cohabitation and later divorce, she or he is able to take into account other variables that may also affect divorce (e.g., income, education, age).

Importantly, these surveys typically ascertain cohabitation histories. Because cohabiting unions are generally brief, it is important to know whether people have *ever* cohabited and not merely whether they are currently cohabiting. Histories provide even more information than this (e.g., how many cohabitations, duration of cohabitation). Note that cohabitation histories are not without problems. Hayford and Morgan (2008) show that cohabitation rates are underestimated for times distant from the date of interview relative to those closer to the interview.

There remain several difficulties in defining and measuring cohabitation. One problem concerns family boundary ambiguity, or “who is in and who is out” of a family (Boss, 2007, pp. 108–109; Stewart, 2005). Brown and Manning (2009) found that cohabiting mothers' descriptions of their familial arrangements differed from their adolescent children's perceptions. Among mothers who reported they were living with a cohabiting partner (e.g., a cohabiting stepfamily), only one-third of their children described their families in the same way. This is in contrast with 99% congruity between mothers and adolescents who reported living in two-biological-parent families. These findings are consistent with other research documenting a correlation between greater family complexity and less consistency in members' descriptions of family structure (White, 1998).

Relevant to defining cohabitation is that entrance into cohabitation is often blurry and not tied to a specific date. In their qualitative study of 115 young adults with cohabitation experience, Manning and Smock (2005) found that cohabiting unions often form quite gradually and many interviewees were unable to provide a

precise date their cohabitations began. Moving into cohabitation is often a gradual process or “slide.”

It also matters *who*, *when*, and *how* questions about cohabitation are asked (Knab & McLanahan, 2006). Just as mothers and adolescents offer conflicting reports of family composition, couples do not always agree on their relationship status (Waller & McLanahan, 2005). This means that one partner may reply “yes” while the other says “no” when asked, separately, whether they are in a cohabiting relationship. *When* the question is asked can also affect responses. Unmarried couples with a child or children are more likely to describe themselves as cohabiting if asked right after their baby is born (when feelings of closeness peak) than if asked retrospectively (5 years later) about their relationship status at the time of the birth (Knab & McLanahan, 2006).

How respondents are asked about their unions is also important. Prior to 2007, the CPS ascertained cohabitation status by whether the household head, or “reference person” on the household roster, lived with an “unmarried partner.” Qualitative work suggested that this term was not ideal; Manning and Smock (2005) found that many cohabitators did not understand the term “unmarried partner,” and more often referred to their co-residing partners as boyfriend or girlfriend. Further, the structure of the pre-2007 CPS household roster, as well as the 1990 and 2000 Census, only captured cohabiting unions in which one partner was the reference person. As a result, cohabiting couples who were living with others such as family members, friends, etc. were left out if neither partner was the reference person (a problem particularly relevant among socioeconomically disadvantaged cohabitators; see Manning & Smock). Another problem with the pre-2007 measure concerned cohabiting couples with children. Each child was connected to one of the adults in the household (the “parent pointer”), and if that adult was married the child was considered to reside with two parents. If the adult was unmarried, however, the child was coded as living with one parent, overlooking the possibility that the child’s parents were unmarried and cohabiting.

The CPS made innovations to address these issues beginning in 2007: The addition of a direct question about cohabitation that did not use the term “unmarried partner,” but boyfriend, girlfriend, or partner; a household roster that allows for connections between people that do not necessarily include household head, and the addition of a second parent pointer. The second parent pointer allows children to be connected to two adults as parents, and indicates the nature of the relationship (biological, step, or adoptive parent).

These innovations appear to have led to improvements. Kennedy and Fitch (2009), using 2008 CPS data found that 5% of all cohabiting unions were between two household members, neither of whom was the reference person. These “subfamily” cohabitations were previously left out of the count. Kreider (2008) estimated that the new question that eliminates term “unmarried partner” captures roughly 20% cohabitators that were missed using the old term.

How Are Cohabitation, Marriage, and Divorce Related?

Many earlier studies of cohabitation assumed that cohabitators would eventually tie the knot, or that they were contemplating doing so. Particularly because cohabitation and marriage share many qualities—shared residence and resources, intimate relations, and, in many cases, childrearing—this makes intuitive sense. Cohabiting theoretically provides couples with the opportunity to test their compatibility, solidify their bonds and learn how to be part of a partnership. But the findings from research into whether cohabitators consciously view their union as a trial marriage are decidedly mixed.

Data from the 2002 NSFG indicate that almost half of all first cohabitations begin with the intention to marry, and that many individuals regard cohabitation as part of the marriage process (Guzzo, 2009). In a 2004 review of qualitative studies of cohabiting and marriage, the authors found that a majority of cohabiting couples believed that living together would allow them to evaluate their potential to succeed in marriage

(Edin et al., 2004). But other studies have found that many couples, particularly those without children and with greater socio-economic advantages, cohabit without consideration of future marriage plans (Manning & Smock, 2005). What drives this contradiction is the differentiated function and meaning of cohabitation across population sub-groups, a topic we examine in closer detail below (*How does cohabitation differ across population sub-groups?*).

Recent research on the motivations of cohabitators urges a move away from the default view of cohabitation as a precursor to marriage (Bumpass & Lu, 2000; Lichter, Qian, & Mellott, 2006; Raley & Bumpass, 2003; Sassler, 2004). In their study of cohabiting adults drawn from mixed class backgrounds, Manning and Smock (2005) found that none of the 115 interviewees reported having considered marriage at the start of the cohabitation period. Other studies, however, have found that one half to three quarters of cohabitators intend to marry their partner at some point (Brown & Booth, 1996).

Despite the fact that cohabiting couples do not necessarily view their relationship as a premarital experiment, it is nevertheless the case that almost half of cohabiting unions lead to marriage (Bumpass & Lu, 2000). We might reasonably expect that these marriages would be of higher quality (judged in terms of the individuals' satisfaction with and sense of stability in marriage) than those marriages that were not preceded by cohabitation, since cohabitation could serve as a screening device to test for marital compatibility (Teachman, 2003, p. 445). The evidence does not offer straightforward support for this hypothesis. Numerous studies have found that nonmarital cohabitation is no guarantor of eventual marital success (Brown, 2000, 2004; Teachman, 2003; Teachman & Polonko, 1990). Part of the problem is lower levels of interpersonal commitment than are found between married partners (Stanley, Whitton, & Markman, 2004).

This brings us to the question of relationship quality. Many cohabiting couples report that they are very happy with their relationships (Brown & Booth, 1996). It seems that cohabitation per se does not decrease relationship quality or increase

the risk of divorce. Other factors must be taken into account. For example, cohabitators may lack the skills needed to sustain an intimate relationship, particularly those who have been in numerous cohabiting relationships. Further, cohabitators, more so than married couples who did not cohabit, may take a less conventional approach to relationships generally and thus be more willing to see divorce as an acceptable option when spousal relations break down (Axinn & Thornton, 1992).

Whether and to what extent nonmarital cohabitation increases the odds of eventual divorce is a prominent theme in the literature (Axinn & Thornton, 1992; Dush, Cohan, & Amato, 2003; Hohmann-Marriott, 2006; Kline et al., 2004; Stanley, Rhoades, & Markman, 2006). As summarized by Smock (2000), many of the studies on this issue written during the 1990s suggested that premarital cohabitation *is* associated with a higher risk of divorce. But studies using more recent data present quite complicated findings (Smock & Manning, 2010). Phillips and Sweeney (2005) found that the prevalence of marital disruption to unions that started as cohabitation varies across race and ethnic lines: non-Hispanic White women who cohabited are more likely to experience divorce than are non-Hispanic Black and Mexican-American women. Whether the marriage partners cohabited serially (with other partners) before marrying is another important variable that predicted higher divorce rates (Lichter & Qian, 2008). There is also evidence to suggest that it is not premarital cohabitation alone that predicts increased risk of subsequent divorce, it is the joint effect of premarital cohabitation and premarital intercourse (Teachman, 2003). In sum, there is no clear causal arrow leading from cohabitation to divorce. It now appears that marriages preceded by cohabitation may be at slightly higher risk of divorce than those that did not begin as cohabiting unions, and that several relationship-specific factors, including prior relationships, partners' social status and level of intimacy, are at play.

One disagreement among scholars is whether the higher divorce rates of premarital cohabitators are better explained by characteristics that are typical of cohabitators (the selection explanation)

or by the process itself of cohabiting (the experience explanation) (Axinn & Thornton, 1992; Dush et al., 2003; Tach & Halpern-MeeKin, 2009; Thomson & Colella, 1992). This debate has produced a robust literature, and it is beyond the scope of this chapter to explore it in depth. Several studies have found that disparities in marital outcomes can generally be accounted for by selection (Brown, Sanchez, Nock, & Wright, 2006; Lillard, Brien, & Waite, 1995). In other words, individuals with certain personal and social characteristics are inclined both to cohabit and to have unstable marriages. There is, nevertheless, evidence to suggest that the experience of cohabiting changes the partners' attitude toward their relationship, making them more likely to divorce (Axinn & Thornton, 1992).

A separate issue concerns a so-called slide into cohabitation and, later, marriage. Couples slide when they move the relationship to a next step (from dating to cohabiting; from cohabiting to marriage) because they reach a point of inertia in their relationship (Manning & Smock, 2005). Such relationship transitions are also associated with increased risk for unhappiness and instability in cohabitation, and, later, for marital distress (Stanley et al., 2006).

How Does Cohabitation Differ Across Population Sub-groups?

Nonmarital cohabitation is now practiced by a majority of the population, and cohabitators today comprise a heterogeneous group. Family scholars are careful to avoid totalizing definitions or characterizations of cohabitators and their relationship trajectories. Instead, the emphasis in the literature is on the differential nature of cohabitation across population subgroups (Edin, 2000; Edin et al., 2004; Lichter, Batson, & Brown, 2004; Raley & Bumpass, 2003; Xie, Raymo, Goyette, & Thornton, 2003). Documenting racial, ethnic, age and class differences in cohabitation patterns and relationship trajectories is fairly uncomplicated. Making sense of these differences is another matter.

Scholars have established three key findings that help us to understand how cohabiting unions

differ across groups. First, the socio-economic disadvantages faced by low-income Hispanics and African-Americans are correlated with higher rates of relationship dissolution and lower rates of marriage. While high numbers of socio-economically advantaged men and women also cohabit, their relationships are more likely to lead to marriage than are those of low-income cohabitators (Smock & Greenland 2010). Low-income people of color tend to have very limited resources throughout the period of cohabitation—a situation that is associated with union distress and dissolution (Gibson-Davis, 2007). Social class is an important explanation of racial and ethnic variation in relationship forms and trajectories. This is due to the correlation between economic advantage and race in the United States; non-Hispanic Whites have historically enjoyed, on average, the highest incomes and lowest levels of poverty across family structures (Proctor & Dalaker, 2002).² In poor urban neighborhoods, cohabiting relationships are often under additional pressures due to expensive, overcrowded housing. While researchers do their best to include available measures to proxy social class in studies examining cohabiting, relationship trajectories, and family structure stability, racial and ethnic variation may be reduced but does not disappear.

Second, cohabitation patterns differ significantly among those with children versus those without. A recent study (Tach & Halpern-MeeKin, 2009) found that cohabitators with shared children who went on to marry each other experienced lower quality marital relationships, on average, than did married cohabitators who had not had children before marriage. The birth of a child to unmarried parents is a key determinant of future marital quality. This is the case regardless of whether the children were born to both cohabitators or to one of the cohabitators with a previous partner.

Again, there are noteworthy differences across race, ethnic, and income lines. Nonmarital birth

²We note figures from the 2000 Census that showed Asian-Americans earning 14% more than Whites, on average, and a 9% advantage when educational levels are factored. There is great variation among the group of Asian-American labor force participants, depending on level of acculturation and education (Xie & Goyette, 2004).

is associated with family instability, defined as multiple transitions in family composition, parenting structure, and residence. Whites as a group are least likely to have a nonmarital birth. Partly as a result, the trajectories of African-American and Hispanic families with children involve more instability than those for White children and, among those born to unmarried mothers, a lower chance of experiencing their mothers' marriage by age 12 (Kennedy & Bumpass, 2008; Raley & Wildsmith, 2004).

The third key finding is that cohabitation patterns differ along generational lines. While cohabiting unions continue to be most prevalent among persons aged 18–40, rates of cohabitation are rapidly increasing among older adults as well. One study that used indirect measures of cohabitation from 1980 to 1990 census data suggested that the cohabitation rate among men and women 60 years of age and older tripled during that period (while it doubled among unwed men and women under 40) (Chevan, 1996). In light of this evidence, several scholars have focused on how cohabitation patterns among older adults differ to those of their younger counterparts (Brown, Bulanda, & Lee, 2005; Brown, Lee, & Bulanda, 2006; de Jong Gierveld, 2004; Hatch, 1995; King & Scott, 2005).

For a start, data from the NSFHS indicate that the self-reported relationship satisfaction and quality levels among older cohabitators are significantly higher than are those reported by younger cohabitators. In their assessment of these data, King and Scott (2005) argue that cohabitators of all ages have similar motives for cohabiting, though one potentially significant difference is that younger cohabitators care more about assessing partner compatibility. This may be because, more so than their older counterparts, they are likely to see their relationship as having serious marital potential. It is also possible that financial needs, which differ throughout the life-course, play a role. What little research exists suggests that young cohabitators, often lacking education and stable employment, are drawn to cohabitation as a way to save money (Sassler, 2004). In contrast, cohabitators with further education and work experience—say, aged 30 and older—are less

likely to factor in money concerns as a reason to cohabit. In fact, widows and widowers with pensions may risk losing a portion of it if they remarry, thus encouraging them to cohabit with rather than marry an intimate partner.

Another study of older cohabitators (in this case, those aged 51 and older) provides a descriptive portrait of them (Brown, Lee, et al., 2006). Four percent, or a little more than one million, adults in this age group cohabit, and 90% of them were previously married. But cohabitation among older adults is just as heterogeneous as it is among younger adults, with older African-Americans more likely to cohabit than their coevals from other ethnic groups, and with varying levels of intensity, duration and relationship satisfaction (Chevan, 1996; Hatch, 1995). The same factors that predict low relationship quality and union dissolution among young cohabitators challenge older adults' cohabiting unions: constrained economic resources, socio-demographic disadvantage, weak social ties, and poor physical health (Brown, Lee, & Bulanda, 2006).

What Are the Impacts of Cohabitation on Childbearing and the Well-Being of Children?

Earlier we discussed the impact of having a child on nonmarital cohabitation, and pointed out that the birth of a child to unmarried parents is a key contributor to relationship stress and increased risk of divorce, if the parents eventually marry. We now shift the lens and examine the impact of nonmarital cohabitation on children themselves.

Of all births, almost 20% are to cohabiting couples (Kennedy & Bumpass, 2008; Mincieli, Manlove, McGarrett, Moore, & Ryan, 2007). This proportion appears to be growing. Between 1997 and 2001, a little more 50% of all nonmarital births were to cohabiting couples. Between 1990 and 1994, in contrast, roughly 29% of all nonmarital births were to cohabiting couples (Bumpass & Lu, 2000; Mincieli et al., 2007). Moreover, the share of births to cohabiting women increased substantially from the early 1990s onward while the share to single mothers

living without a partner remained steady (Kennedy & Bumpass, 2008).

What do we know about the experiences of children who grow up in, or at some point experience living in, a household headed by cohabitators? Relatively little work has been done to examine direct impacts of cohabiting on child well-being (Manning, 2002). What research does exist suggests that children of unmarried, cohabiting parents whose union is stable develop just about as well as their counterparts whose parents are married and stable. Individual characteristics of children and their parents/caregivers, however, make a difference in determining children's outcomes (Kalil, 2002). Family connectedness and children's embeddedness in close, caring relationships depends in large part on whether the cohabiting adults who raise them are committed to each other.

An area that has received more attention is the risk of instability to children born outside of marriage in comparison with those born to married couples. One strand of this investigation contrasts the stability of parental relationships for children born to cohabiting versus those born to married parents, typically finding that the former are more prone to witness their parents' break-up (Graefe & Lichter, 1999; Osborne, Manning, & Smock, 2007; Raley & Wildsmith, 2004; Wu & Musick, 2008). For example, about 15% of children born to cohabiting parents experience the end of their parents' union by age 1, half by age 5, and two thirds by age 10. For children born to married couples, instability is much less frequent, with only 4 and 15% experiencing their parents' separation by age 1 and 5, respectively, and roughly 28% by age 10 (Manning, Smock, & Majumdar, 2004, pp. 146–147).

A central motivation for research on union dissolution among parents is that there appear to be negative associations between parental separation and children's well-being. Indicators of well-being include children's health and development, self-esteem as adults, cognitive growth, and personal risk-taking (i.e., experimentation with sex, alcohol, and drugs). Numerous studies have established that family structure instability has negative effects on child well-being (Cherlin, 1999; Fomby & Cherlin, 2007). More generally, researchers have documented that family

structure instability tends to decrease child well-being. The problematic outcomes are numerous: delayed verbal development, compromised academic achievement, behavioral problems, financial instability during adulthood, and delinquency, among others, depending on the availability of measures in the data being used.

There is also evidence for continuity between adolescent and adult relationship experiences, suggesting that whether an adult marries or cohabits is related to the form, intensity, and duration of the intimate relationships she or he had as a teenager (Raley, Crissey, & Muller, 2007; Schoen, Landale, & Daniels, 2007). This suggests a cyclical process of relationship success or distress. Children of parents who dissolved their cohabiting union are more likely to initiate sexual activity as young teens, and because early sexual activity is associated with behavioral problems and emotional difficulties, the teen is on a path towards lower relationship quality as a young adult. We wish to stress that cohabitation itself cannot be blamed for damaging children. The dissolution of any sort of parental union—non-marital or marital—presents challenges to most children. Because cohabitators have *on average* less socioeconomic advantage than married persons, their problems are only exacerbated by breaking up and their children must then face the stress of additionally constrained resources.

Why Cohabit?

Earlier in this chapter, we stated that recent studies of cohabitation have problematized the longstanding assumption that cohabitation is a conscious precursor to marriage, and expanded our understanding of cohabiting unions to encompass a broad range of emotional and material motivators and investments. Qualitative studies have played a significant role in destabilizing status quo assumptions about cohabitators' motivations to cohabit (Smock, Huang, Manning, & Bergstrom, 2006). In this discussion, we draw evidence from qualitative work to demonstrate how such methods can help us to produce nuanced understanding of cohabitators' motives, desires, and expectations.

In a study that examines why people choose to cohabit, Sassler (2004) conducted in-depth interviews with cohabitators aged 20–33 in the New York City area and found that the majority of them cited finances, convenience (broadly defined), or changes in their housing situation as catalyzing their decision. The intriguing finding from this work was that the primary motive for cohabiting was not an intention on the part of the cohabitators to try out marriage. Many respondents explained that moving in together made sense from a logistical or financial point of view, and that these reasons, as much or more as love and romance, were factors in their decision to cohabit. For example, a 23-year-old woman recounted how she wound up living with her boyfriend:

I was looking for my own apartment at this time. I was saving money and I was looking for an apartment. He was like, “Why don’t you just move in with me?” I was like, “Let’s give it some time,” or whatever. So I dated him for like a month and then finally all my stuff ended up in his house (Sassler, 2004, p. 496).

Other respondents described a move towards cohabitation that was based on convenience and common sense. The responses led Sassler to identify three groups of cohabitators, organized around differences in how quickly the relationship progressed to cohabitation. Accelerated Cohabitators transitioned from initial romantic involvement to moving in together within 6 months; Tentative Cohabitators were involved with their partners for between 7 and 12 months before moving in together; Purposeful Delayers made the transition to cohabitation after at least 1 year of dating. Sassler found that members of this group were generally slower to progress through all stages of the relationship than were members of the first two groups.

Sassler’s study demonstrates that cohabiting couples are not necessarily driven to live together in order to practice or prepare for marriage. The study also reminds us that there is no single, modal cohabitation context. The standard definition of cohabitation as two unrelated, unmarried, romantically involved adults living together does not shed light on what precipitated the decision to cohabit, how the partners view cohabitation and

whether they intend to maintain that relationship stage for long. Qualitative work can provide us with fine-grained observations of cohabitators’ decision-making process, something that is more difficult to glean from quantitative studies.

In another qualitative study of cohabitators’ motives, Rhoades et al. (2009) asked 120 heterosexual couples why they decided to cohabit. The authors sent participants in-depth mail surveys, and used the responses to construct a Reasons for Cohabitation Scale. Across all respondents, 61% stated that they wanted to move in with their partner in order to spend more time with him or her. A significantly smaller number of respondents, 18.5%, stated that their prime motive for moving in together was that it made sense financially. A bit more than 14% reported a desire to test marriage compatibility, and 6% gave as their number one reason for cohabiting, “I don’t believe in the institution of marriage.” The reasons given for cohabitation were associated with number of prior cohabiting relationships, depression levels, individual well-being, and relationship quality. What is important about this area of research is that it points to the interconnectedness of personal characteristics and relationship trajectories. If a cohabitor’s prime motive for cohabiting is to test for marital compatibility, it may mean that he or she is strongly committed to a long-term relationship and views cohabitation as a step towards marriage. On the other hand, a choice of cohabitation that stems from the cohabitor’s past experience in a bad relationship will in turn predict low relationship commitment. These are complicated connections. Large scale qualitative work has the potential to shed light on the motives and choices recognized and taken by cohabitators.

Theoretical Frameworks to Study Cohabitation

Studies of cohabitation emphasize the importance of economic resources and cultural factors in precipitating union formation and influencing union outcome (whether sustainment, marriage, or dissolution). Culture and resources matter: participants in studies of nonmarital cohabitation routinely cite

one or both as factoring in their relationship decisions. Evaluating the extant research through the culture and resources lens offers useful insights to how men and women make relationship decisions, and a powerful theoretical framework that offers another perspective on who cohabits, why, under what circumstances and to what end. Sound application of theories has potential to simplify otherwise complex social interactions, highlighting specific elements or processes (Morgan, Bachrach, Johnson-Hanks, & Kohler, 2008).

In this section we present two major sociological theories that have been applied to the study of nonmarital cohabitation. The first of these is the culture-resources paradigm, as expounded by the social historian William H. Sewell, Jr. and expanded in Morgan et al. (2008). The second is the theory of capital pluralism, conceptualized by sociologist Bourdieu (1986) and developed by a number of scholars interested in understanding what drives individuals' decision-making processes. Although we separate these theories under different headings, we recognize that they overlap in some significant ways.

Theorizing Cohabitation I: Culture and Resources

Although cultural factors and economic resources often work together, they also function independent of each other. Cultural schema and resources both reinforce and act upon one another, creating a duality of social structure that simultaneously empowers and constrains individuals (Sewell, 1992). Socially sanctioned patterns of family life, collective ritual, and union formation comprise schema, which operate through resources (including income, apartments, health insurance, savings accounts, and kin networks). Such resources are made valuable within cultural schema. A gold band worn on one's left ring finger is worth more than just the value of its material contents: it is, at least in many cultural subgroups throughout the United States, a highly prized signifier of marital relationship status. Cultural schemas are powerful precisely because they are taken for granted as commonsensical. They are susceptible to

change, but doing so is typically a slow and difficult process if there is no significant socio-historic event that bends the social fabric (Sewell, 1992, 1996, 1999).

A recent paper applies the culture-resources paradigm to family change and demonstrates how an individual's or couple's resources affect the cultural schema they choose to operationalize (Morgan et al., 2008). When men and women decide to marry they do so in congruence with an established pattern of beliefs (cultural schema) about the value of marriage. Marriage and its associated rituals can thus be better understood through an examination of the undergirding values and beliefs. At the same time, schema which value marriage would be difficult to sustain without couples' continuing to marry, thus reinforcing the value of marriage. When resources increase or decrease, or their distribution across groups shifts, individuals' social actions may change and thus engender social transformation. Because schema are reproduced through humans, and because humans have a certain measure of individual agency which allows them room for creativity (or mistakes), schema are mutable and social change does occur.

An important premise to this line of analysis is that individuals have differential access to resources and schematic systems depending on their location in social space, defined, as it were, by social class, region, generation, religion, ethnicity, or race. When a person makes a decision—say, to agree to cohabit with a partner or to propose that the relationship take a new direction—he or she is influenced by a number of schemas, some of which may be contradictory. She or he may, for example, come from a family that strictly disapproves of nonmarital cohabitation, but also live in a community that celebrates individuality and freedom from traditional constraints on organizing one's personal life. In choosing nonmarital cohabitation, she or he may risk hurting family members (or even being cut off from them); at the same time, she or he may benefit financially, emotionally, and socially by choosing to cohabit. It is of interest to researchers to understand how social actors navigate schema and resources, and which of these drive family change.

Let us consider qualitative evidence from studies of young adult cohabitators who cited financial concerns when asked by researchers to explain why they were holding off on getting married (Smock, Manning, & Porter, 2005). One young woman, Heidi, was living with her boyfriend and his parents at the time of the interview. Heidi worked as an assistant manager at a shoe store and was concerned that she and her boyfriend did not have sufficient funds to pay for a wedding or support themselves financially:

Right now, we wouldn't be able to afford, you know, to be out on our own... To have to pay rent ... to pay bills... I mean, I realize that you're going to have rent and I realize that you're going to have you know, utilities and groceries and furnishings and stuff like that. I don't think he realizes that half the time, and he's like, "Hmmm, so let's go!" I think that we need to have more income coming in so we can be able to do that (Smock et al., 2005, p. 688).

Using the schema-resources paradigm, two particularly interesting aspects of Heidi's statement emerge. First, Heidi believes that married life requires some measure of financial stability and the ability of a couple to support themselves without recourse to assistance from family, friends, or the government. Whatever resources she and her boyfriend might have now (as cohabitators with his parents) are sufficient for the current living arrangement but would be insufficient for marriage. Many couples whose resources are adequate to support them through cohabitation express the view that they ought to have even *more* resources before they marry (and not necessarily because they are factoring in the cost of children) (Edin et al., 2004; Gibson-Davis, 2007). There seems to be something special about marriage that distinguishes it from other partnership forms such that additional levels of resources are perceived to be required. In this view, marriage is a capstone achievement, a sign that a couple has achieved both emotional and financial maturity (Edin & Kefalas, 2005; Gibson-Davis, 2007).

Second, the preoccupation with financial stability is shouldered by female as well as male partners. A generation or two ago, the prevailing wisdom had it that men ought to be guarantors of income and provide financial stability for their

spouses or partners. Heidi's words make clear that she sees herself equally responsible for shoring up her and her boyfriend's resources. What we might call Heidi's cultural script is distinctly recent: "*we* wouldn't be able to afford" ... "*we* need to have more income coming in so that *we* can be able to do that." Traditional schema governing romance and love are still at play, but they have been integrated with the practicalities of modern-day partnerships. Another woman, Petra, reported that her boyfriend "wants to marry me and [wants] a big wedding and, you know, he wants the whole nine yards" (the sense here is that Petra's boyfriend occupies the traditional male role of wooer and relationship driver) "but right now *we* can't really afford it" (italics added for emphasis). This is not to say that cohabitators today hold a uniformly gender-egalitarian view of work and financial contributions—indeed, many do not. But Heidi, Petra, and their female coevals see themselves as active partners in the fiscal direction of their unions, rather than as passive supporters of their male partners' work decisions.

Theorizing Cohabitation II: Capital

In the previous section we considered resources as bound up mostly with money, but it is important to emphasize that resources includes more than cash. Money, education, and employment figure centrally in most studies of cohabitation, and we agree that these forms of resources play a crucial role in precipitating, sustaining, and directing relationships. Nevertheless, expanding the definition of resources to include various forms of capital—economic, cultural, social, and symbolic—offers a multi-dimensional perspective on why some relationships lead to cohabitation, some to marriage, and others to dissolution. Bourdieu defined social capital as "the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Further, Bourdieu (1986) argued that individuals use their various

forms of capital to protect and advance their social position, often by distinguishing themselves from the capital-deficient (in other words, from the socio-economically disadvantaged).

Implicit in Bourdieu's view is that capital is (a) accumulated and (b) always potentially useful. Some sociologists have challenged this view, pointing out that a given form of capital can be positive or negative depending on the context. In a 1999 study of young African-American men in a Chicago low-income neighborhood, Young found that acquiring capital was not necessarily a problem for his subjects (Young, 1999). The men he interviewed were in possession of the skills and strategies they needed to survive and even thrive in their immediate community. But the same social and human capital that were valued in their home environments—street savvy, working knowledge of current gang affiliations, ability to adopt self-defensive postures in the face of aggressive challengers—were not valued in the mainstream job market. In many cases, the men *had*, in fact, acquired the sort of traditional forms of capital envisaged by Bourdieu, but they lacked older mentors or role models who could teach them to use that capital strategically.

Young's intervention is especially germane to the study of cohabiting unions' relationship trajectories because cohabitators are disproportionately young and socio-demographically disadvantaged (Bumpass & Lu, 2000; Nock, 1995; Thornton, Axinn, & Teachman, 1995). Abundant evidence suggests that relationship forms, problem-solving strategies, and family life patterns are passed on from parents, step-parents, or other primary adult caregivers (Lichter et al., 2006; Sassler, Cunningham, & Lichter, 2009). That children of separated parents are more likely to grow up and have unstable relationships is not difficult to explain: what they know (and what they don't know) about relationships, they have learned from their parents. Social background differences play a key role. Higher education and income levels are associated with higher rates of marriage after cohabitation, later average age at first marriage, and fewer first births before age 24 (Schoen, Landale, Daniels, & Cheng, 2009). In short, the stability

and quality of a relationship—whether marital or nonmarital—are closely linked with the participants' human, social, and economic capital.

Turning again to empirical evidence, Edin and Kefalas's (2005) study of poor unwed mothers reveals that they place a high value on children and regard childlessness as a tragedy. Indeed, one researcher has called children "the most important resource created" in marriage, and we add that they are additionally valuable outside of marriage (Seltzer, 2000). The young Philadelphia mothers interviewed by Edin and Kefalas decisively contradict the popular perception of them as sexually irresponsible, socially deviant, and derelict in their maternal duties. They acknowledge the economic hardships they face, and many of them express regret that the fathers of their children do not play an active role in their children's upbringing. But by and large they are proud to be mothers, and believe that bearing children before marriage is perfectly acceptable and, in many cases, commonsensical (Edin & Kefalas, 2005). Even those mothers who cohabit with a romantic partner whom they consider to be supportive and reliable do not wish to rush into marriage lest an unstable relationship lead to divorce.

How can theories of capital, as developed by Bourdieu and Young, help us to study nonmarital cohabitators with children? On the one hand, parenthood transforms teenagers and young adults from kids into fully fledged grown-ups: as custodians of the next generation, young men and women increase their social capital by having their own children. On the other hand, children become a liability when, for example, parents want to return to school or work but are unable to do so because they cannot afford child care. This is the dual nature of capital (Young, 1999). For impoverished cohabitators with constrained mainstream social or economic capital, the negative effects of capital are particularly pronounced. The relationship challenges faced by unmarried, cohabiting parents are well-established (Graefe & Lichter, 2002; Tach & Halpern-Meekin, 2009; Timmer & Orbach, 2001; Twenge, Campbell, & Foster, 2003). Children are positive capital when it comes to raising the social stature of their parents, but negative capital when those same parents need

time and resources to allow them to work or study. Of course, parents from all socio-economic backgrounds, whether single, cohabiting or married, wrestle with conflicting demands and try to use their capital strategically. Cohabitators who are young and poor are typically less able to weather the emotional and financial storms because they have limited access to the mainstream forms of capital that they need to create a stable life. They are also less likely to marry, and more likely to cohabit serially, than are cohabitators from higher income brackets.

There is a good deal more work to be done in this area. Morgan et al. (2008) have introduced a promising avenue of research that illuminates the complex interconnections that influence fertility and family formation choices. Integrating theories of resources and capital into empirical studies of cohabitation offers a powerful method for analyzing how differential access to money, housing, kin networks, and social supports (among other resources) influences cohabitators and their relationship decisions.

Conclusion

Over the past 3 decades, social scientists have established that cohabiting unions have increased in frequency and produced both challenges and new opportunities for men and women who choose to cohabit. Before the rise and popular acceptance of cohabitation, marriage was the only way for heterosexual couples to live together in a socially approved manner. Couples today can choose to share living space, combine resources, and bond emotionally without committing to marriage. This shift in social mores has also reduced the stigma of bearing children out of wedlock, such that babies born to unmarried, cohabiting parents will be seen by many to come from an intact family.

Our chapter synthesized numerous areas of knowledge on cohabitation, organized around five research questions that figure prominently in the literature. These included: (1) measuring cohabitation; (2) understanding the association between cohabitation and marriage, and between

premarital cohabitation and divorce; (3) differentials of cohabitation along generational lines; (4) experiences of children in cohabiting families; and (5) the growing literature on why individuals choose to cohabit.

We began the chapter by noting that the majority of marriages and remarriages are now preceded by a period of cohabitation (Smock, 2000). But the aggregate number obscures the multiple paths to, and contexts of, cohabitation and the implications of such variation. One of the most important implications revolves around the instability of cohabiting unions (relative to marital unions) and the impact on child well-being. It is clear that children who are most socio-demographically disadvantaged to begin with are, on average, more likely to be born into contexts in which they can expect to experience family instability (Raley & Wildsmith, 2004). It is likely that researchers will continue to engage these themes, though we suggest that studies also take on the question of how cohabiting unions can be better supported. Marriage is formally supported, through tax incentives and health insurance coverage. But many cohabitators set a high economic bar for marriage and hold off on tying the knot until they feel financially secure. As long as millions of young, lower-than-average-income men and women cohabit and have children, supporting their union through policy may help create more stable families.

A second implication of the research we synthesized is that moving beyond the core couple is vital to understanding variation in family forms and relationship trajectories. Many cohabiting couples live with parents, grandparents, members of the extended family, and roommates. Their families are dynamic and may include household members who are present at one point in time and then leave the household; families may also include part-time residents such as step-siblings or quasi step-siblings (e.g., biological children of a cohabiting partner). Given such fluidity, cohabitation should not be assumed to be concomitant with financial independence or sole household residency.

Third, researchers will continue to examine the links between cohabitation and marriage.

We know that approximately one half of all cohabiting unions lead to marriage. We know that many young adults feel strongly that they want marriage and family life. We also know that many young cohabitators do not (or say that they do not) view their cohabiting unions as trial-run marriages. The two statements are not necessarily incompatible. It is perfectly possible that women and men today view cohabitation with a romantic partner as permissible irrespective of whether they intend to marry, and expect to cohabit more than once before finding a marriage partner. We urge continued attention to long-term relationship trajectories that take in multiple cohabitations and eventual marriage, as well as to the factors that motivate cohabitation.

Fourth, a significant development in family studies is attention to the meaning of cohabitation and marriage. This research has helped us to understand the symbolic importance of the family in its many guises, incorporating an interpretive approach that is typically associated with cultural studies. Qualitative studies have helped us to understand that while marriage is an aspiration for most people, those on the economic edge are likely to see themselves as unready to marry, with marriage signifying the achievement of a middle-class lifestyle. Additional qualitative work can deepen our comprehension of the ways that men and women, as well as adolescents and children, perceive and experience family forms.

Throughout this chapter, we sought to emphasize that cohabitation is a social construct. This means that a wide range of relationships—varying in terms of the partners' expectations of marriage, perceptions of relationship stability, willingness to pool resources, and exclusion of other romantic partners—are classified as cohabitation (Casper & Sayer, 2000). Two coresiding 50-year-old romantic partners with previous marriages and no intention to remarry are called cohabitators; so are two 20-year-old parents of a small child who live with one partner's parents. The all-encompassing "cohabiting union" can be misleading in such a situation: the two sets of partners are likely to show very different relationship trajectories, role manifestations, and reported satisfaction levels. Bearing in mind the heterogeneous nature of

cohabitators and the circumstances in which their relationships function is crucial when trying to draw conclusions about how cohabitation, marriage, and divorce are interrelated.

In closing, we remind our readers that cohabitation is not a new relationship type. Throughout human history and across cultures, adults have cohabited in various forms (Thornton, 2005). Why is this topic so important to researchers now? If cohabitation rates suggest a continual increase, what is there left to say after declaring it a normative relationship form? The very fact that so many adults cohabit, intend to cohabit or express support for the idea of cohabitation is noteworthy. Cohabitation may not be new, but its widespread cross-cultural prevalence is. Moreover, the upward trend is recent enough that we still do not know the full scope of the impacts of cohabitation on children, work, financial stability, intergenerational relationships, health, and other long-term aspects of the life-course. For example, we know that rates of cohabitation have risen concomitant with a decline in rates of marriage, but it is far from clear where (or whether) to draw a causal arrow between these trends (Cherlin, 2004; Ellwood & Jencks, 2004; Goldstein & Kenney, 2001). A diverse group of scholars—demographers, economists, family scientists, psychologists, legal scholars, sociologists, social workers, and scholars of health—is attempting to elucidate our understanding of these impacts on the millions of Americans for whom cohabitation is a more acceptable relationship form than ever before.

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Parent–Child Relationships in Diverse Contexts

13

Kevin R. Bush and Gary W. Peterson

Families often serve as the most important social contexts for child development, with their most significant quality being complex relationships in which socialization influence flows in more than one direction. Children are not just passive social beings who are shaped by their surrounding environment. Instead, they are active agents who help reshape their environment over time as they exert countervailing influence on others in their social context. As children interact with parents, siblings, and other family members, significant symbols are exchanged, meanings and patterned behaviors are co-created, and roles are reciprocally determined and constantly renegotiated as children experience development in context. Patterned behavior within the parent–child relationship is a product of shared genetic characteristics, parents' shared values and resources, common elements of the family environment, and patterned ways that parents respond to the young.

Despite the appearance of patterned behaviors, however, the influence of children on their parents and the larger system of family relationships demonstrate significant variation across time and in the different psychosocial outcomes that develop in individual children. Beginning in

infancy, children are sources of powerful influence on their parent's behavior and the larger patterns of family interaction. Early within the parent–child relationship, for example, infant cries, verbalizations, movements, and gazes both elicit and influence parental responses. Consistent with this circular process, the responses of parents elicit further responses from children, with the result being that patterns of interaction emerge that have been characterized as a “dance” between partners in a dynamic relationship (Peterson & Hann, 1999; Peterson & Rollins, 1987). This parent–child dance continues in both patterned and evolving ways throughout the life course, becoming increasingly susceptible over time to outside influences as children develop and expand their social networks.

The metaphor of a “dance” that socializes both parents and children serves as backdrop for defining the purpose of this chapter, which is to provide an overview of the current research on parent–child relationships in diverse contexts. To accomplish this complex goal, an extensive review is provided first of the theoretical and empirical work on the impact of family structural variations on parent–child relationships consisting of such influences as family socioeconomic status (SES), poverty status, maternal employment, divorce, remarriage, and the presence of siblings. This is followed by attention to several dimensions of parent–child processes consisting of parental styles, dimensions of parental behavior, parent–child conflict, and interparental or marital/couple conflict on child development.

K.R. Bush, PhD (✉) • G.W. Peterson, PhD
Department of Family Studies and Social Work,
Miami University, McGuffey Hall 101, Oxford,
OH 45056, USA
e-mail: bushkr@muohio.edu; petersgw@muohio.edu

Although a goal of this chapter is to describe and draw conclusions about the general state of knowledge relating to parent–child relationships, the primary focus is on recent empirical literature completed during the first decade of the twenty-first century. Prior to describing and drawing these conclusions, however, a brief review of relevant theories is provided that conceptualizes parent–child relationships, the process of socialization within families, and some of the socialized outcomes demonstrated by children.

Socialization Within and Beyond Families

Families are often viewed as influencing the development of children through social dynamics referred to as the family socialization process. These interpersonal dynamics within families provide the means for transferring important values to the young, constructing shared meanings, and providing models for instilling psychosocial outcomes in children. A more encompassing arena of socialization beyond family boundaries is the broader social context consisting of experiences that family members have within neighborhoods, communities, cultural settings, legal systems, religious institutions, political institutions, and diverse aspects of the natural environment (Bornstein & Sawyer, 2006; Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 2005; Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994).

Families provide a continual evolving social context for the socialization of parents, children, and other family members as development proceeds across the life course. Beyond family boundaries, connections exist with other ecological niches (e.g., cultural settings, economic institutions, neighborhoods, etc.) that contribute to developmental change. Traditional conceptions of family socialization have involved various kinds of unidirectional or social mold approaches. From a traditional social mold perspective, parents are viewed as shaping and influencing children (i.e., who are largely viewed as passive recipients) to internalize societal values and expectations that are valued by families and other social institutions (Inkeles, 1968; Parsons & Bales, 1955; Peterson & Hann, 1999).

At the risk of stating the obvious, a more accurate view of socialization that contrasts with the social mold perspective is one that portrays children as active participants in this process. Recent theoretical and empirical work recognizes more accurately the complex nature of socialization and asserts that this process involves at least bidirectional influences or, more accurately, multidirectional influences (Crosnoe & Cavanagh, 2010; Kuczynski, 2003; Peterson & Hann, 1999). That is, children both influence and are influenced by many social agents and experiences in their ecological context (e.g., parents, siblings, peers, teachers, extended family members). Simultaneously, these dyadic mutual influences are embedded in a larger social context and, in turn, influence and are influenced by institutions and social settings that compose the larger human ecology (e.g., schools, community settings, laws, culture, economic patterns, etc.) (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1994).

Ecological Theory Applied to Parent–Child Relationships

Although family socialization is the focus of this chapter, the larger socialization process occurs within a complex multifaceted context consisting of several ecological systems within which children and families are embedded (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1994) such as neighborhoods, schools, and larger social-cultural systems (e.g., cultural, religious institutions, etc.). That is, a combination of social, genetic, and maturational factors are major contributors to child development (Lerner, 2002). However, due to the diverse ecological complexities in which development takes place, any efforts to isolate specific socialization influences (e.g., family, peer, biological) as the sole influences on development are unlikely, if not impossible, to establish.

The ecological perspective of Bronfenbrenner (1979; 2005; Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994), in particular, has been applied effectively to conceptualize the multiple socialization contexts of child development. This theory is especially important for its comprehensiveness because both immediate and more distant (or indirect)

sources of influence on children's development are conceptualized in one model. Current definitions of the ecological approach includes five ecosystemic levels or dimensions as follows: (a) the microsystem, which refers to the family (or subsystem, or individual family member); (b) the mesosystem, which refers to connections between microsystems such as the linkages between families and schools; (c) the exosystem, which refers to influences originating from larger systems that encompass and provide an immediate context for families such as neighborhoods and communities; (d) the macrosystem, which represents the largest social contexts at the national, societal, or general cultural level (such as political, religious, economic, cultural, and legal institutions); and (e) the chronosystem, which refers to the timing and patterning of events across the life course (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1979, 1994, 2005). The Ecological approach highlights the notion that no one social context can be understood in isolation from the others. Although it is difficult to truly operationalize the entire theory simultaneously, "spillover" is likely to occur among the various ecosystemic levels, which means that interconnections between the family and surrounding social contexts must always be considered (Goodnow, 2006).

Family Systems Theory Applied to Parent–Child Relationships

Viewing parent–child relationships from a family systems perspective, the focus is on the interaction between parents and children. That is, the reciprocity between parents and children allows for more powerful (i.e., hierarchical relationships) parents (compared to their child) to contribute to their children's competence through reciprocal interactions. A family systems perspective also allows for continuity in conceptualization without applying constraints for the particular structural qualities of families. Thus, all families operate as systems and follow the properties of a system regardless of composition, SES, ethnicity, or other possible structural variations (Minuchin, 1974). Perhaps the most fundamental idea of this framework is that family systems are complex entities

whose members are tied together as part of larger relationship wholes. That is, all elements of family systems are interrelated through dynamic, mutual, and circular processes that link together the constituent individuals and relationships within families (Bornstein & Sawyer, 2006).

Several assumptions or constructs of family systems theory are useful for conceptualizing and understanding parent–child relationships. The first of these constructs, isomorphism, refers to an equivalence of form, such that aspects of the larger system (e.g., family) are reflected in interactions among the parts (i.e., the individuals and subsystems) of the system (Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993). Common patterns of interaction can be identified by observing interaction between family members and subsystems which are reflective of or represent the rules and boundaries of the family system. For example, themes of the larger family system, such as tolerance for individuality, are reflected in how parents and children interact, how the parenting subsystem interacts with the child/sibling subsystem (internal boundaries), and how a family interacts with or presents itself to the outside world (external boundaries).

Another concept, the assumption of nonsummativity or holism, refers to viewing the whole system as more than simply the sum of its components or parts (Bornstein & Sawyer, 2006). In other words, a family is more than simply a parent plus a child, but also involves the interactions between each of the systems subcomponents (i.e., individuals and/or subsystems), such as the constituents within the parent–child relationship. An important aspect of a family system or subsystem is the meaning(s) and structure(s) that emerge out of this interaction. A systems perspective often focuses on these emergent qualities of the system as a whole vs. the qualities of any particular component (i.e., individual or subsystem) in isolation from the whole (Bornstein & Sawyer; Broderick, 1993).

Yet another important concept or assumption is self-reflexivity within human systems, which refers to the ability of individuals (separately or collectively) to examine the operation of their systems and establish their own goals (Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993). The multiple and reciprocal directionality of family influences as well as

the potential for conflict spawned by divergent views between individual members and family subsystems highlights the importance of self-reflection and goal orientation within family systems.

Unique patterns of interaction develop within each family system through the processes of carrying out roles and accomplishing goal-oriented tasks, as both explicit and implicit rules are created and represented through the construct of boundaries (Bornstein & Sawyer, 2006; Minuchin, 1974). For example, each family develops unique patterns of communication that define their relationships, roles, goals, and strategies for accomplishing goals, all of which provide structure for daily life.

A systemic view of parent–child relations, for example, often focuses on the degree of openness in information exchange. Such a focus on communication is important, because open communication between parents and children facilitates close and supportive relationships. Parent–child relationships that are close and supportive, in turn, provide the impetus for healthy negotiations of conflict and autonomy, both of which lead to positive parent–child relationships and child outcomes.

Children’s Social Competence and Problem Behavior: Outcomes of Socialization

Most parents intend to foster social competence in their children by setting appropriate expectations that are consistent with behavior and values considered to be normative in their social-cultural context and contribute to adaptive relationships with others (Bloom, 1990; Gillespie, 2003; Peterson, 2005; Peterson & Bush, 2003; Peterson & Leigh, 1990). Social competence is defined as a set of attributes or psychological resources that help children adapt to and cope with diverse social situations they are likely to encounter in everyday life (e.g., Baumrind, 1966, 1991; Peterson, 2005; Peterson & Bush, 2003). Recent conceptualizations of social competence identify several subdimensions, including (a) social skills

and prosocial behavior with peers and other interpersonal relationships; (b) psychological or cognitive resources (e.g., self-regulation, conflict management, problem-solving skills); (c) a balance between age-appropriate autonomy and connectedness in reference to parents; and (d) an achievement orientation.

The opposite of socially competent attributes, problem behavior, can generally be classified as externalizing or internalizing behavior. The first of these types of problem dimensions, externalizing behavior, refers to aggressive, violent, and conduct disordered behavior that acts out against society at home, school, or other social contexts (Meyer, 2003). A second problem dimension, internalizing attributes, refers to difficulties such as anxious or depressive symptoms that are manifest psychologically and directed internally toward the self (Kovacs & Devlin, 1998). The prevalence of internalizing or externalizing attributes among the young increases the chances of children experiencing other problems during development such as school failure, parent–child conflict, and poor peer adjustment. Similarly, these other problems (e.g., parent–child conflict) can also lead to or exacerbate internalizing and externalizing problems. For example, children’s conflict with fathers has been found to mediate the relationships between paternal depression and children’s internalizing and externalizing problems (Kane & Garber, 2009). In contrast, dimensions of children’s social competence (e.g., self-regulation or social skills) as well as aspects of family socialization processes that foster such outcomes (e.g., parental support) are sources of social-psychological resilience that assist children to cope successfully with situations that threaten effective adaptation and lead to internalizing or externalizing problems (Gillespie, 2003; Hauser, 1999).

Family Structural Variation

Structural variations in family life refer to differences across families in the composition (i.e., the number of family members, types of relationships and statuses), resources available (e.g., income and education level), and structural organization

(e.g., intact two-parent, bi-nuclear families). Over the years there have been continuing debates regarding the comparative impact of structural family variations vs. family processes on child outcomes, parent–child relationships, parenting, and marriage. Growing evidence indicates that a focus on both structural and family process variables is necessary to develop a thorough understanding of families in the form of direct and indirect effects (e.g., Crosnoe & Cavanagh, 2010). Most of the impact from family structural variations is typically conveyed indirectly through influences on specific family processes and social psychological variables, such as patterns of communication, conflict management, and parental behavior (Cherlin, 2004; Demo & Cox, 2000; Teachman, 2000; Wilson, Peterson, & Wilson, 1993). The structural characteristics of family life impact the quality of interaction or processes that take place during socialization. Thus, although some direct structural effects may be evident, the primary means of specifying the impact of these family characteristics is to delineate how they have consequences for the dynamic processes within family systems that contribute to family functioning. These influences on family processes, in turn, will have psychological and behavioral consequences for family members (Rutter, 2002).

Family SES

Often considered within the larger topic of social stratification, the construct family SES is commonly used to define the social and economic standing of a particular family and its members within the larger society. SES is often provided empirical meaning based on indicators of parental education, income, residence, and/or other measurements of social class standing.

Research during the first decade of the twenty-first century suggests that SES is predictive of parenting beliefs, values, and behaviors as well as child outcomes within families (see Conger, Conger, & Martin, 2010 for recent review). Two common theoretical models that have been applied to understand the relationship between

SES, parent–child processes, and child outcomes are the Family Stress and the Investment Models (Conger et al.).

Following the *Family Stress Model*, SES influences child outcomes through parents and related family processes. Lower SES, for example, is associated with greater stress, depression, poor neighborhoods, and disadvantaged living conditions for parents. Moreover, economic hardship for parents is associated with such patterns as higher levels of interparental conflict (IPC), parenting behavior characterized as punitive, uninvolved and inconsistent parenting, as well as problematic child outcomes (Conger & Conger, 2002; Conger et al., 2002). Thus, from the standpoint of the Family Stress Model, the primary effects of economic influence/stress on children are mediated through variations in the kinds of parenting that can result from the circumstances of economic hardship. Recent studies with diverse samples and methodologies support the Family Stress Model by concluding that economic pressure on parents leads to emotional distress and IPC, which, in turn, leads to greater use of problematic forms of parenting. Parents who are more likely to foster problematic child outcomes tend to engage in IPC, use punitiveness frequently with children, are disengaged, and are frequently inconsistent in their discipline and socialization patterns (e.g., Benner & Kim, 2010; Conger et al., 2002; Mistry, Biesanz, Taylor, Burchinal, & Cox, 2004; Parke et al., 2004).

The basic premise of the *Investment Model* is that parents who have more economic resources are better able to provide significant investments in the development of their children (e.g., private schools, tutors, etc.). In contrast, parents with fewer economic resources must focus their limited capital on more immediate family needs (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; Duncan & Magnuson, 2003). Parental investment includes childrearing practices aimed at facilitating child competence and includes such things as parental stimulation of learning (e.g., directly and through advanced training/support), meeting basic needs (e.g., healthy food, shelter, medical care), and the ability to reside in an economically advantaged neighborhood/community. The Investment Model

includes the idea that economic well-being often translates into parenting approaches that encourage social, cognitive, and behavioral competence in the young. Findings from recent studies suggest that higher family incomes, that often serve as resources for greater parental investment, have been found to predict both prosocial outcomes during the time when children and adolescents are present in families (Gershoff, Aber, Raver, & Lennon, 2007; Linver, Brooks-Gunn, & Kohen, 2002; Yeung, Linver, & Brooks-Gunn, 2002) as well as financial and occupational success by the young after adulthood is attained (e.g., Bradley & Corwyn, 2002). Recent studies also provide evidence for more than one perspective by concluding that the parental investment model is a better predictor of cognitive development, whereas the family stress model is a better predictor of social-emotional development in the young (Gershoff et al., 2007; Linver et al., 2002; Yeung et al., 2002).

Besides economic hardship, it is also important to recognize that parents of different SESs often have distinctive conditions of life as well as values and priorities that reflect these conditions. These values and priorities, in turn, influence parental goals and practices perceived as adaptive in their particular context. Most of the studies in this area follow Melvin Kohn's (1963; 1977; Pearlin & Kohn, 1966) pioneering work on the relationships between parental education, occupation, values, and parenting beliefs and practices. These early studies found that parents in blue-collar occupations emphasized obedience and conformity in their parenting values (viewed as related to success within blue-collar occupations). Parents situated in white-collar occupations, on the other hand (i.e., higher education), were found to emphasize and value independence, creativity, and initiative in their children, which are values associated with success in middle-income occupations.

In recent extensions of this work on the consequences of parents' SES, Weininger and Lareau (2009) report a paradox, in that, although working class and lower SES parents emphasized children's conformity to external authority, they also appeared to grant considerable autonomy to

their children. Lareau's (2002, 2004) qualitative work, in turn, describes higher SES parents as facilitating children's achievement and talents through the provision of additional opportunities beyond those typically available to children of lower SES. Parents of higher SES standing provide these advantages through their access to resources and time in the form of such involvements as advocacy work in schools/communities and facilitating children's engagement. That is, higher SES parents are able to provide greater opportunities and more access to resources that they value highly and believe are necessary for their children's well-being. This process by parents, or "concerted cultivation," is believed to operate in the same manner across race and ethnicity, while being more a function of variation in SES. The process of concerted cultivation can be seen, therefore, as producing qualities that are necessary for success in the parent's work and socioeconomic environment (e.g., Weininger & Lareau, 2009). Among lower SES parents, in contrast, rather than "concerted cultivation," parents are reported to use a "natural growth" approach to child rearing. This natural growth approach provides more open schedules and free time activities to the young, while also emphasizing children's conformity to external authority (Lareau, 2002, 2004). The work of Lareau has been followed up by various quantitative studies, which have, for the most part, confirmed these processes (Bodovski & Farkas, 2008; Crosnoe & Huston, 2007). The only exception to supportive findings is some negative findings for concerted cultivation by parents across varied race and ethnic groups (Cheadle & Amato, 2011). Thus, more work is needed in this productive area of research, especially where mixed methods approaches can be used to examine more thoroughly the more subtle variations among working class and those experiencing poverty. Another possibility, in turn, is that these parents emphasize conformity to help prepare their children for types of work that they have experienced themselves. At the same time, these parents also may realize the increasing importance of acquiring other skill sets and assets (e.g., attaining a college education) that are beyond their own expertise, and thus grant more

autonomy for the youth to explore areas in which they have limited or no experience.

This early work of Kohn et al. and recent work by Lareau et al. highlight the continuing importance of the social context on parent–child relationships and child outcomes. That is, the quality of the social contexts in which parenting and socialization occur is predicted by the social and economic resources available to parents (e.g., the quality of neighborhoods, nutrition, home learning environments, schools/education, as well as underlying parental beliefs and socialization goals) (Leyendecker, Harwood, Comparini, & Yalcinkaya, 2005). The specific components of SES, however, are likely to have differential effects on family processes and child development.

Human capital (i.e., nonmaterial resources such as parental education), for example, is reported to be the most robust aspect of SES for predicting parenting practices among parents of young children (e.g., Richman, Miller, & Levine, 1992). As children develop, however, social capital (e.g., supportive social networks outside the family) and financial capital (e.g., the ability to provide for basic necessities) are likely to become more salient influences on parenting and the socialization of children (Leyendecker et al., 2005). Recent empirical work suggests that the relationships among SES, parenting, and child development are not simple linear relationships. Instead, the effects of changes in SES have been found to be more pervasive at the lower ends of the socioeconomic continuum, such as for families living at or below the poverty line. In contrast, the same amount of change in education or income at the other end of the continuum (high SES families) may have diminishing returns and is not as likely to have an equivalent effect (Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 1997; Duncan & Magnuson, 2003). Moreover, social capital is especially helpful for families with low financial capital and low human capital, because supportive social networks can serve to buffer the effects of poverty on the parenting environment and child outcomes (e.g., Field, Widmayer, Adler, & De Cubas, 1990; Leyendecker et al., 2005).

Another illustration of socioeconomic effects on parent–child relations and child outcomes is

the impact of poverty on child development. The influence of poverty on parent–child relationships occurs, in part, through diminished resources and a deprivation of enriched learning environments in the home (e.g., fewer books, educational toys, less concerted cultivation) as well as stressors associated with living in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods. The detrimental effects of poverty appear to be greater among families with young children compared to those with older offspring. That is, exposure to poverty in early childhood appears to have more negative consequences than exposure to poverty during later developmental stages (Duncan, Ziold-Guest, & Kalil, 2010; Hao & Matsueda, 2006; Leyendecker et al., 2005). For example, researchers in this area have reported that children exposed to poverty during early childhood (compared to adolescents exposed to poverty) earn less money and work fewer hours after adulthood is attained (Duncan et al., 2010), have lower cognitive abilities and realize lower educational achievement (Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 1997). These findings support an ecological perspective in which it is increasingly recognized that the economic circumstances of family environments provide key contexts for cognitive and socioemotional development during early childhood, which are necessary for acquiring school age human capital (e.g., Cunha, Heckman, Lochner, & Masterov, 2005).

Maternal Employment

The increasing prevalence of women in the work force and the coinciding rise in dual-earner families over recent decades is one of the most influential changes that US families and society have experienced (Baum, 2004; Riggio, 2006). Not surprisingly, this trend has been less pronounced among women at the lower end of the SES continuum (e.g., Cromartie, 2007) because maternal employment has been simply business as usual among this group. In 2008, 71% of mothers with minor children worked outside of the home (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009). The research evidence regarding the effects of maternal employment on parents, parenting, and child

outcomes is largely inconclusive and varies depending on many factors including age of child, family structure (e.g., two parent vs. single parent), SES (e.g., poverty compared to other economic circumstances), type of work (e.g., rewarding and flexible vs. tedious and nonstandard schedules), quality of child care, and parent-child relationships (Brooks-Gunn, Han, & Waldfogel, 2002). Studies have found negative effects (e.g., Han, Waldfogel, & Brooks-Gunn, 2001), positive effects (e.g., Makri-Botsari & Makri, 2003), and the lack of long-term negative effects (Gottfried, Gottfried, Bathurst, & Killian, 1999; Hoffman, 2000).

On the positive side, maternal employment has been shown to directly facilitate positive child outcomes, such as through the provision of positive role models, especially for girls. Maternal employment typically increases family income (at least among dual-earner families/couples), which, in turn, is a positive predictor of beneficial child outcomes such as cognitive development and academic performance (e.g., Baum, 2004), presumably through increased access to educational and related social resources in the surrounding micro- and mesosystems (e.g., higher quality neighborhoods and schools). In contrast, early maternal employment has been reported as negatively related to children's behavioral adjustment (Belsky & Eggebeen, 1991; Joshi & Bogen, 2007), cognitive development (Baydar & Brooks-Gunn, 1991; Han, 2005), and academic performance (Baum, 2004).

Some evidence has been reported that supports the differential effects of maternal employment based on ethnicity, SES, type of employment, and children's developmental stage. For example, several studies have found negative effects for maternal employment on child outcomes among European American samples but not for African American samples (Han et al., 2001; Waldfogel, Han, & Brooks-Gunn, 2002). The detrimental effects of maternal employment also are more amplified among families living in poverty, compared to those in the middle and upper class. For example, among recent welfare leavers, Dunifon, Kalil, and Bajracharya (2005) reported that lengthy parental commute time was related to the

lower socioemotional adjustment among their school age children. Related studies of similar populations, on the other hand, have concluded that entry into work was not associated with child outcomes (Chase-Lansdale et al., 2003) and, when parents met the work requirements of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, the psychosocial outcomes of low income children improved or even surpassed peers in nonworking families (Wertheimer, Moore, & Burkhauser, 2008).

The impact of maternal employment on child outcomes and family processes appears to vary with children's developmental stage. Han et al. (2001) found that maternal employment produced negative effects on both cognitive and behavioral outcomes for White children during the first year of life, but also concluded that positive consequences were evident for the cognitive outcomes of children at ages 2 and 3. Morris, Gennetian, and Duncan (2005) found similar results for 2-5-year olds, but reported that the cognitive gains from maternal employment faded after age 5. By middle childhood, nonfamily influences such as peers, teachers, and schools play an increasing role in children's lives, with a result being that maternal employment may have less direct impact for children in the latter portion of middle childhood than in earlier periods (e.g., Baum, 2004). The increase in family income from maternal employment, on the other hand, is likely to impact the quality of children's schools and neighborhoods (Baum). Moreover, older children are more likely to perceive their parents as potential role models, and thus benefit from having employed mothers, especially girls.

The type and quality of the mother's employment and/or her job satisfaction also have important influences on parental health, parenting practices, and child outcomes. Although paid employment can have positive effects on mothers' mental health through the alleviation of financial strain and the experience of psychological rewards (e.g., work/career achievement and satisfaction from employment), not all employment has positive outcomes. Employment conditions characterized by long hours, nonstandard schedules, stressful circumstances, menial tasks, or physically

taxing requirements are more likely to contribute to maternal frustration, stress, fatigue, and possibly psychological symptoms. Such difficult and stressful employment conditions, in turn, can have negative consequences for parenting quality and child outcomes. In low-income families, for example, maternal employment that involves non-standard schedules is associated with socioemotional problems of children during early childhood (Han, 2005; Joshi & Bogen, 2007). Similarly, mothers employed in low prestige jobs are more likely to manifest coercive parenting (Raver, 2003), which, in turn, is predictive of child outcomes (e.g., internalizing and externalizing problems) that are inconsistent with social competence. Employed mothers who work longer hours have been found to spend less time with children, engage in less monitoring, talk less, express less affection, and engage in more arguments with their children (Crouter, Bumpus, Maguire, & McHale, 1999; Muller, 1995; Repetti & Wood, 1997; Sayer, Bianchi, & Robinson, 2004). Consequently, an overall assessment is that research on the effects of maternal employment has been found to be replete with nuanced complications, often contradictory, and probably of largely moderate impact on children and youth.

Divorce

Most children experience important family structural and process changes when their parents divorce (for a more detailed review of this area see Chap. 21). It is estimated that approximately 50% of children in the United States will experience their parents' divorce (Lansford, 2009). Results from meta-analyses (Amato, 2001; Amato & Keith, 1991) indicated that children of divorced parents scored significantly higher on measures of problematic outcomes (e.g., depression and conduct problems) and significantly lower on positive measures of well-being (e.g., academic achievement, self-concept, social relations, and quality of relationships with parents) compared to children with continuously married parents (Amato, 2000; 2001; Amato & Keith, 1991). However, such findings must be interpreted and

applied cautiously, as the relationships between parental divorce and child outcomes are quite complex (Chap. 9; Lansford, 2009).

A sizable portion of the research on the impact of divorce can be characterized in terms of two extremes, with some researchers asserting that parental divorce has serious long-term effects on children (e.g., Popenoe, 2003; Wallerstein, Lewis, & Blakeslee, 2000), while others assert that there are no measureable long-term effects (e.g., Harris, 1998). Much of the scholarship, however, falls within a broad middle-ground position in which researchers conclude that it is common for some negative effects to become prevalent, most of which consist of small, temporary, and nonuniversal consequences (Lansford, 2009). That is, drawing any conclusions about divorce consequences requires a complex process of analyzing the relevance of various mediators (e.g., income, parental quality, IPC), moderators (e.g., age of child, adjustment prior to divorce), and methodological factors (e.g., indicators of adjustment, analyses and type of study) that can impact the identified links between parental divorce and children's outcomes. Although divorce can have negative consequences for children, compared to families with intact marriages, the majority of children from divorced families do well on most indicators of child well-being (Amato, 2003; Kelly & Emery, 2003; Lansford, 2009; O'Conner, 2003). For example, Hetherington and Kelly (2002) report that 10% of individuals whose parents stayed married experienced serious long-term problems, compared to 25% of those in families whose parents divorced.

Children's adjustment to divorce can be enhanced through factors that decrease IPC and/or shield children from this conflict. Other aspects of the family environment that foster children's adjustment to divorce include the provision of adequate maternal and paternal involvement (e.g., parental monitoring along with emotional and economic support), co-parenting, social support (e.g., from extended family members), and other sources of formal and informal support (Chen & George, 2005). In an overall sense, therefore, the quality of the parent–child relationship has been found to be an important mediator of children's

adjustment to parental divorce (Hetherington & Stanley-Hagen, 1999; Kelly & Emery, 2003; O'Conner, 2003). Children who continue to experience positive parent-child relationships and positive parenting environments are more likely to demonstrate constructive short- and long-term adjustment to divorce (Hetherington & Stanley-Hagen, 1999; O'Conner, 2003).

Siblings

Another important structural variation of the family system that influences child development within families is the presence and number of siblings as well as the quality of sibling relationships (see Chap. 15). Though the sibling and parent-child relationships often have distinctive boundaries, these subsystems are often intensely related to each other, with the result being that many issues from one subsystem often spill over into the other. A majority of children in the United States are raised with at least one sibling, and sibling relationships typically serve as the models for peer relations and a "practice" ground for developing social skills and peer relationships. Sibling relationships are complex (Myers & Bryant, 2008) and the impact on child outcomes varies by a variety of factors including age, gender, birth order, spacing, and gender constellation of sibling dyad.

Attachment relationships between siblings can serve as a positive support throughout life (Cicirelli, 1995; Dunn, 2007; Teti & Ablard, 1989). Sibling relationships change over the life course, as does the impact of sibling relationships on individual outcomes. Positive sibling relationships are particularly beneficial for engaging in cooperative and pretend play, which provides opportunities for children to develop mutual understanding of each other. For example, having one or two siblings instead of none is related to enhanced social skills within peer group interactions (Downey & Caldron, 2004). During middle childhood, poor quality sibling relations are a frequent source of parent-child conflict (McHale & Crouter, 2003), which, in turn, impacts child outcomes. Sibling relationships also can be charac-

terized as consisting of more egalitarianism, higher intensity, and greater emotionality with age as children progress from late middle childhood into early adolescence (Buhrmester & Furman, 1990). Moreover, early and middle childhood are times when siblings will typically experience less pull from relationships outside of the family that might weaken the close and intimate bonds of siblings (Dunn, 2002). Studies have found that sibling conflict in middle childhood is predictive of problem behavior in adolescence and early adulthood (Bank, Patterson, & Reid, 1996; Paterson, 1982; Richman, Stevenson, & Graham, 1982; Stocker, Burwell, & Briggs, 2002). Recent studies also have found several positive effects of sibling relationships on child development (Pike, Coldwell, & Dunn, 2005; Richmond, Stocker, & Rienks, 2005). For example, Richmond et al. (2005) found that as sibling relationships increased in quality (e.g., more warmth and less conflict) over time, the extent of children's depressive symptoms decreased.

Another important influence on child development and sibling relationships is the extent to which differential parental treatment occurs in families. Parents often recognize behavioral differences among their children (e.g., temperament differences from infancy and beyond) and adjust their parenting accordingly (Templeton, Bush, Lash, Robinson, & Gale, 2008). Perhaps consistent with gene-environment conceptions, parents treat children differently based on children's personal characteristics which often elicit differential responses from parents (McHale & Crouter, 2003). Children typically become well aware of the differences in behavior directed toward them by parents compared to their siblings (Dunn & Munn, 1985). Researchers have consistently reported that perceptions of receiving less favorable parental treatment (e.g., greater restrictiveness) compared to one's sibling is positively related to externalizing and internalizing problems (Dunn, Stocker, & Plomin, 1990; McHale, Crouter, McGuire, & Updegraff, 1995; McHale, Updegraff, Jackson-Newsom, Tucker, & Crouter, 2000; Richmond et al., 2005). Recent studies have concluded that parental differential treatment is more strongly related to children's

externalizing problems than to children's internalizing attributes (e.g., Boyle et al., 2004; Kowal, Kramer, Krull, & Crick, 2002; Richmond et al., 2005). Thus it appears that the experience of being treated unfairly by parents in a comparative sense is more salient in predicting the behavioral problems of children than the quality of sibling relations. It is important to keep in mind, of course, that complex relationships may exist between sibling relationship quality, differential parental treatment, and children's outcomes.

Sibling relationships are unique in several ways. First, most siblings spend a great deal of time together and, by middle childhood, young siblings spend more time with one another than they spend with parents or peers (McHale & Crouter, 1996). Second, sibling relationships tend to be emotionally uninhibited, which increases the chance of siblings influencing one another (Dunn, 2002). Third, the role structure of sibling relationships is different than other close relationships in that they can contain both complementary (as seen in parent–child relationships) and egalitarian (as seen in peer relationships) components (Dunn, 1983). The role structure of sibling relationships is highly variable across time and place, and has been found to differ across gender constellation, age spacing and birth order, and age (Chap. 15).

Although sibling relationships can serve as both positive and negative influences on child development, it is important to note the complexity of siblings' impact on each other. Neither the quality of sibling relationships nor the extent of differential parental treatment defines the whole picture of sibling relationships. Instead, sibling relations may be conceptualized best in terms of complex interactions among many factors that closely impinge upon brother and sister relationships (e.g., degree of maturation, peer relations, and parent–child relations) and that are associated with changes in children's adjustment (Chap. 15; Richmond et al., 2005).

In summary, the influence of family structural variations on parent–child relationships and child development occurs primarily through the impact of these differing structural organizations on family processes and interactions such as parenting

behaviors, goals, and parent–child relationships. That is, structural variations in families (e.g., divorce, SES, siblings) have consequences for parent–child relationships and child development by influencing interaction and relationships as well as resources and opportunities within families, which, in turn, have consequences for children's development.

Family Process and Relationship Variables

The aspects of family life that typically have the strongest direct influences on child development (i.e., dimensions of social competence and problem behaviors) are family processes and relationships, rather than structural dimensions of families. Consequently, subsequent sections of this chapter review the most prominent parental and family process dimensions of the parent–child relationship that have either negative or positive consequences for child development. More specifically, two broad strategies commonly used for conceptualizing the parental socialization of children are examined, the social mold perspective (i.e., parenting styles and behaviors) and the bidirectional perspective (i.e., parent–child conflict and IPC).

Parenting Styles and Behaviors

In most societies, parents have the primary responsibility for socializing children to demonstrate culturally acceptable qualities that at least, in part, foster children's successful functioning within and conformity to societal norms. Although "researchers have begun to more clearly articulate how the meaning of a parenting behavior influences its developmental significance" (Crosnoe & Cavanagh, 2010, p. 599), there remains much room for improving the consistency of operationalizing conceptualizations of parenting (e.g., McLeod, Weisz, & Wood, 2007; Stewart & Bond, 2002). The recent debate regarding parental knowledge vs. parental monitoring (e.g., Stattin & Kerr, 2000; Smetana, 2008) is an excellent

example of moving the field forward (Crosnoe & Cavanagh, 2010), but much more work is still needed. For example, although there is acceptance of common conceptualizations of parenting influence (e.g., responsiveness and demandingness), consistent use of standardized, valid, and reliable instruments/methods to operationalize these concepts and corresponding terminology is very limited indeed (e.g., Stewart & Bond, 2002). One might find two studies, for example, that use the same terminology to describe a specific dimension of parental influence (e.g., parental punitiveness or coerciveness), but, upon closer inspection, notice that the scales and items are tapping different constructs. This dilemma is more pronounced in studies across different cultures and social contexts.

A long history of research exists that examines the socialization of children by parents, which delineates how various types of parenting behavior or styles influence various child outcomes and how this varies across gender, age of child, SES, and other contextual variables (Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Peterson & Hann, 1999; Peterson & Rollins, 1987; Rollins & Thomas, 1979). Some researchers still use the terms “parenting style” and “parenting behavior” synonymously (Spera, 2005), though there are important distinctions between these concepts (Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Stewart & Bond, 2002). In general, parenting styles are composed of complex sets (or multiple dimensions) of attributes and refer to emotional climates or contexts in which parents raise their children. Compared to parental styles, in turn, parenting behaviors refer to more precisely defined practices (i.e., many of which are one dimensional) directed by parents at children within specific contexts (Barber, 1997; Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Peterson & Hann, 1999; Peterson & Rollins, 1987; Rollins & Thomas, 1979; Stewart & Bond, 2002). Given the context specificity of parenting practices, these practices may vary considerably in presence and meaning across cultures and other social contexts, whereas parenting styles may be more likely to apply generally across diverse settings (Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Hart, Nelson, Robinson, Olsen, & McNeilly-

Choque, 1998; Stewart & Bond, 2002). That is, parenting styles refer to behaviors and interactions that occur over a broad range of situations and over time that create a general atmosphere in which parent–child relationships occur. Parental behaviors, on the other hand, refer to specific techniques rooted in the parent’s belief and value systems that are more likely to vary across cultural and social circumstances.

Although specific terms and instruments may vary, which make comparisons very difficult across studies, instruments, and constructs, consensus does exist that the key components of parenting styles consist of responsiveness (e.g., acceptance, warmth) demandingness (e.g., behavioral regulation or control) (Maccoby & Martin, 1983) and more recently, autonomy granting (Peterson, Bush, & Supple, 1999; Ryan, Deci, & Grolnick, 1995). Research on frequently identified parental styles and dimensions of parental behavior is briefly reviewed in subsequent sections of this chapter.

Parental Styles

For several decades the popularity or focus of researchers on parenting styles has waxed and waned to some extent, but remains a prominent aspect of studying parent–child relationships (Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Peterson & Hann, 1999; Peterson & Rollins, 1987; Rollins & Thomas, 1979). The most prominent researcher in the parenting styles literature is Baumrind (1971; 1978; 1991; Baumrind & Black, 1967; Baumrind, Larzelere, & Owens, 2010) who conceptualized several childrearing typologies—or multidimensional patterns of parental behavior, expectations, and values that contribute to an overall climate within the parent–child relationship. Although changing somewhat over time, Baumrind’s most commonly identified typology includes the three categories: authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive parenting. Her most recent conceptualizations include making further specifications to distinguish between types of power assertion across varied reconceptualizations of parenting styles (e.g., Baumrind et al. 2010).

Currently, many researchers still find parenting styles to be a viable option for examining

parental influence, at least among White middle class families (Gavazzi, 2011). Some problems have arisen, however, when parenting styles have been applied to diverse populations. More specifically, instruments developed to operationalize parenting styles for Western samples have not always predicted child outcomes consistently within ethnic minority populations and/or non-Western cultural groups (e.g., Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, & Fraleigh, 1987; Steinberg, Mounts, & Lamborn, 1991). This inconsistency appears to occur because the instruments used to measure parenting styles are rooted in the history of the specific culture in which they were developed (i.e., most often middle class Caucasians in the United States). That is, specific “parental behavior or practice” items are frequently included as components of parenting style measures, which collectively are more culturally specific and do not necessarily apply across cultures (Chao, 1994, 2001; Stewart & Bond, 2002).

Scholars from Asian cultures, for example, have concluded, with growing frequency, that Western measures of parenting style do not capture aspects of Asian (e.g., Chinese) parenting. A particularly notable proposal along these lines has been evident for forms of control (i.e., the control dimension itself is composed of several different dimensions) as illustrated by the strong Chinese emphasis on child-training and the different methods used by these parents to convey love and caring to their children (Chao, 1994, 2001). That is, cultural influences among Asian-American parents and other non-Western cultural groups may not be captured and may be overlooked in current conceptualizations of parenting style typologies (Chao, 1994, 2000, 2001).

Perhaps in a conceptual sense, however, once the context-specific practice items are removed or adjusted to a specific culture/context, the hope remains by some that a general parenting style can be assessed. At least two of the key parenting style constructs, warmth and dominating control, have demonstrated some evidence for cross-cultural generality. For example, Stewart and Bond (2002) reported evidence based on a series of cross-cultural studies which provided support that “warmth” (i.e., responsiveness) and dominating

control (i.e., demandingness) generally apply across diverse cultures. Similarly, Kagitcibasi (1996) reported support for the construct of parental “warmth” as a parental attribute that is generally applicable across cultures. Autonomy granting actions by parents also have garnered some support in ethnically diverse and non-Western samples (e.g., Bush, 2000; Bush, Peterson, Cobas, & Supple, 2002; Bush, Supple, & Lash, 2004; Supple, Ghazarian, Peterson, & Bush, 2009).

Authoritarian Parenting Style

The authoritarian parenting style is characterized as being high on demandingness (control) and low in responsiveness (warmth) and tends to be associated with the most problematic psychosocial outcomes among children and adolescents. Authoritarian parents are described as using hostile control or harsh punishment in an arbitrary manner to gain compliance (i.e., arbitrary discipline, Hoffman, 1983), without tolerating much give and take in their relationships with children (i.e., unqualified power assertion, Hoffman, 1983). A common objective is to shape and control the behavior and attitudes of children in accordance with an absolute set of standards to gain obedience and conformity. Researchers examining US samples have reported that parents (at least among middle-class European-Americans) who use the authoritarian style tend to foster lower levels of social competence dimensions (e.g., self-concept and school performance) and higher levels of problematic outcomes such as conduct disorder, externalizing behavior, and noncompliance in the young (Baumrind, 1971, 1978, 1991; Baumrind et al., 2010; Dornbusch et al., 1987; Steinberg et al., 1991).

Permissive Parenting Style

Baumrind (1978, 1991) describes the permissive parenting style as being tolerant and accepting of children’s impulsive behavior. She describes these parents as using very little punishment and as avoiding the implementation of firm controls or restrictions. This category has been further divided into (a) permissive-neglectful and (b) permissive-indulgent styles.

Parents who demonstrate the permissive-neglectful style of parenting convey low levels of responsiveness and low levels of demandingness. Children living with permissive-neglectful parents are at risk for experiencing too much autonomy without the continuing bond of parental supportiveness that provides a secure base. As a result, these children are more likely to experience “separation” from a parent, rather than attain autonomy through a negotiated process that establishes a healthy balance between growing self-determination and remaining connected to parents. Children in permissive-neglectful homes are more likely to associate with deviant peers, especially as they enter adolescence and young adulthood. The results of such deviant associations for children may be increased resistance to authority, partially due to limited or no exposure to consistent discipline (e.g., monitoring) and the enforcement of rationally based parental rules. Another issue is that children of permissive-neglectful parents have not experienced parental nurturance, which limits their opportunities to establish and/or maintain close relationships with authority figures that are a continuing reaffirmation of attachment bonds.

The permissive-indulgent parenting style is characterized by low levels of parental demandingness, but high levels of responsiveness (parental support and nurturance). Some children with permissive-indulgent parents may experience positive outcomes such as high levels of self-esteem/confidence and autonomy. The lack of parental control by permissive-indulgent parents, however, can override some of the positive impact of parental responsiveness. The high autonomy granting of permissive indulgent parents tends to occur within the context of few if any parental rules or discipline, which can result in children being granted independence too fast and too soon. That is, ironically, for different reasons, the end result of permissive-indulgent parenting may be similar to that of permissive-neglectful parenting. This parental approach may have such similar consequences for the young by creating an atmosphere that allows and fosters associations with deviant peers, lower motivation for or engagement in school, as well as externalizing behavior problems (Baumrind et al.,

2010; Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Peterson & Hann, 1999). Explanations for these adverse child outcomes are the lack of exposure to sufficient firm control in the form of parental monitoring, the guidance provided by parental rules, and consistent discipline.

Authoritative Parenting Style

The authoritative style of parenting is characterized by high levels of demandingness (i.e., firm consistent behavioral control, not psychological or punitive control) and high levels of responsiveness. In other words, parents in this category convey support, warmth, clearly defined rules, have effective communication (promoting psychological autonomy), and provide consistent discipline with moderate to high levels of behavioral control (Baumrind, 1991; Steinberg et al., 1991). Authoritative parenting is characterized by rational power assertion in which discipline involves clear communication and is a logical consequence of children’s actions. This approach to parenting involves effective monitoring, predictable consequences based on rules, consistency, and demands that are adjusted to children’s developmental needs (Baumrind et al., 2010; Hoffman, 1983). US researchers have consistently found authoritative parenting to predict desirable psychosocial outcomes among children and adolescents, at least most strongly among middle-class European-American children (Baumrind, 1991; Dornbusch et al., 1987; Larzelere, Sather, Schneider, Larson, & Pike, 1998; Peterson, 2005; Steinberg, 2001). More specifically, authoritative parenting has been associated with high levels of self-esteem, school performance, social skills, and fewer problems with antisocial behaviors and substance abuse (Baumrind, 1971, 1978, 1991; Baumrind et al., 2010; Dornbusch et al., 1987; Steinberg, 2001; Steinberg, Dornbusch, & Brown, 1992; Steinberg et al., 1991). Research by Larzelere et al. (1998), for example, found that parenting consistent with the authoritative parenting style reduced noncompliance and aggression among toddlers.

Parenting Behaviors

A focus on specific dimensions of parental behaviors is an alternative strategy to the use of more

global conceptions of parenting, such as parenting styles (e.g., Barber, 1997, 2002a). Because parenting styles represent combinations of parenting behaviors, it is difficult to determine how specific dimensions of parenting are predictive of particular developmental outcomes of children and adolescents when using typologies (Barber; Herman, Dornbusch, Herron, & Herting, 1997; Linver & Silverberg, 1997).

Studies examining the relationships between specific parental behaviors (i.e., practices or dimensions of parenting) and child outcomes across diverse cultural groups have found significant relationships for several dimensions of parental behavior such as support (responsiveness), behavioral control, reasoning (i.e., induction), punitiveness (demandingness), and autonomy granting as predictors of a variety of positive and negative child outcomes. This conclusion must be qualified, in some cases, in which relationships have been found to vary somewhat across cultures (see Chao & Otsuki-Clutter, 2011 for recent review). In reference to indicators of social competence (self-concept, conformity to parents, autonomy, school readiness/achievement), for example, positive relationships have been found with parental support, behavioral control, and autonomy granting (e.g., Bean, Bush, McKenry, & Wilson, 2003; Bush et al., 2002; Gavazzi, 2011; Herman et al., 1997; Karavasilis, Doyle, & Markiewicz, 2003; Linver & Silverberg, 1997; Martin, Ryan, & Brooks-Gunn, 2010; Peterson & Hann, 1999). Similarly, studies also have found significant negative relationships between parental support, behavioral control, autonomy granting, and externalizing and internalizing problems (e.g., Gavazzi, 2011; Hill & Bush, 2001; Hill, Bush, & Roosa, 2003; Luyckx et al., 2011).

Parental Support

Supportive parenting practices convey the broader construct of parental responsiveness and warmth to children and include behaviors related to acceptance, affection, nurturance, and companionship (Barber, 1997; Peterson & Hann, 1999; Rohner, 1986, 2004). Parental support can be conveyed through verbal expressions of love and

caring as well as nonverbal behaviors including physical affection in the form of hugs and kisses (Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Peterson & Hann, 1999; Rohner, 1986, 2004). Additionally, recent evidence from studies among non-Western samples and ethnic minority groups in the US suggests that parental support also can be conveyed through parenting practices not typically considered/assessed with Western measures of parental support. Instead, supportiveness in some cultures may be more intertwined and conveyed through moderate parental behavioral control (e.g., setting, communicating, and enforcing clear and high expectations) and involvement (Chao & Otsuki-Clutter, 2011). That is, assessments of support that only include conventional Western indicators (e.g., physical affection and praise) are likely to miss important elements and methods of conveying and perceiving supportiveness that are rooted in the diverse value systems across cultures.

Findings from studies among Mexican populations in the US (Hill et al., 2003) and Mexico (Bush et al., 2004), for example, suggest that children perceived support as being a conceptual component of firm behavioral control/expectations. Among parents in collectivistic cultures where displays of affection are subdued and emotional restraint is emphasized, it is likely that support is conveyed through other means such as establishing firm expectations through communication and teaching and monitoring adherence to these standards which may be perceived by children as parents believing in and caring for them (cf. Wu & Chao, 2005).

Supportive parental behavior serves as a means of expressing care, confidence, love, acceptance, and value for children and is useful for fostering positive parent–child relationships and is predictive of children’s social competence (Baumrind, 1978, 1991). Supportive parental behavior facilitates positive relationship outcomes such as secure attachment (Karavasilis et al., 2003; Kerns, Tomich, Aspelmeier, & Contreras, 2000), and positive child outcomes such as academic achievement, self-concept development (Bean et al., 2003; Bush et al., 2002) and serves to inhibit dimensions of internalizing and externalizing

attributes (Atzaba-Poria, Pike, & Deater-Deckard, 2004; Caron, Weiss, Harris, & Catron, 2006; Hill & Bush, 2001; Hill et al., 2003).

Parental Behavioral Control

Parental behavior characterized as behavioral control relates to the broader construct of “demandingness” (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Following what Hoffman (1983) termed “rational power assertion,” demandingness refers to behaviors that help regulate children’s behavior through the implementation of a coherent and consistent system of rules with predictable consequences (Baumrind et al., 2010). This consistent system is facilitative of positive parent–child relationships and assists parents to maintain trust and open communication. Parental control practices that are part of this system include monitoring, clearly communicated expectations, enforced rules, and consistent discipline in a manner that provides a pattern of firm rational control (Baumrind, 1971; Bugental & Grusec, 2006; Peterson & Hann, 1999).

Specific parental practices facilitative of behavioral control will vary across stages of development as well as social contexts. For example, during early childhood, behavioral control involves more direct supervision by parents or others in authority, whereas, among older children and adolescents, behavioral control assumes more distal forms of influence. That is, as children continue to develop during middle childhood and especially during adolescence, autonomy is granted gradually by negotiating relationship change and by using more distal forms of parental control. Methods of parental supervision (necessary as a means of fostering social competence, but also for guarding against any drift toward delinquent behavior) are adjusted as children begin to establish and maintain peer relationships and interact with an expanding social network beyond family boundaries (Kerns, Aspelmeier, Gentzler, & Grabill, 2001; Peterson & Hann, 1999; Templeton et al., 2008). As development progresses from early to middle childhood, the young assume more and more responsibility for self-regulation. That is, behavioral control is mutually negotiated, as parents still need to ensure that their child complies with

family and societal standards. A major issue in parent–child relationships during middle childhood, therefore, is how parents and children negotiate appropriate levels of parental behavioral control as children’s autonomy becomes more manifest (Kerns et al., 2001; Peterson & Hann, 1999).

Parents who use behavioral control monitor the activities of their children and are more likely to facilitate positive child outcomes. These positive outcomes include secure attachments (Kerns et al., 2001), school readiness/achievement, and social competence through clear sets of standards from which children can evaluate themselves (Barber, 1997; Baumrind et al., 2010; Crouter & Head, 2002; Herman et al., 1997; Linver & Silverberg, 1997; Martin et al., 2010). Moreover, parental behavioral control also serves to guard against the development of externalizing problems (Barber, 1996; Barber, Stolz, & Olsen, 2005; Caron et al., 2006; Eyberg, Nelson, & Boggs, 2008).

Parental Psychological Control

Excessive, arbitrary, and coercive parental behaviors that inhibit the development of psychological autonomy among children are referred to as psychological control (Barber, 1997, 2002a, 2002b), some aspects of which are characteristic of the authoritarian parenting style (Baumrind et al., 2010). Psychological control attempts are currently conceptualized as indirect and covert and supposed to follow what Hoffman (1983) termed “unqualified power assertion,” where prompt compliance is demanded without reason or explanation (enforcing rigid hierarchy in the family system) (Baumrind et al., 2010). Parental practices of this type are also supposed to include parental intrusiveness, guilt induction, and love withdrawal (Bugental & Grusec, 2006). More specifically, psychological control can be manifest through the suppression of children’s development of psychological autonomy or through inducing guilt in children as an expression of over protectiveness as well as authoritarian control. For example, parents who use intrusive psychological control do not negotiate (“my way or the highway”) as they desire and demand compliance, thus providing children little choice. An interesting

complexity is that, perhaps because intrusiveness is viewed as parental caring in collectivistic cultures with strong traditions of parental authority, this socialization behavior seems to foster prosocial outcomes in children such as academic achievement and conformity (e.g., Bugental & Grusec, 2006). In contrast, guilt induction and love withdrawal involve emotional manipulation, and in U.S. samples, are less likely to foster positive child outcomes or be viewed by children as acts of parental caring (Baumrind et al., 2010).

Parenting practices using unqualified power assertion focus on psychological manipulation and ignore the developmental needs of children, with the result being that the young are not provided with clear expectations from which to evaluate themselves (Barber, 1996, 2002a, 2002b). Recent studies among diverse samples have supported the view that psychological control, and particularly perhaps its power assertive quality, is a negative predictor of self-esteem and academic achievement (Aunola & Nurmi, 2004; Bean et al., 2003; Bush et al., 2002; Herman et al., 1997; Linver & Silverberg, 1997) as well as a positive predictor of internalizing and externalizing attributes (Bugental & Grusec, 2006; Caron et al., 2006).

Significant validity issues exist with this multidimensional conception of psychological control and have caused other scholars, both present and past, to propose that a distinction be made between two conceptually separate aspects of this construct: (1) punitiveness or unqualified power assertive behaviors and (2) intrusive forms of psychological control. The first component of psychological control, punitiveness or unqualified power assertive behaviors (or coercive control attempts), was initially conceptualized as imposing arbitrary authority to demand children's behavioral compliance to parents (Peterson & Hann, 1999; Peterson & Rollins, 1987; Peterson, Rollins, & Thomas, 1985; Rollins & Thomas, 1979). In contrast, intrusive forms of psychological control, such as guilt induction and love withdrawal, were originally focused on the emotional manipulation of children's dependency on parents rather than demanding their behavioral compliance to arbitrary external authority (Holmbeck

et al., 2002; Levy, 1943; Parker, 1983). These conceptual and empirical distinctions have a long history in the study of parent–child relationships, with punitiveness or coercive control attempts being the featured dimension of authoritarian parenting and intrusive psychological control (i.e., guilt induction and love withdrawal) being the key dimension of overprotective parenting (Holmbeck et al., 2002; Levy, 1943; Parker, 1983; Peterson & Hann, 1999; Peterson & Rollins, 1987; Peterson et al., 1985; Rollins & Thomas, 1975, 1979; Schaefer, 1959; 1965). Consequently this recent confounding of these established conceptual and empirical distinctions may result in losses of useful information about real differences in the meaning of parental practices, the masking of nonequivalent meanings when parental psychological control (as recently reconceptualized) is examined within different cultures, and problematic or misleading predictions of children's psychosocial outcomes (see Chap. 9, for a further discussion of these distinctions; Peterson, Steinmetz, & Wilson, 2004, 2005).

Psychological Autonomy Granting

Parenting practices related to the broader construct of psychological autonomy granting refer to behaviors and the establishment of a climate that balances connectedness in the parent–child relationship with developmentally appropriate levels of autonomy by children (Bugental & Grusec, 2006; Peterson, 2009; Peterson et al., 1999, see Chap. 1). That is, autonomy granting does not entail that parental control or involvement is absent but rather that extensive parental involvement or a secure base (i.e., a secure connection with the parent) is at the heart of autonomy granting and one of the most important psychosocial outcomes of children (e.g., Bugental & Grusec, 2006; Herman et al., 1997; Peterson, 2009; see Chap. 1). A secure base or attachment is a fundamental requirement for successful socialization within parent–child relationships and fosters children's receptivity to parental socialization attempts. Successful parents recognize the importance of children's developmental needs (i.e., the need to develop autonomy) and use discipline and support to encourage children's feelings of

self-direction. An important aspect of autonomy granting by parents is providing children with opportunities to make choices (Grolnick, 2003), while balancing this with the maintenance of their authority (Peterson, 2009). This process of balancing the provision of choice and autonomy while maintaining discipline within the family system and close parent–child relationships is a complex process involving gradual renegotiation over time (Peterson, 2009; Peterson & Hann, 1999; Peterson et al., 1999; see Chaps. 1 & 9).

Parents who grant psychological autonomy as part of their parenting behavior provide opportunities and encouragement of the young to express their growing independence within supportive parent–child relationships (Gray & Steinberg, 1999). Parental psychological autonomy granting fosters positive self-worth, academic achievement (Barber, 2002a; Bush et al., 2002), and secure attachment in children (Karavasilis et al., 2003).

Family Conflict: Parent–Child and Interparental Conflict

Parent–Child Conflict

Similar to other interpersonal relationships, conflict within parent–child relationships should not be assumed uniformly to be a negative or destructive process. Conflict in all human interpersonal systems can have a range of relationship consequences from being a negative, neutral, or positive force, depending on how it is managed. So, instead of inevitably being a destructive force within parent–child relationships, conflict has the potential to be a source of positive change and a signal that change is needed. Thus, it is not the conflict per se that causes negative outcomes, but rather how it is managed through the kinds (and meaning) of the sequential responses of children and parents to the presence of conflict that determines whether positive or negative patterns will emerge. Although frequently assumed to be especially characteristic of parent–adolescent relationships in families, conflicts between parents and their young occur throughout the family life course. Conflict also is common, for example, during early and middle childhood, especially

during major transitions, such as when the young enter child care, preschool, and elementary school. Entry into school and, to a lesser extent, child care and preschool has the potential to expose children to a more complex array of peers and often results in increased bids for autonomy. Children’s efforts to attain autonomy and parental responses vary depending on the age and developmental stage of the child. Parent–child conflict that occurs early and is often severe (i.e., poorly managed), in turn, can be an important predictor of later developmental outcomes including antisocial behavior and diminished social competence (Brennan, Hall, Bor, Najman, & Williams, 2003; Ingoldsby et al., 2006; Loeber, Farrington, Strouthamer-Loeber, Moffit, & Caspi, 1998). For example, parent–child conflict in early and middle childhood is associated with the “early starter” pathway, in which behavior problems in childhood evolve into serious delinquency in adolescence and a stable pattern of criminal behavior in adulthood (Brennan et al., 2003; Ingoldsby et al., 2006).

Parent–child conflict is a bidirectional process and does not simply refer to maladjustment as long as the conflict is moderate, negotiated, and managed to some degree. Instead, the kind of conflict (i.e., either negative or positive conflict) that emerges in a particular relationship often depends on other aspects of the relationship, such as the quality of the attachment relationship, the specific parenting style used, and how the specific parenting practices contribute to the frequency and severity of parent–child conflict. These dimensions of the parent–child relationship, in turn, help determine the extent to which conflict can either be managed and used as a positive force for developmental change or contribute to very severe conflict that can become a threat to relationship quality or even its existence.

The use of an authoritative parenting style in which parents use rational control attempts, is more likely to convey clearly communicated expectations, maintain a trusting mutual relationship, and is more likely to elicit or predict more positive or modulated responses from children (Baumrind et al., 2010). Such relationship patterns are more likely to successfully resolve

conflicts because children who experience authoritative parenting are more likely to perceive parents as reasonable, fair, and trustworthy. In contrast, children exposed to authoritarian parenting often receive high frequencies of unqualified coercive control attempts and arbitrary demands for compliance (Hoffman, 1983). Children who are subject to such punitive forms of parenting behavior are more likely to feel hostile toward parents and become less willing to comply with parents because this type of control attempt is perceived as arbitrary and unfair. Similarly, authoritarian parents are more likely to respond with more forceful contingencies in the face of persistent defiance by children (Larzelere, 2001), with the result being that such coercive cycles often escalate in frequency and severity (Paterson, 1982).

Other sources of conflict management within the parent–child relationship are the quality of parent–child communication and the degree of relationship closeness (i.e., supportiveness or attachment quality). These aspects of parent–child relations are important predictors of conflict management by preventing conflictual exchanges between parents and the young from escalating in frequency and severity. Conflict will continue to exist in such supportive relationship environments but will be tempered in frequency and severity by the positive bonds between parent and child.

Interparental Conflict

Other potential causes of parent–child conflict involve influences outside of the parent–child relationship, including conflicts between other family members such as interparental or marital/couple conflict. Several recent studies have found that parent–child conflict mediates the relationship between marital conflict and children’s adjustment (Buehler & Gerard, 2002; Gerard, Krishnakumar, & Buehler, 2006). That is, the frustrations associated with marital conflict may spill over into the parent–child relationship which, in turn, tends to inhibit children’s social competence and foster externalizing behavior and internalizing outcomes (Rhoades, 2008).

The link between IPC and undesirable short-term and long-term outcomes for children has

become well established in parent–child research (DeBoard-Lucas, Fosco, Raynor, & Grych, 2010; Grych & Fincham, 2001). Children who are exposed to IPC are at increased risk for developing psychological problems (e.g., depression and anxiety), social adjustment difficulties, and behavioral difficulties (e.g., disruptive behaviors and aggression) both during childhood as well as later in life (Gerard et al., 2006; Grych, 2005; Grych & Fincham, 2001; Kelly, 2000).

Not all children who witness IPC, however, develop poor outcomes because many variables mediate the presence or absence of such consequences for the young (Cummings & Davies, 2002; Deboard-Lucas et al., 2010; Grych & Fincham, 2001). Although some conflict is likely to occur in all intimate relationships, all conflict is not necessarily negative for the couple or for their children. At the most basic level, conflict in relationships signals the need for change and a key point is to focus on the proximal processes (e.g., children’s responses to conflict) involved in the relationships between IPC and child outcomes (Rhoades, 2008). That is, children’s responses to IPC imply how they perceive and make meaning of the IPC in consideration of their context (needs, desires, and goals).

An analysis of the impact of IPC on children and parent–child relationships must take into account several attributes of parents and children. These attributes include the coping resources and conflict management strategies of parents and children as well as the socialization practices of parents. Other factors of importance are the overall quality of parent–child relationships, the quality of marital/couples’ relationships, and the attachment relationships within families. Additional issues of importance are the frequency and severity of conflict as well as the extent of children’s exposure to and involvement in reoccurring patterns of conflict. All of these factors play important roles in regard to the impact of conflict on parents, parent–child relationships, and children’s outcomes (DeBoard-Lucas et al., 2010; Grych, 2005).

Research on the relationships between child attributes, IPC, and child outcomes has identified an important intervening role for the coping

capacities and resources of children. In a recent meta-analysis, for example, Rhoades (2008) sheds light on what recent findings indicate about children's responses to IPC and subsequent associations with child outcomes. Using studies of children between the ages of 5 and 19 years, Rhoades reported mostly small to moderate effect sizes for relationships between children's responses to IPC and children's outcomes, with negative responses by the young being predictive of negative child outcomes. More specifically, moderate effect sizes were reported for associations between (1) children's negative cognitions (e.g., self-blame) in response to IPC and internalizing problems and self-esteem problems; (2) children's negative affect in response to IPC (sadness, fear, and anger) and internalizing problems; and (3) children's behavioral responses to IPC (involvement in and avoidance of IPC) and internalizing problems. For the most part, the findings from this recent meta-analysis suggest that IPC has a larger impact on children's internalizing problems than externalizing behavior.

Recent work that examines the role of parental attributes and the relationship between IPC and children's outcomes highlights the intervening role of children's coping strategies, resources, and parental behavior. For example, IPC can influence child outcomes either directly (e.g., child externalizing or internalizing problems) or indirectly by "spilling over" and disrupting the socialization behaviors of parents that promote children's well-being. That is, child development can be detrimentally effected indirectly when IPC leads to parents' increased use of psychologically controlling parenting behavior, decreased involvement/support, and more frequent negative interactions between parents and children (DeBoard-Lucas et al., 2010; Gerard et al., 2006). Recent research that examines the link between IPC and parenting behaviors reported that the relationship between harsh discipline and IPC was stronger than the relationships found between IPC and other parenting behaviors (Krishnakumar & Buehler, 2000). Moreover, aspects of high-quality parent-child relationships in the form of authoritative parenting can buffer the negative effects of IPC on children, particularly when

secure attachments, supportive and responsive parenting are involved (Buehler & Gerard, 2002; DeBoard-Lucas et al., 2010).

Other important intervening variables include the frequency and type/level of IPC. Results from longitudinal studies indicate that the effects of divorce on children may vary according to the level of IPC prior to divorce (for review see Amato, 2001; Amato & Keith, 1991). More specifically, a seemingly surprising result is that children, whose parents engaged in relatively low frequencies and severity of overt conflict, appear to experience decreased adjustment following divorce (Amato, Loomis, & Booth, 1995; Hanson, 1999; Jekielek, 1998; Morrison & Coiro, 1999). Conversely, children whose parents engage in chronic, overt, intense, and unresolved conflict seem to have better adjustment if their parents divorce. These contrary to common sense anomalies, in turn, can be explained by the fact that children, whose parents did not engage in overt and chronic conflict, are likely to experience their parents' divorce as unexpected and a source of considerable stress (Amato, 2001). Children whose parents engaged in chronic and overt conflict would be less likely to see the divorce as shocking and unexpected, and more likely to experience less exposure to conflict and/or stress, and might even feel relieved.

Conclusion

Throughout the period of childhood, parent-child relationships are complex, diverse, and malleable in response to influences from the broader social ecology and internal changing dynamics. Comprehensive models of parent-child relationships for future research should include the simultaneous examination of variables from the larger human ecology beyond family boundaries (e.g., the neighborhood and community), structural variations in family life (e.g., SES, family composition, divorce, step-parenting, etc.), and relationship processes (e.g., parenting styles and practices) within the parent-child microsystem. The examination of only one of these dimensions without the others presents an

incomplete picture of parent–child relationships within an increasingly diverse configuration of contemporary family life (see Chaps. 6, 9, 14 & 32). Moreover, studies of parent–child relationships should include reports from the multiple members of these relationships rather than capture only portions of the whole. The need to assess multiple perceptions recognizes that “reality” within families, these most elementary of human relationships, is socially constructed and only partially shared as overlapping “absolutes” by its participants.

Parent–child relationships are a product of creating shared meanings which, in turn, are dependent on both very intimate and more distant contextual influences for their substance. When elements of the family system or the broader ecological context experience change, parent–child and other family relationship subsystems often require parallel adaptations for optimum development to occur. This need for change is often experienced as conflict within parent–child marital/couple and other family relationships. How families and parent–child relationships deal with such change-inducing conflict involves the extent to which these dynamics are managed in positive directions toward the development of social competence or toward negative developments in the form of externalizing or internalizing outcomes by children (see Chaps. 9 and 14).

Thus, a key focus should be on designing and conducting studies that allow for the careful examination of the complex multidirectional influences within family systems and the larger ecological contexts that encompass family life. Few studies, for example, fully apply family systems theory or the broader human ecological approach that captures family life, parent–child relationships, and the surrounding social-cultural context. Instead, most parent–child research only examines a small piece of the picture. For true knowledge advancement in parent–child relations to occur, more complex research approaches are needed that simultaneously examine the larger social contexts and the more intimate face-to-face dynamics within the parent–child relationship. Other required strategies include complex longitudinal designs, the use of multiple methodologies, the involvement of

multiple informants, and the concerted examination of multiple contexts that shape interpersonal patterns within parent–child relationships.

Although some consistency exists in the conceptualization of constructs related to parent–child relationships, standard methods of operationalizing these concepts often are lacking. Some of this lack of conceptual clarity may result from a frequent pattern of conducting research that is methodologically elegant and statistically sophisticated but is either atheoretical or superficial in reference to the theoretical basis used to conceptualize the constructs/variables examined in a study.

Although variation in measurement and operationalization is necessary across age and developmental stages during childhood, even within specific developmental periods, standardization in the conceptualization of constructs is lacking. Future progress in parent–child research will depend, in part, on the extent to which investigators strive for greater theoretical substance, clarified constructs, and greater emphasis on assessing the validity of methods used to operationalize parent–child variables. Moreover, the validity of measures created within one culture or ecological niche must be tested thoroughly for cross-cultural validity prior to making the ethnocentric presumption that the exact same concept can be measured with the same method in another cultural context (Stewart & Bond, 2002). In the absence of constructs that lack validity and consistent operational strategies, it is difficult for our knowledge about parent–child relationships to advance through cumulative science based on sound theory testing and by making comparisons across studies that build upon each other.

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Stephen Gavazzi

This book chapter covers a complex and multi-faceted area of family development: families with adolescents. Following some preparatory remarks regarding definitions of terms, this chapter presents two related sections regarding our knowledge base about families facing the demands of this particular developmental period. The first section is concerned with theories that frame our understanding of families with adolescents, whereas the second section deals with family-based research findings. These two sections draw evenly from a broad cross-section of social science disciplines, providing an integrative and concise approach to the interdisciplinary nature of work being conducted in this area of inquiry.

The first section involves family-based theoretical efforts, and hence examines basic concepts about the families within which adolescents grow and develop. Particular emphasis is given to theoretical frameworks from the family science field, including most prominently family development theory and family systems theory. Due to the interdisciplinary nature of this book chapter, however, theories coming from other fields,

including ecological theory, attachment theory, and social learning theory, also will be explored.

The second section of this book chapter focuses on family research topics as part of an exploration of empirical results that inform the field about families with adolescents. Research articles related to this area of inquiry, spanning many decades of work, have now reached substantial proportions. As such, there literally was no way to cover this body of empirical work in its entirety within the page restrictions of a single book chapter. Because some sort of choice about what to include and what to exclude was inevitable, the decision was made to emphasize the findings of those studies on families with adolescents that have been published over the last 15 years.

The present chapter's review of the research on the linkages between family factors and adolescent outcomes was limited to aspects of adolescent problem behaviors—delinquency, mental health, alcohol, and other drug use—and two areas of adolescent's potential assets—education and social competency. This approach was necessary because the literature on the relationships among family factors and adolescent outcomes is so large and diverse; articles were chosen in order to provide the reader with a representative sample of the types of studies that have been conducted over the last decade and a half in these areas. The selected studies are thought to serve as excellent examples of the type of cutting edge work being done in the larger compendium of literature concerning family influences on adolescent development and well-being.

S. Gavazzi, PhD (✉)

Department of Human Development and Family Science,
Ohio State University, Campbell Hall, 1787 Neil Avenue,
Columbus, OH 43210-1295, USA

Center for Family Research, Ohio State University,
Columbus, OH, USA
e-mail: SGavazzi@ehe.osu.edu

Taken together, the sections of this book chapter on theory and research are meant to embody separate yet related aspects of how well we currently understand and observe the inner working of families containing members who are adolescents. A commentary section concludes this book chapter by providing both a summary of the current accomplishments in this area of inquiry, as well as observations regarding the challenges ahead related to theoretical and empirical work focused on families with adolescent members.

Definitions of Terms

In order to investigate any type of phenomena, definitions of terms must be developed and adopted that describe the central focus of inquiry. For present purposes, the task at hand is to define what it means to study “families with adolescents.” Despite the fact that this book chapter concerns family phenomena and not individual developmental issues, the fact that this family life cycle stage is predicated on the developmental phase of its offspring necessitates a delineation of what the term “adolescent” implies.

The complexity involved in defining adolescence is reflected in many books that focus on this developmental period. These texts typically contain a section that discusses the variety of ways that the adolescent developmental period can be defined. For example, Steinberg (2007) notes that there are various ways that definitions of adolescence can be constructed dependent on the biological, cognitive, and/or social context criteria that are employed. For instance, chronological age can be used, resulting in a focus on teenagers (13–19 years of ages). Alternatively, there are legal definitions, with an emphasis on 18 as the “age of majority” signifying adulthood (although the age of 21 as the legal drinking age also can be employed). Also, there are definitions that surround physical development, usually emphasizing events such as puberty, the end of physical growth, and the development of adult sex characteristics. Further, there are more psychologically based definitions that rely on markers of emotional and cognitive maturity. Finally, there are

definitions that are based on social contexts and events, such as high school graduation.

Such variations in definitions also are reflected in differences of opinion regarding the period of time covered by adolescence. The general public tends to think in terms of chronological age only, making the terms “adolescent” and “teenager” synonymous. In contrast, developmental theorists and researchers employ a variety of timeframes to capture the adolescent period. For instance, some scholars divide this developmental period into early adolescence and late adolescence (Cobb, 2006; Santrock, 2008). Here, early adolescence is marked by tasks related to the establishment of a group identity amongst one’s friends, whereas later adolescence concerns the development of an individual identity. Others break down this developmental period into early, middle, and later adolescence, with an emphasis on the school environment (middle school, high school, and college respectively), as well as emphasizing an additional transitional period known as “emerging adulthood” (Arnett, 2003).

As noted above, the present book chapter goes beyond the individualized focus on adolescents in order to establish and describe the larger family context. At the same time, the complexity of describing this developmental period directly impacts the definition of terms regarding families with adolescents. Because there are differences of opinions regarding the beginning and ending points of this developmental period, the reader also must expect that definitions will vary regarding what constitutes a family with adolescents. This lack of unanimity is both embraced and used as a point of comparison wherever possible, such that the scholarship reviewed throughout the chapter makes explicit reference to the ages of adolescent family members whenever available in material regarding theories and research findings related to their families.

Before turning to this material, however, some common ground must be developed regarding what our definition of family itself will be. Dictionary definitions state that the term “family” references the most basic unit of a society that has as its main function the raising of children. In most mainstream Western societies,

families traditionally are thought to be made up of two parents rearing their offspring (Anderson & Sabatelli, 2006). In other societies, there is greater emphasis on the extended generations of a family, and therefore can include any number of additional members such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and the like. Even in current American society, however, the consistently high divorce rates and large numbers of children being born to unmarried parents has given rise to the need to include different combinations of members that can be regarded as comparable to the traditional family form (Olson & DeFrain, 2006). Hence, single-parent headed households, custodial and noncustodial parents following a divorce, cohabiting couples with children, stepfamilies, and gay and lesbian parents together create a virtual kaleidoscope of diversity regarding family forms.

Given this rather tremendous variation in family membership, the present chapter adopts what might best be described as an “intergenerational nurturing” definition regarding families with adolescents. The intergenerational component denotes that there is at least one adult and one adolescent present to count as a family. As well, the nurturing component of this definition implies that the adult or adults inside of this family have primary care-giving responsibilities for the adolescent.

The notion of intergenerational nurturing is thought to align well with frameworks offered by Bush and Peterson (2008) and others regarding the main influences that families have on their offspring. Here, major emphasis is placed on a family socialization process that views parents and other adult caregivers as assuming a central role in teaching their adolescents how to become useful members of the larger society in which they reside. The relative success of these parental efforts often is addressed in terms of the offspring’s development of socially competent behavior (i.e., problem-solving skills, achievement orientation) as examples of positive outcomes on the one hand, and the manifestation of problematic behaviors (i.e., delinquent behavior, substance abuse) as instances of more negative outcomes.

Theories About Families with Adolescents

In the most general sense, White and Klein (2008) have asserted that there are two kinds of family theories. First, there are theories containing family concepts that are used to describe other phenomena. Second, there are theories that attempt to describe families themselves as an object of study. Extending this to our present purposes, we can see there are theories that use family concepts to describe how adolescents develop, and there are theories that describe families of adolescents as entities of their own. Often as not, the theories covered in this book chapter are utilized to accomplish both tasks; that is, these theories both describe the families themselves as well as their impact on the development and well-being of their adolescents.

Attention is directed now toward these theories. The first two theoretical frameworks covered in this section are associated mostly with the field of human development and family science: family development theory and family systems theory. Next, three additional theories that are known more broadly throughout the social sciences are covered due to their critical focus on the larger social context within which these families with adolescents are situated (ecological theory) as well as the nature of the parent–offspring relationship itself (attachment theory and social learning theory).

Family Development Theory

Most generally, family development theory concerns the description of how families make transitions across time as members enter and leave through birth and death, marriage and divorce, and otherwise deal with various normative and nonnormative life events. While there is rather substantial variation among scholars in terms of the concepts that are used to discuss family development (Rodgers & White, 1993), most theoretical applications give some attention to family life

cycle stages and developmental tasks, a tradition that stems back to the inaugural work of Glick (1947) and Duvall (1957).

The “families with adolescents” stage of the family life cycle (Carter & McGoldrick, 1980) is centered on the theme of increasing the flexibility of the family’s boundaries in order to both facilitate greater adolescent independence and accommodate the growing dependence of grandparents and other older family members. As such, this theme of increased family boundary flexibility is linked to a number of key developmental tasks (also discussed as “second-order changes”). These developmental tasks include: (a) the alteration of the parent–adolescent relationship in order to allow the adolescent to move more freely out of and back into the family environs; (b) a renewed focus on marital issues and parental career interests; and (c) taking on a greater role in care-giving for older family members (Carter & McGoldrick, 1989). In combination, these developmental tasks strongly suggest a perspective that accounts simultaneously for interacting needs and desires of three generations of family members: adolescents, parents, and grandparents (Ackerman, 1980).

Some of the most common issues that arise out of this multigenerational theoretical focus include issues that focus on individuality (autonomy, identity) and intimacy (dating, sexuality) concerns (Preto, 1989). As the chapter on “Adolescence in Contemporary Families” contained in this *Handbook’s* previous edition has pointed out (Steinmetz, 1999), topics falling under these broad categories have become some of the more well-researched subject areas that are covered in the families with adolescents literature. More often as not, the focus on both individuality and intimacy as expressed through family interactions often seem to be balanced around the actions of the parents, who in effect become the “pivot point” for these developmental issues (Mattessich & Hill, 1979).

For instance, adolescents and parents are engaged in an almost constant renegotiation of issues that underscore the adolescent’s autonomy claims at the very same time that the parents are beginning to communicate about independent

living decisions with their own parents and other older family members. Likewise, parents undergoing mid-life recalibrations of their career aspirations may be returning to higher educational pursuits at the very same time that their adolescents are getting ready for their first college experience. Further, adolescents are experiencing the awakening of their sexual desires while parents may be dealing with sexual issues inside of their marriage or, if the marriage has dissolved, one or both parents might find themselves reeducating themselves about sexual expectations within the current dating scene. Taken together, there is the clear sense that family member interactions can be “felt across generations” (Preto & Travis, 1985) as adolescents, parents, and grandparents work to resolve these and related developmental issues.

Family Systems Theory

Most systems-oriented works in the social sciences have as their origin the General System Theory (GST) work of Bertalanffy (1968), whose efforts involved no less than an attempt to unify all sciences through the recognition of concepts that were common to each academic discipline. The application of this work within the family field has emphasized the use of concepts such as hierarchy, boundaries, equifinality, multifinality, and feedback (Whitechurch & Constantine, 1993) that, in combination, reflect an emphasis on understanding how families operate as open systems with properties that are of a non-summative nature (the axiomatic GST principle of “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts”).

Although not typically discussed in such GST terms, the hallmark application of systems theory, as applied to the family with adolescents, is associated with the open systems property of the steady state (i.e., sometimes also referred to as homeostasis, which actually is a closed system concept in the GST tradition). Likened to a host of other dynamic processes (such as blood pressure, made up of both systolic and diastolic readings), this concept typically is used to discuss the balance of stability and change—achieving a

“dynamic equilibria” (Bertalanffy, 1968)—that must be struck in families with adolescents as members negotiate the demands of this developmental period (Koman & Stechler, 1985). One result of this emphasis in the literature on families with adolescents is a focus on distance regulation and boundary maintenance, most often discussed in terms of differentiation levels (Bowen, 1978).

Here, family differentiation is seen as the family system’s ability to display both tolerance for intimacy and tolerance for individuality among its members (Anderson & Sabatelli, 1990). The combination of high individuality tolerance and high intimacy tolerance (termed high family differentiation), where family members are able to simultaneously experience themselves as both separate yet connected individuals, is associated with the highest levels of adolescent and family functioning. Conversely, low differentiation levels (both low individuality tolerance and low intimacy tolerance) have neither the experience of separateness or togetherness, and therefore are associated with the lowest functioning levels. In the middle of these polar extremes are combinations described as moderate differentiation levels that are associated with unexceptional adolescent and family functioning levels. The combination of high individuality tolerance and low intimacy tolerance is thought to reflect the sacrifice of connectedness experiences for the sake of individuality claims, while the combination of low individuality tolerance and high intimacy tolerance is the exact reverse; i.e., the sacrifice of individuality for the sake of togetherness (Gavazzi, 1993). As studies of family distance regulation in other cultures reviewed below will indicate, however, the relative balance of individuality and intimacy and its connection to healthy adolescent development very well may shift in more collectivist or otherwise non-Western societies.

Other variations on the application of steady state phenomena exist in the systems-influenced literature on families with adolescents. For instance, Stierlin (1981) discussed the family context of the adolescent as being made up of both centripetal and centrifugal processes that alternatively push and pull family members into

and out of the home environment. Another example is Hauser, Powers, and Noam (1991) work on constraining and enabling processes, whereby separateness and connectedness experiences are either restricted or facilitated through interactions between parents and adolescents. Although applied more generally to all families instead of only to families with adolescents, a review of this literature would be incomplete without mention of Broderick’s (1993) bonding and buffering processes as well. Here, bonding processes are equated with the centripetal pull to remain connected with other family members, while the buffering processes are thought to be those centrifugal forces that maintain some distance between members of the family.

Ecological Theory

Theoretical attempts to place the family system within its larger social context are indebted to the ecological approach developed by Bronfenbrenner (1979). Although various aspects of human development and the individual’s interaction across time with various ecological contexts are highlighted in this body of work (Bronfenbrenner, 1995), the ecological approach perhaps is most well known for its emphasis on levels of the ecosystem. For instance, the family is characterized as the primary “microsystem” of all human development, and exists at this ecosystem level alongside other intimate social settings that involve ongoing face-to-face interaction. In turn, the “mesosystem” is meant to describe various connections between microsystems (such as the linkage between families and schools), while the “exosystem” involves the influences of larger systems such as the neighborhood and community. Finally, the “macrosystem” represents even larger social contexts such as nation and culture.

Peterson and Hann (1999) have asserted that there are three important elements of the ecological approach as applied to the study of families with children. First, the ecological framework maintains an emphasis on the mutually reciprocal influences between children and these social contexts, a departure from the unidirectional view

that youth are impacted by their environment but do not have the ability to shape it. Second, the influences of various social contexts can be both direct and indirect, generating an emphasis on potential mediating and moderating effects of these ecological levels. Third, and inclusive of the first two points, the social contexts within this ecological approach are organized in systemic fashion, translating into the notion that no one social context can be understood in isolation from the others.

Applied more specifically to the social milieu of adolescence, Antonishak, Sutfin, and Reppucci (2005) have emphasized the important influences of three contexts: peers, neighborhoods, and the media. Peers represent both microsystem (close friendships) and exosystem (cliques and crowds) influences, and are thought to have some of their greatest influence through sociometric status (Bagwell, Newcomb, & Bukowski, 1998), meaning the degree to which someone is liked or disliked by others. The exosystem influences of neighborhood, in turn, are thought to be both proximal (direct) and distal (indirect), and are dominated by the influence of socioeconomic status and other family hardship indicators (Coulton, Korbin, Su, & Chow, 1995). Finally, the effects of the media are thought to be the most widespread across social contexts. While typically seen as part of the overall culture and therefore macro-systemic in orientation, the recent rise in social networks (MySpace, Facebook, etc.) generates evidence that these Internet-based collectives are having a more immediate microsystem impact.

Attachment Theory

Attachment theory has had a long tradition as a theory in developmental psychology, going back to the pioneering work of Bowlby (1969) and Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, and Wall (1978). Because this framework has maintained a dyadic orientation from its beginnings, attachment theory has been of sustained interest to family theorists and therapists alike (Minuchin, 1985). The basics of this approach involve the concept of “internal working model,” which refers to the

individual’s early experiences with their primary caregiver and, as such, guide all present interactions within interpersonal relationships. The most well-adjusted individuals are those who are “securely attached,” the result of having experienced consistent nurturance from the primary caregiver. Less well-adjusted individuals are either “anxious attached,” generated from the uneven availability of caregivers, or are “avoidant attached,” the result of consistent rejection from the caregiver.

Attachment theory has continued to develop, as evidenced by contributions of Talbot and McHale (2003), who proposed that the internal working models offered by attachment theory can be greatly enhanced by attention to “whole-family or polyadic relationship representations.” As support for these ideas, they point to the work of Belsky (1981) and others who have maintained that child–mother–father triads are the most appropriate units of analysis for understanding the reciprocal influences of family members. Of particular interest here is the flexibility of the internal working models, which are thought to be demonstrably influenced by co-parenting processes and marital dynamics, and not only the dyadic level relationships with each primary caregiver.

Applied to families with adolescents, Cretzmeyer (2003) focuses attention on the role that attachments play in perceptions of family emotional support, and reviews a wide range of studies that highlight the malleability of the adolescent’s internal working model through a focus on present family functioning levels, and include references to the use of the attachment perspective in clinical efforts (cf. Lopez, 1995). Others have made a related call for the use of an attachment perspective in understanding parent–adolescent relationships (Pinquart & Silbereisen, 2005), including its theoretical pairing with the family systems perspective (Benson, 2005; Caffery & Erdman, 2000).

Social Learning Theory

Social learning theory, another theory covered in the present chapter that claims psychological

origins, also is based as much on relationships as it is on individually oriented concepts. Developed in large part by Bandura (1977), this theoretical framework focuses attention on how learning takes place through the observation of others' behavior, and especially those behaviors that are perceived as rewarded within the social context. Thus, imitation plays an important role in the learning process as individuals attempt to recreate the behaviors that are modeled and reinforced by the actions of others.

Theorists, researchers, and intervention-based professionals have long maintained an interest in the applicability of social learning theory in efforts to understand and work with families. For instance, Crosbie-Burnett and Lewis (1993) utilized the social learning concept of "reciprocal determinism"—with its emphasis on the circular influence that occurs between the individual and her/his social context—as a way of describing the learning that is gained through family member interactions. Similarly, Pinquart and Silbereisen (2005) have asserted that social learning theory provides assistance in understanding how similarities among siblings are the result of shared experiences within the family environment.

The efforts of Patterson (1982) and his colleagues at the Oregon Social Learning Center are among the most recognized bodies of work that have applied social learning theory concepts to the study of families. Focusing on the family environment as the most important context in learning antisocial behavior, Patterson's approach involved the recognition of what he termed coercive family processes. Here, parents who employ coercive tactics with their children and adolescents (such as bribing or threatening behaviors) initiate a process whereby the offspring learn how to use aggressive behaviors (flying into a rage or otherwise throwing temper tantrums) in order to avoid compliance. Over time, these behaviors are thought to generalize to other situations involving adult authority figures, as well as within friendship groups (Patterson, Bank, & Stoolmiller, 2005). Prosocial peers generally do not tolerate coercive behavior, leading to greater associations with delinquent peer groups who do reinforce displays of antisocial behavior. These patterns are

thought to persist into adulthood, leading to an intergenerational cycle of antisocial behavior, unless and until certain "turning points" can be established that interrupt the modeling and reinforcement processes (Granic & Patterson, 2006).

Research on Families with Adolescents

If White and Klein's (2008) classification of family theories (discussed above) were to be extended into the empirical realm, research efforts surrounding families with adolescents also could be divided into two similar kinds of categories. First, there are efforts to use family concepts as independent variables in order to explain dependent variables associated with adolescent development and well-being. As well, there are efforts to study families with adolescents as the central theme of the empirical effort (where the family variables themselves often as not serve as the de facto dependent measures). In practice, many of the research studies in this area of inquiry represent a blend of both efforts, such that families with adolescents are both described and are used to explain variations in adolescent development and well-being.

This section on research studies that focus on families with adolescents begins with a discussion of "unit of analysis" issues, used here to describe different focal points that researchers can adopt when seeking to generate family-based data. This discussion gives way to a review of studies that focus on families of adolescents, covering empirical work that concerns such areas as parenting (including parent-adolescent communication and parent-adolescent conflict) and family processes and family structure. Finally, this section offers a description of studies that use family factors to explain a variety of outcome variables associated with adolescent development and well-being. As noted above, the present chapter's review of such material was limited to three aspects of adolescent problem behaviors—delinquency, mental health, and alcohol and other drug use—and two areas of potential adolescent assets—education and social competency.

Unit of Analysis Issues

In general, issues concerning the “unit of analysis” are thought to provide assistance in helping to define exactly what we are attempting to think about, study, or impact (Sabatelli & Bartle, 1995). Regarding families with adolescents, there are at least two units of analysis that we could consider beyond the focus on any individual family member. One of these units of analysis concerns the various dyads within the family, including the parent–adolescent dyad, the marital dyad, and sibling dyads. The second unit of analysis would include triads and larger constellations of members (polyads) that are labeled as “family level” variables.

All of the dyads mentioned in the previous paragraph potentially exist within a family, and certainly are considered to be a part of the larger family system; however, typically they are not considered to be fully representative of the family unit itself. At the same time, the parent–adolescent dyad is thought to be a distinctive dyad inside of the family. Unlike others mentioned, it is both intergenerational and is based on caring activities, thus satisfying the “intergenerational nurturing” definition of family adopted within this chapter. As well, the parent–adolescent dyad has been extensively studied, and often has been given the label of “family” research by others. Finally, not being able to label certain household compositions (i.e., a single parent and his/her adolescent offspring) as representing a family unit is fraught with all kinds of political and policy difficulties.

Overall, there are four types of studies that have made contributions to the field’s empirical understanding of families with adolescents. First, there are those studies that have focused on a single intergenerational dyad. Second, there are empirical efforts that have centered on the adolescent’s relationship to both parents. Third, there are studies that have focused on the adolescent’s family as a totality. Fourth, there are empirical efforts that have conceptualized the family with adolescents as the combination of various dyads.

Studies that have focused on an intergenerational dyad typically concern a single-parent–

adolescent relationship, but could include the adolescent’s relationship to other caregivers such as a grandparent or a foster parent. Empirical work classified as focusing on the adolescent in relation to both parents concerns studies that do not make a distinction between the two care-giving adults (i.e., parents are treated as a single entity with questions such as “My parents...”), or that ask about relationships to both parents, but conduct separate analyses for data pertaining to the mother–adolescent and father–adolescent relationships. Research findings generated from these first two types of studies will be reviewed below under the heading of “dyadic research on families with adolescents.”

Studies focusing on the family with adolescents as a totality would involve research that makes no distinction among various members (i.e., family members are treated as a single entity with questions such as “My family...”). Finally, those studies that conceptualize the family with adolescents as being comprised of various dyads that exist within the family involve the combination of at least two reciprocal relationships such as adolescent–mother, adolescent–father, and/or adolescent–sibling. In these cases, data pertaining to the dyadic relationships are handled as “relational family data” (Fisher, Kotes, Ransom, Philips, & Rudd, 1985), meaning that the appropriate statistical analyses are employed in order to examine the interrelated nature of the dyads. Research from these latter two types of studies will be reviewed below under the heading of “polyadic research on families with adolescents.”

Overview: Dyadic Research on Families with Adolescents

Historically, the literature pertaining to the impact of parents on adolescents has been based on Baumrind’s (1978) original conceptualizations of authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, and indifferent parenting styles. These styles are comprised of a two-dimensional view of parenting (Maccoby & Martin, 1983) that recognizes variation in both parent responsiveness (warmth, affection) and parent demandingness (rule-setting, discipline).

Authoritative parents, the style of parenting most often associated with positive adolescent outcomes (Darling & Steinberg, 1993), represents the combination of high responsiveness and high demandingness. While authoritarian parents also are high in demandingness, this style of parenting is characterized by low responsiveness. Permissive parents are low on demandingness but high on responsiveness. Indifferent parenting styles, as the label implies, are low in both demandingness and responsiveness.

In addition to research pertaining to parenting styles, Peterson's (2005) review of literature relevant to the influence of parents on adolescents recognizes the important contributions made regarding parental behavior on adolescent outcomes, beginning with the recognition that "the closest thing to a general law of parenting is that warm, supportive, nurturant, and accepting behavior by mothers and fathers is associated with the development of social competence by adolescents" (p. 40). Hence, research on parenting factors related to support, use of reasoning/induction, monitoring, supervision, knowledge, granting of psychological autonomy, and discipline strategies all must be recognized as additional important areas of inquiry regarding the impact of parents on adolescent development and well-being (Cox & Harter, 2003).

Dyadic Research on Families with Adolescents: Selected Studies from the Last 15 Years

More recent studies that have focused on parenting styles continue to underscore the belief that an authoritative parenting style is associated with the most positive adolescent well-being outcomes (Weiss & Schwartz, 1996). One more recent twist on this body of findings has been a greater focus on the specific parenting styles of both mothers and fathers. Noting that much of the literature to date has focused on mothers only, Bronte-Tinkew, Moore, and Carrano (2006) found that an authoritative style of parenting displayed by fathers was significantly associated with positive outcomes for adolescents (average age 15.3 years) even

after a number of mother-related variables (including mother's own parenting style) were controlled. In addition, as hypothesized these researchers found that father impact was greater for male adolescents than for female adolescents. This latter finding also can be seen as a contribution to another emerging set of studies that look as the relative importance of mothers' and fathers' contributions to adolescent development and well-being (cf. Stolz, Barber, & Olsen, 2005).

The newer emphasis on obtaining information from both mothers and fathers has led to efforts to examine the uniformity of parenting styles. For instance, Fletcher, Steinberg, and Sellers (1999) reported that "interparental parent consistency" (inferred from the reports of high school students on the parenting styles of their mothers and fathers) was less important than the presence of at least one authoritative parent. Additionally, few differences in adolescent outcomes were identified between families with two authoritative parents vs. those containing only one authoritative parent. Extending this type of research through use of both self-report and observational ratings (thus examining both the "insider" reports of adolescents and the "outsider" views of observers), Simons and Conger (2007) examined parenting styles of both parents with seventh grade adolescents (followed longitudinally with measures taken in the eighth and ninth grades). In addition to findings that marked notable differences between inside and outside perspectives, these researchers reported that mothers and fathers most often shared a common parenting style. Further, it was reported that the most positive adolescent outcomes were associated with having both parents displaying authoritative parenting styles.

Beyond parenting styles, researchers continue to make contributions to the field's understanding of the specific behaviors that comprise competent parenting of adolescents. For instance, Bogenschneider, Small, and Tsay (1997) examined the relationship between parents' perceptions of their own parenting competence and eighth through twelfth grade adolescents' reports of parenting behaviors. Findings indicated that higher perceived levels of competence by parents were

associated with adolescent reports of greater monitoring, higher levels of responsiveness, and less psychologically controlling behaviors by their parents. Newcomb and Loeb (1999) also have examined the association between less competent parenting behavior and more general adult problem behaviors in a sample of mothers of seventh through ninth grade adolescents. Poor parenting behaviors (defined here as lack of warmth, and frequent aggression, rejection, and neglect) were associated with mothers' socially deviant attitudes and more direct engagement in both drug use and property crimes.

Overview: Polyadic Research on Families with Adolescents

Research efforts that focus on the family with adolescents as a totality or as the combination of multiple dyads are dominated by studies of family processes. Day, Gavazzi, Miller, and Langeveld (2009) define family processes as "the dynamics of the relationships among the multiple family members and across boundaries to those outside the system" (p. 120). Extending the teleological argument of general systems theory, Day, Gavazzi, and Acock (2001) posited that family processes were those strategies used by families to accomplish certain core goals that would enhance outcomes for its members. These scholars identified certain "compelling family processes" in the research literature that were thought to form the backbone of empirical work in this domain, including distance regulation (family differentiation, boundary maintenance, expressed emotion, triangulation), flexibility (adaptability, problem-solving, coping strategies), supervision (monitoring, behavioral control), and caring (support, affection, acceptance, companionship).

Some of the studies in this area of inquiry concurrently focus on issues related to family structure, which largely has to do with the marital status of parents and their biological relationships with youth in the household. Although some researchers continue to maintain that there is a dominant effect of family structure, most scholars insist that any distinction made between family

processes and family structure is "somewhat artificial" (Peterson, 2005; Teachman, 2000). This sentiment is perhaps best expressed by the distinguished researcher Heatherington (2006), who recently wrote that "happy, well adjusted children can be found in diverse types of families... it is family process rather than family structure that is critical to the well-being of children" (p. 232).

This contention is based on the notion that any type of disturbance to the family's structure (separation, divorce, remarriage, etc.) will only impact youth well-being in a negative way if core family processes are disrupted, including marked declines in father involvement (Carlson, 2006; Scott, Booth, King, & Johnson, 2007; Stewart, 2003) and alterations in the mother-adolescent relationship (Arditti, 1999; Koerner, Jacobs, & Raymond, 2000). These disruptions can be further aggravated by the overall increase in cumulative risks (Cavanagh, 2008; Matjasko, Grunden, & Ernst, 2007), especially with regard to economic disadvantages (Manning & Lamb, 2003), and/or by new relationship issues brought on through one or both of the parents' remarriages (Halpern-Meekin & Tach, 2008; King, 2006; Yuan, Vogt, & Hayley, 2006).

Polyadic Research on Families with Adolescents: Selected Studies from the Last 15 Years

As noted above, this area of research has been dominated by studies that have focused on distance regulation concepts, and especially those empirical efforts that use the family differentiation construct. While many earlier studies of this construct relied solely on the adolescents' perspective, the use of multiple family member perspectives in the assessment of family differentiation levels was initiated by Bartle-Haring and Gavazzi (1996). Using two samples of families with adolescents (ages 11–19) and families of college students (average age 19.8 years), these researchers demonstrated how mother, father, and adolescent perspectives on family differentiation levels converged onto a

latent variable that represented the family system as a single unit (i.e., the family as the unit of analysis). Furthering this line of research, Bartle-Haring, Kenny, and Gavazzi (1999) used a sample of families with college students (average age 19.6 years) and generated evidence that both supported the operationalization of differentiation as a family system variable and at the same time underscored the importance of understanding variation in agreement about what was happening inside of the multiple dyads of these families. Yet another study conducted by Cohen, Vasey, and Gavazzi (2003) used a sample of families with college students (average age 18.6 years), and generated support for the bi-dimensional structure of family differentiation (as both individuality tolerance and intimacy tolerance), as well as establishing the predictive influence of higher individuality tolerance levels on reduced adolescent internalized distress (as trait anxiety, depression, and worry).

Family differentiation levels also have been studied cross-culturally, although regrettably using only adolescent perspectives to date. For instance, Chun and MacDermid (1997) used a sample of Korean adolescents (average age 15.7 years) in order to examine the associations among variables related to family differentiation and adolescent individuation and self-esteem. Interesting same sex pairings resulted, including the findings that father–adolescent differentiation levels were the strongest predictors of male adolescent individuation, whereas female adolescent individuation levels were most strongly related to mother–adolescent differentiation levels. Manzi, Vignoles, Regalia, and Scabini (2006) employed two samples of older adolescents (ages 17–21) from Italy and the United Kingdom in order to examine the relationships among variables related to family differentiation (operationalized here as the combination of family cohesion and enmeshment, building off of earlier work done with these concepts by Barber and Buehler (1996)) and a host of adolescent adjustment variables. These researchers reported both the usual and typical association between greater family cohesion and positive adolescent well-being found in American samples, as well as the somewhat unusual (by US standards of research)

findings regarding the lack of relationship between enmeshment and adolescent adjustment in the Italian sample, which may well indicate a more collectivistic family pattern of relating that values very high levels of togetherness.

Other distance regulation concepts employed in the study of families with adolescents include the notion of triangulation, whereby third family members are pulled into the conflicts that erupt between two parties within the family (Kerr & Bowen, 1988), often as not with negative effects on the triangulated adolescent (Bell, Bell, & Nakata, 2001). Franck and Buehler (2007) used a sample of families with sixth grade students in order to examine the relationship between triangulation, marital hostility, and adolescent outcome variables associated with problematic behavior. The findings reported on the deleterious effects on adolescents who become “caught in the middle” of parental conflict, especially with regard to the adolescent’s increased susceptibility to internalizing problem behaviors. Similar findings using only adolescent perspectives (ages 14–19) were reported by Grych, Raynor, and Fosco (2004), who also noted some interesting results regarding sibling relationships. Contrary to stated expectations, those adolescents who reported greater closeness to siblings also reported feeling more threatened by parental conflict.

Triangulation and adolescent well-being also has been studied in relation to marital conflict, marital love, and co-parenting conflict by Baril, Crouter, and McHale (2007). Using a sample of married parents and their adolescents (where outcomes were measured at 16 and 18 years of age), these researchers reported a significant association between greater co-parenting conflict reported by parents and more risky behaviors as reported by adolescents, as well as the mediating effect that greater marital love had on this relationship over time. Interestingly, triangulation was not strongly associated with adolescent risky behavior (although problems in the detection of this systems construct were discussed as one possible explanation of this finding). Another concept related to triangulation—“parentification,” defined as the assumption of a parent role by the youth in order to provide such things as emotional

support to a parent—also has been associated with greater marital conflict and poor outcomes for 14–18-year-old adolescents (Peris, Cummings, Goeke-Morey, & Emery, 2008).

Variation in parenting behaviors exhibited to adolescent siblings has emerged as another important topic within this empirical area (O'Connor, Hetherington, & Reiss, 1998). Feinberg and Hetherington (2001) used a sample of same-sex paired sibling adolescents (between the ages of 9 and 18 years) and their parents in order to examine the impact of “differential parenting,” defined in this study as the parental display of different levels of warmth and negativity to their offspring. These researchers reported on the unique if somewhat modest contributions of the differential parenting construct regarding its impact on adolescent well-being after parenting behaviors themselves were taken into account. Here, greater differences in terms of how parents treated siblings corresponded to more negative outcomes for the less-well-treated adolescent, even after the level of poor treatment was taken into account. Kan, McHale, and Crouter (2008) examined a similar construct labeled “interparental incongruence” in a longitudinal study of parents and their first-born and second-born adolescents (average ages were 17.3 and 14.8 years respectively at the sixth and final year of this study). Among other things, the findings indicated that youth perceptions of interparental incongruence (measured as differing levels of intimacy and conflict shown to the adolescent offspring) at the beginning of this study were predictive of parent reports of marital quality levels (measured as the levels of intimacy and conflict shown between the parents) a full 6 years later.

Conflict itself has emerged as an important topic of interest in studies of families with adolescents (Adams, & Laursen, 2007; David, Steele, Forehand, & Armistead, 1996; Gerard, Buehler, Franck, & Anderson, 2005), especially regarding the ways that interaction patterns are replicated across subsystems. Van Doom, Branje, and Meeus (2007) reported that the ways that parents handled their conflicts with one another were significantly related to how those parents and

their adolescents (average age 13.2 years) resolved conflict. In a similar vein, Reuter and Conger (1995) employed a longitudinal observation study of parents and adolescents (over a 4-year period from the time the youth were 12–13 years of age) and reported that more disruptive and hostile family interaction styles were significantly related to less parent–adolescent agreement over time.

Summary of Research on Dyadic and Polyadic Relationships

Baumrind's (1978) original work on parenting styles maintains a strong influence on the most recent research that focuses on dyadic relationships in families with adolescents, and the vast majority of these studies underscore the linkage between healthy adolescent development and an authoritative style of parenting. Newer studies have extended this work to now examine potential differences between mothers and fathers, including the impact of parenting style *consistency* within the family, as well as expanding the definitions of *competent* parenting to include such variables as monitoring, responsiveness, warmth, and psychological control.

In turn, research efforts focused on polyadic relationships in families with adolescents largely have paid attention to family processes such as family differentiation, triangulation, and conflict levels. Of particular note is the rising interest in making cross-cultural comparisons between families living in different cultures. As well, the increased attention given to siblings and the degree to which parents treat them in a *congruent* manner represents an important and innovative advancement in this empirical area.

Overview: Family Influences on Adolescent Outcome Variables

Masten and Shaffer (2006) presented six basic models for understanding how families matter in terms of their impact on children and adolescents.

Most simple and straightforward of all is the “direct family effects” model, where the influence of a given family variable has an immediate and undeviating impact on some factor related to the youth. The “mediated indirect family effects” model assumes that a third variable plays an intermediary role regarding the impact of the family variable, and the “complex mediated family effects” model elaborates how multiple variables might be employed to understand the indirect influences of family factors on youth outcomes. The “family as mediator” and the “family as moderator” models hold that certain family factors can either mediate or moderate the influence of other variables on factors related to youth. Finally, the longitudinal and reciprocal impact of family and youth factors is represented by the “transactional family-child effects” model, whereby the bidirectional influence that parents and their offspring can have on each other are taken into account as they impact both present and future family member interactions.

Employing such models, studies have documented the critical role that family factors play in explaining a variety of outcome variables associated with adolescent development and well-being. In total, these studies have served to emphatically counter some recent arguments that the family environment plays a relatively inconsequential role when compared to the impact of other predictor variables such as peer groups and genetic susceptibilities (Clarke-Stewart, 2006). As well, this body of compelling evidence has given rise to many forms of family-focused treatment for families with adolescents that are evidence-based and contain objectives founded on the results of this body of family-focused research (Werner-Wilson & Morrissey, 2005). Overall, this literature base is thought to have been sufficiently well-developed for Hinde (2006) to pose the question: “are we not getting near to knowing enough for framing policies that will permit interventions where they are most needed and ameliorate the most urgent issues, and indeed for framing any policy that is likely to be implemented?” (p. 363).

Family Influences on Adolescent Outcome Variables: Selected Studies from the Last 15 Years

Delinquency and Conduct Disorders

The impact of parenting variables continues to dominate the literature concerning adolescent delinquency and conduct disorders. Simons, Wei, Conger, and Elder (2001) examined the impact of parenting on delinquent behaviors in a longitudinal study of parents and their adolescents (seventh graders at the initiation of this study). While the strongest associations between more “inept” parenting behaviors (i.e., defined as low monitoring, harsh, and inconsistent discipline, and less use of inductive reasoning evidenced in the aggregated reports from parents, children, and observer ratings) and greater amounts of self-reported youth delinquency were seen in the early adolescent years, results also indicated that more functional parenting practices over time did serve to reduce antisocial behavior. Deković, Janssens, and van As (2003) examined a variety of parenting, marital, family, and demographic indicators in a sample of parents and three age groups of adolescents (12–13, 14–15, and 16–18 years). These researchers found that more positive parenting behaviors (more responsiveness, more involvement, less punishment, more monitoring, and greater consistency) and a more positive parent–adolescent relationship (greater attachment and less rejection and conflict) were strongly associated with less self-reported adolescent delinquent acts across these age groups.

There also has been sustained interest in the role that siblings play in the development of delinquent and antisocial behavior. Snyder, Bank, and Burraston (2005) conducted a 10-year longitudinal study using parents, older brothers (average age 19.5 years at the end of the study) and their younger siblings (average age 16.3 years at the end of the study). The impact of more ineffective parenting (i.e., defined as lack of supervision and higher parental conflict) was significantly related to the older siblings’ greater exposure to delinquent peers, and in turn both greater sibling conflict and

more sibling co-participation in deviant behaviors substantially increased the younger siblings' delinquent behavior. Slomkowski, Rende, Conger, Simons, and Conger (2001) included both brother–brother and sister–sister pairs in their 4-year longitudinal study of adolescent (ages 11–15 years at the outset of the study) delinquent behavior. Similar results were found for both brother and sister sibling pairs, such that greater older sibling delinquent behavior and more hostile and coercive sibling relationships predicted greater younger sibling delinquent behavior over time.

Some important gender differences have been noted in the literature connecting family factors with delinquent behavior. Cashwell and Vacc (1996) examined associations between family level variables (i.e., family cohesion) and delinquent behavior as reported in a sample of sixth through eighth grade adolescents. These researchers reported gender differences in the sense that family cohesion was negatively related to delinquent behavior for females but was positively related to delinquency for males. Gavazzi (2006) used a sample of court-involved adolescents (average age 14.9 years) to examine the impact that “disrupted family processes” (more conflict, lack of monitoring, inconsistent discipline) had on self-reported delinquent behavior. Results indicated that a gender X race interaction was significant, such that females in general and African American girls in particular reported the strongest associations between greater amounts of disrupted family processes and higher levels of delinquency. In a similar fashion, the important interplay of race/ethnicity and family factors has been highlighted in research concerning adolescent violence and aggression as well (cf. Gorman-Smith, Tolan, Zelli, & Huesmann, 1996).

Adolescent Mental Health

Family factors have been characterized as retaining both protective and risk factors in terms of mental health issues for adolescents, and especially adolescent depressive symptoms. Slesnick and Waldron (1997) used a sample of depressed and nondepressed adolescents (average age 15.1 years) and their parents in an interaction study of the association between family problem-solving

and adolescent depression. Parents of depressed adolescents were reported to engage in greater amounts of incongruent communication, leading the researchers to conclude that depressive symptoms may be an adaptive response to confusing parent behavior. Herman, Ostrander, and Tucker (2007) used a sample of adolescents (ages 12–17 years) to examine the associations among variables related to family cohesion, family conflict, and adolescent depression. These researchers reported a significant interaction between adolescent race and family factors, greater depression by African American adolescents being related to lower family cohesion, while white adolescent depression was associated with higher family conflict. These researchers note that the primacy of family cohesion in the lives of African American youth has been reported by others (cf. Sagrestano, Paikoff, Holmbeck, & Fendrich, 2003), whereas “reducing family conflict may be the critical leverage point in alleviating child depressive symptoms” (p. 329) for White youth.

Other researchers have taken a more global view of adolescent mental health through an examination of both internalizing (depression, anxiety, and other emotional disorders that are experienced “inside” the adolescent) and externalizing (aggression, conduct disorders, and other psychological concerns that are “acted out” on others) problem behaviors. Forehand, Biggar, and Kotchick (1998) conducted a 6-year longitudinal study that examined the linkage between family risk factors and internalizing and externalizing difficulties in a sample of adolescents (ages 11–15 at the start of the study). This study found significant associations between family risks (more interparental conflict, lack of two parents in the home, greater parent–adolescent relationship problems, and more parent physical and mental health problems as reported by mothers) and both types of adolescent mental health concerns, such that increased amounts of these family risk factors predicted greater amounts of both short-term and long-term adolescent problem behaviors. Gavazzi, Bostic, Lim, and Yarcheck (2008) examined the influence of adolescent gender and race on the association between disrupted family processes (more conflict, lack of monitoring, inconsistent

discipline) and adolescent mental health concerns. Among other results, this study generated evidence that disrupted family processes mediated the impact of gender on both internalizing and externalizing problems for the African American adolescents (but not the white adolescents), a striking contrast to the long-held notion that girls are more likely to display internalizing problems while boys are more likely to externalize their mental health issues. While these researchers noted some consistency of findings when compared to other studies examining the impact that family factors have on internalizing and externalizing problem behaviors among African American youth (cf. Griffin, Botvin, Scheier, Diaz, & Miller, 2000), the lack of similar findings for the White youth prompted the authors to call into question the possibility that race was serving as a proxy for socioeconomic status, something that was not controlled for in this study.

Another body of studies has sought to examine the combined impact of both family and friends on adolescent mental health concerns. Deković, Buist, and Reitz (2004) conducted a 3-year longitudinal study of adolescent (average age 13.4 years) reports of both family and peer relationships and adolescent internalizing and externalizing problems. Parent–adolescent relationship quality (measured as greater communication quality, greater trust, and less alienation) was associated with higher levels of both dimensions of adolescent mental health, whereas friendship relationship quality (also measured as greater communication quality, greater trust, and less alienation) was associated with higher amounts of only internalizing problems. Rubin et al. (2004) examined the associations between family, peer, and adolescent mental health variables in a sample of adolescents (average age 10.3 years), their mothers, and their best friends. More positive family factors (i.e., measured as adolescents' perceptions of greater parental support) and more positive peer factors (i.e., measured as greater friendship quality) were associated with less internalizing problems, whereas only greater parental support was a predictor of less externalizing difficulties.

Alcohol and Other Drug Use

The family environment also is a known predictor of adolescent use of alcohol and other substances. Brody and Ge (2001) examined the associations between parenting behaviors and adolescent (ages 11–12 years) alcohol use in a three-wave longitudinal study. Interestingly, these researchers noted that the significant association between more positive parenting (i.e., defined as both being more “nurturant-responsive” and less “harsh-conflicted” reports of parent behaviors by mothers, fathers, and adolescents) and less adolescent alcohol use was mediated by adolescent self-regulation, supporting the notion that parents best shield their adolescents from substance use by teaching them how to control their own behavior. Barnes, Reifman, Farrell, and Dintcheff (2000) conducted a six-wave longitudinal study regarding the influences of the family on the alcohol use of adolescents (average age 14.5 years at the initiation of the study). Results using adolescent reports indicated that greater parent monitoring and more support were associated both with less initial adolescent involvement with alcohol as well as predicting lower rates of misuse over time.

As in other studies of adolescent outcomes reviewed above, there also has been increased interest in the combined impact of family and peer factors. Barnes, Hoffman, Welte, Farrell, and Dintcheff (2006) extended their earlier effort discussed in the previous paragraph by examining the impact of peer characteristics on adolescent alcohol use as well as other substances. While greater amounts of peer deviance (i.e., measured as the youth's reports of their friends' involvement in delinquent behaviors) were reported to be significantly associated with greater adolescent misuse of alcohol and other drugs, parental monitoring also was reported to have an important role in buffering these peer influences. Dorius, Bahr, Hoffmann, and Harmon (2004) examined adolescent marijuana use through the reports of adolescents between the ages of 12 and 19 years. One interesting nuance within this study involved making the distinction between adolescent closeness to each parent,

leading to the finding that greater closeness to fathers but not mothers attenuated the relationship between more peer involvement with drugs and greater adolescent marijuana use.

Another important line of research that has its parallel in other outcomes-based studies discussed above involves the effects of siblings. Rende, Slomkowski, Lloyd-Richardson, and Niaura (2005) employed a “social contagion” approach to the study of sibling effects on adolescent (seventh through 12th graders) smoking and drinking behaviors. The results of this study presented a strong argument that shared environment factors (including sibling contact and mutual friendships) were much stronger influences than genetic factors regarding adolescent substance use. Here, greater amounts of contact with substance-using siblings and their friends were more strongly associated with increased adolescent substance use than genetic relatedness. East and Khoo (2005) conducted a 5-year longitudinal study of Latino and African American adolescent older sisters (15–19 years of age at the initiation of the study), their younger male and female siblings (11–16 years of age at the initiation of the study) and their mothers. Findings from this study indicated that greater warmth/closeness in the sibling relationship and older sister’s greater drug and alcohol use predicted higher levels of younger sibling drug and alcohol use in the full sample of male and female younger siblings. In addition, sibling warmth/closeness mediated the impact of family structure (i.e., single vs. married mothers) on adolescent substance use (i.e., siblings with single mothers displayed greater warmth and closeness), while mothers’ monitoring behaviors were unrelated to this adolescent outcome variable.

Development of Socially Competent Behaviors

There has been increased interest in documenting the role that family factors play in the development of adolescent social competence. Research on adolescent social competence—those behaviors associated with positive outcomes in the lives of youth—serve as an important counterbalance to the widespread examination of adolescent

problem behaviors. Henry, Sager, and Plunkett (1996) conducted a study on adolescent (average age 14.7 years) perspectives regarding parent and family factors and how they were linked to adolescent social competence as measured by both emotional and cognitive dimensions of empathy. Results were reported indicating that greater adolescent emotional empathy was associated with more family cohesion and higher levels of parental support, while greater amounts of the cognitive dimension of adolescent empathy was related to more parental inductive behaviors.

Other studies have examined the reciprocal influences of family factors and adolescent social competence. O’Connor, Hetherington, and Clingepeel (1997) reported on a study of adolescents (average age 11.4 years) that used the combined reports of adolescents, both parents, teachers, and trained observers on various measures of social competence. These researchers reported strong support for the bidirectional influence of variables that tapped into parent-to-adolescent and adolescent-to-parent behaviors, whereby greater “positivity” (as reflected in family member enjoyment of the relationship, affection displayed, and positive communication) was related to such indicators as social competence, cognitive competence, physical competence, prosocial behavior, and global self-worth. Some gender differences also have been reported as well. Schoenrock, Bell, Sun, and Avery (1999) collected data from male and female adolescents (ages 17–19) in order to examine the impact that parent and family factors had on a global measure of social competence. For male adolescents, greater social competence was associated with higher levels of family support and family autonomy, while greater female adolescent social competence was related to higher levels of family support only.

Potential differences in the relationships between family factors and adolescent social competence have been studied in terms of race/ethnicity and cultural variation, as well as the potential intermediary nature of these variables. Prelow, Loukas, and Jordan-Green (2007) conducted a longitudinal study of Latino adolescents (average age 11.9 years at the initiation of the study) and their mothers. These researchers

reported that both family routines (measured as the regularity of family events in the home) and adolescent social competence mediated the impact of socioenvironmental risk (operationalized as the accumulation of risks associated with family financial strain, neighborhood problems, and maternal psychological distress and parenting stress) on adolescent externalizing problems. Garcia and Gracia (2009) used the reports of adolescents (average age 14.9 years) from Spain in a study of parenting styles and self-perceptions of social competence. Results indicated that authoritative and permissive styles of parenting both were associated with the highest levels of social competence. Carson, Chowdhury, Perry, and Pati (1999) used the reports of adolescents (average age 13.7 years) from India along with their fathers and teachers in order to examine the associations between a number of parent and family variables and adolescent social competence in school. Findings revealed that the most socially competent adolescents come from families that display lower enmeshment styles in terms of family cohesion, employ more democratic family styles, and score lower on a measure of external locus of control within the family.

Educational Issues

A growing number of studies have documented the impact of parental and family factors on a variety of adolescent educational issues, an area of inquiry that can reflect both competent and problematic behaviors (Vazsonyi & Flannery, 1997) in school in addition to variables associated with academic abilities and actual performance. Melby and Conger (1996) conducted a four-wave longitudinal study to examine the associations between mothers' and fathers' parenting behaviors and adolescent (average age 12.6 years at the initiation of the study) academic performance. The findings of this study indicated that mother and father parenting behaviors (i.e., measured as greater involvement and less hostility as reported by mothers, fathers, adolescents, and trained observers) were associated both with earlier grade point average and with more positive changes in this indicator of academic performance over time. Amato and Fowler (2002)

used a two-wave longitudinal design to consider the connection between parenting behaviors (i.e., measured as support, monitoring, and use of harsh discipline) and adolescent (12–18 years of age at the initiation of the study) school success. These researchers reported significant associations between both greater parent support and less harsh discipline in terms of greater adolescent school success, but no such relationship regarding the parental monitoring variable in the overall sample. These results did not vary as a function of race (white vs. African American), but differences in family structure were detected in that parent monitoring did seem to matter more in single-parent-headed households.

Other studies have reported results indicating academic differences related to both race and family structure. Heard (2007) used a longitudinal database containing reports from white, African American, and Latino adolescents (average age 14.9 years at the initiation of the study) and their parents to examine the impact of both the duration of time spent in various family structural situations and the total number of family constellation changes on grade point average. African American adolescents were reported to have been less negatively impacted by exposure to single parenthood and Hispanic adolescents less negatively impacted by time lived with non-parents; however, these race/ethnicity differences in grades were due to variables related to social support, stress levels, and school-related difficulties. Demo and Acock (1996) conducted a longitudinal study of family structure and family process variables in a sample of adolescents (ages 12–18) and their mothers. While adolescents residing with never-divorced parents fared best in terms of mother reports of academic performance, less mother–adolescent disagreement itself was the strongest overall predictor of better grades.

Conflict within the parent–adolescent relationship also has been linked to academic performance. Dotterer, Hoffman, Crouter, and McHale (2008) reported on findings from a 2-year longitudinal study of adolescents (average age 14.9 years) and their mothers and fathers. A number of interesting bidirectional associations were discussed, including how greater parent–adolescent

conflict as reported by both parents predicted lower grades (from student report cards) at the end of the study, as well as how lower grades in math at the onset of the study predicted greater parent–adolescent conflict 2 years later. Other studies have generated more detailed information about the subject matter of these disagreements and whether or not potential gender differences exist. Allison and Schultz (2004) compared the reports of sixth, seventh, and eighth grade adolescents regarding the amounts and types of conflict they experienced with their parents. Homework and school performance were among the most frequent domains of conflict endorsed by adolescents, especially in parent–son relationships.

Possible linkages between family factors and relationships outside of the home also have been highlighted within this area of inquiry. Crosnoe and Elder (2004) conducted a longitudinal study of adolescents (average age 16.0 years at the initiation of the study) and their parents. Results indicated that greater parent–adolescent emotional distance as reported by parents was associated with more academic difficulties (being held back, suspended/expelled, skipping classes, homework trouble, and low grades). Although variables related to friendship (lower numbers of friends and less peer support) and lower levels of teacher–adolescent bonding also predicted greater academic difficulties, these variables generally were not shown to buffer the effects of the parent–adolescent relationship. Using a similar sample from the same database, Crosnoe (2004) examined the impact of indicators of both family social capital (measured as emotional distance between parents and adolescents) and school social capital (student–teacher bonding, parent educational attainment, and parent educational aspirations for their adolescents) on self-reported adolescent grades. In addition to the replicated findings regarding the main effects for the family and school factors employed in the previously discussed research effort, this study also generated evidence of “mesolevel interactions” indicating that those students with the most social capital at home were more likely both to have greater social capital at school and to take advantage of those resources.

Summary of Research Regarding Family Influences on Adolescent Outcomes

The research literature regarding the linkage between family factors and various aspects of adolescent outcomes share some very important similarities. First and foremost, these studies uniformly underscore the critical role that families play in adolescent adjustment and well-being. Quite simply put, whether the particular empirical focus is delinquency, mental health, substance use, education, or social competency, parent and family factors matter a great deal. As well, many of these studies provide compelling evidence regarding the longitudinal significance of these dyadic and polyadic variables, as well underscoring the critical role that sibling relationships can play. While a bit less commonplace, nevertheless it is important to note that studies in this area also are beginning to examine the critical role that both gender and race can have on our understanding of the associations between family factors and adolescent outcomes.

Commentary

The theoretical and empirical efforts described above indicate that substantial gains have been made in the field’s understanding and observation of the inner working of families containing members who are adolescents. The present chapter now ends with an overall summary of the highlights of this work, as well as making observations regarding some of the issues and challenges ahead that are related to theoretical and empirical work focused on these families.

The theoretical frameworks used to understand families with adolescents reviewed within this chapter included family development theory, family systems theory, ecological theory, attachment theory, and social learning theory. Certainly, other theories from the family field such as social exchange theory and symbolic interaction theory also have been used to describe families with adolescents in past scholarly efforts. However, these theories rarely if ever receive mention in any of the empirical studies published over the

past 15 years. Because these and other family-based theories not reviewed in the present chapter could offer rich insights about families with adolescents, scholars with an affinity to these frameworks are urged to renew their efforts to provide both explanatory and predictive guidance to researchers who are studying these families. As well, theorists and researchers alike should redouble their efforts to build and test theoretical propositions that are directly applicable to families with adolescents.

Empirically, the present chapter regarded empirical efforts to be family-based under any of four circumstances described in the “unit of analysis” section above: the single intergenerational dyad, the adolescent’s nonspecific relationship to both parents, the adolescent’s family as a totality, and the family with adolescents as the combination of various dyads (adolescent–father, adolescent–mother, adolescent–sibling, etc.).

The difficulty with a single intergenerational dyad approach is axiomatic; by definition, it does not reflect the family as a whole (unless the empirical effort is meant to describe the more atypical case where a given household contains only one adult and one adolescent). The main problem with the nonspecific parent–adolescent relationship and the family as a totality is what can be described as the possibility of “regression to the mean.” For instance, when researchers do not discriminate between parents, how do we account for such effects on an adolescent’s answers about relationships with parents when they view their mothers as extremely warm but their fathers as slightly cold? Moreover, when measuring the family as a totality, besides the possibility of different relationships existing between the adolescent and each parent, how do adolescents judge the overall emotional climate of their family when relationships with siblings might vary as much or more?

In fact, it is only when the families are seen or measured as the combination of various dyads that the researchers are able to acquire that specificity of measurement, and therefore gain more precise ways of describing what is occurring within the various dyads of families. Studies that employ a social relations model to the measurement

of family dyads serve as excellent examples of this type of work. In addition to the Bartle-Haring et al. (1999) study reviewed above, the reader’s attention is drawn to other studies that use a social relations model in research on families with adolescents. Two important illustrations of this approach can be found in studies conducted by Cook (2000) and Buist, Dekovic, Meeus, and van Aken (2004), whereby a social relations model was used to examine attachment relationships in families with adolescents. From a methodological standpoint the most sophisticated studies have been contained within this kind approach, and thus preference should be given to this particular way of framing research on families with adolescents.

The review of the research literature regarding the linkage between family factors and adolescent outcomes was limited to three aspects of adolescent problem behaviors (delinquency, mental health, and alcohol and other drug use) and two areas of potential adolescent assets (education and social competency). A variety of topics related to adolescent outcomes were not covered, and could be given consideration in future research efforts that seek to understand how families impact adolescent development and well-being. These issues include, but are not limited to, outcomes such as risky sexual behavior, pregnancy and teen parenthood, stress, obesity and other eating disorders, and sleep disturbance. Also, while educational issues and social competency were covered in the present chapter, future studies should give further consideration to more positively oriented adolescent outcomes, as well as focusing on family strengths that may be related to these outcomes.

Owing to page considerations, the present review offered a selection of articles that were meant to provide a representative sample of the types of studies that have been conducted over the last decade and a half within selected outcomes areas. Several themes can be discerned from these articles that are related to the field’s general progression toward more complex and sophisticated approaches to the study of families as a collection of dyads, including attention being given to the impact of siblings, the overlapping

influences of marital and parent–adolescent conflict, and the interactive effects of family and peer variables. In addition, some of the studies reviewed in this chapter paid attention to potential variation as a function of adolescent gender, socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, and culture. Future studies should pay greater attention to these and other important demographic characteristics, including religious background, family mobility, migration, adoption, foster care, and the impact of other nontraditional family constellations (such as grandparent-headed households) on family processes and adolescent outcomes.

Further, it is important to note that there has been a considerable rise in the number and types of longitudinal studies that have been conducted, including the use of large and nationally representative databases containing information about families with adolescents. Clearly, the field has profited from these efforts, as the results are more generalizable and can come closer to having consequential, long-term implications. At the same time, the families with adolescents literature has yet to benefit from studies that are more qualitative in nature, something that would provide a helpful parallel effort to these quantitative studies, which tend to lack the complexity of description often necessitated in interpreting results for practitioners. Excellent recent examples include qualitative work on such diverse topics as parent–adolescent communication about sex (Afifi, Joseph, & Aldeis, 2008; O’Sullivan, Meyer-Bahlburg, & Watkins, 2001), family dynamics among immigrant families (Qin, 2008), and father–daughter relationships in low-income minority families (Way & Gillman, 2000).

This last point serves as a segue to a cautionary note that precious little attention was paid to any of the issues surrounding the *application* of the theoretical and research efforts covered in this chapter. Opportunely, a new book just released (Gavazzi, 2011) not only extends the literature review of family processes and adolescent outcomes as proscribed above, but also provides critical linkages between this expanded theoretical and empirical base and the realms of family therapy, family education, and other family-based prevention and intervention efforts. The new

book also gives needed attention to those topics that touch on policy issues relevant to families with adolescents.

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Susan M. McHale, Kimberly A. Updegraff,
and Shawn D. Whiteman

Sibling Relationships

Sibling relationships are the longest lasting relationships in most individuals' lives. Cross-cultural research shows that siblings are central in the everyday lives of children and adolescents around the world, and that in many cultures, these relationships remain among the most important in individuals' lives across adulthood and into old age (Nuckolls, 1993; Weisner, 1989). Despite dramatic declines in family size in past decades in the US, demographic data reveal that the vast majority of children grow up in homes with at least one sibling (e.g., Hernandez, 1997; U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). Indeed, proportionately more children in the US grow up in a home with

a sibling than in a home with a father. And, even in old age, most adults in the US have at least one living sibling (Cicirelli, 1995). As we review below, developmental and family scholars have documented the important role of siblings as sources of socialization and support across the lifespan (e.g., Cicirelli, 1995; Dunn, 2007). In the face of substantial evidence from a range of disciplines on the ubiquity and significance of sibling ties, however, research and theory on sibling relationships have lagged behind those on other family and close relationships.

The goal of this chapter is to provide an overview of the literature on sibling relationships. We highlight the unique qualities of sibling relationships and their significance for one another's behavior, health, and development across the lifespan as well as the commonalities between sibling and other close relationships. Throughout, we describe gaps in the literature on sibling relationships and sibling influences and point to directions for future research. We also argue that, given their centrality in family life, extending our knowledge of sibling relationship dynamics will enhance our understanding of how families operate as systems.

This chapter is organized into two sections. In the first we describe the key dimensions of sibling relationships and review the literature on how sibling relationships change across the lifespan. The remainder of the chapter focuses on influence processes in sibling relationships. Here we consider key theoretical and conceptual

S.M. McHale, PhD (✉)
Department of Human Development and Family Studies,
College of Health and Human Development,
The Pennsylvania State University,
211 Henderson Building South,
University Park, PA 16802-6504, USA
e-mail: mchale@psu.edu

K.A. Updegraff, PhD
School of Social and Family Dynamics,
Arizona State University,
PO Box 873701, Tempe, AZ 85287-3701, USA
e-mail: Kimberly.updegraff@asu.edu

S.D. Whiteman, PhD
Department of Human Development and Family Studies,
Purdue University, 101 Gates Road,
West Lafayette, IN 47907-2020, USA
e-mail: sdwhitem@purdue.edu

frameworks that have been applied to explain individual and developmental differences in sibling relationship characteristics and to account for sibling influences on individual development and well-being across the lifespan. We also provide empirical examples consistent with each perspective. Throughout, we take a developmental perspective, highlighting how individuals' changing competencies, tasks, and circumstances serve as forces of change in sibling relationships and their effects. The chapter concludes with a summary of limitations of research to date and directions for future studies.

The Nature and Developmental Course of Sibling Relationships

Dimensions of Sibling Relationships

Sibling relationships are multifaceted (Buhrmester & Furman, 1990; Myers & Bryant, 2008). In the following pages we highlight three dimensions that have been most commonly studied and that characterize many of the group, individual, and developmental differences that are evident in these relationships across time and place.

The first dimension pertains to the extent of *contact and companionship* between siblings. In childhood, siblings are a fixture of everyday life. Time use studies show that European American children spend more out-of-school time with their siblings than with anyone else (McHale & Crouter, 1996), and in ethnic groups in which familism values prevail such as Mexican American families, siblings spend even more time together (Updegraff, McHale, Whiteman, Thayer, & Delgado, 2005). Like friends, siblings are a focus of free time activities in childhood, but they also share family-centered activities such as meals and outings. At times siblings may be simply part of the background, observers of their sisters' and brothers' activities and of their social exchanges with parents and peers, but siblings also share a history of family rituals and daily routines. Indeed, siblings' childhood experiences provide the foundation for one of the few lifelong relationships that most individuals experience,

and siblings' shared history can serve as a basis for continued emotional connectedness even as their adult responsibilities separate siblings in space and across long time periods.

Beginning in adolescence and continuing into adulthood, sibling companionship begins to decline in Western cultures, as individuals become increasingly involved in the world beyond the family of origin (White, 2001). Given the tasks and transitions of this period in industrialized societies, such as establishing a separate residence, entering the workforce, and family formation, this distancing is not surprising. From a life course perspective, normative activities and roles of adulthood will alter the nature of family relationships, even as siblings' lives remain linked (Elder, 1996). In adulthood, sibling contact may come in alternative forms to everyday companionship. The proliferation of new communications modalities such as email, texting, and social networking websites, may provide expanded opportunities for sibling contact, but these sociohistorical developments have received little research attention. Available data suggest that in the US, sibling contact stabilizes in middle and late adulthood (White, 2001) and that most siblings maintain contact with one another throughout life (Cicirelli, 1995; Spitze & Trent, 2006; White & Reidmann, 1992). For example, studying a nationally representative US sample of 7,730 adults with at least one sibling, White and Reidmann (1992) found that more than half of all brothers and sisters saw and/or contacted one another at least once a month.

Research on adult sibling relationships has been aimed at identifying the factors that explain why some siblings maintain more contact than others, and findings from this research are generally consistent with life course principles. For example, "place" in the form of geographical proximity makes a difference in the extent and nature of adult siblings' direct contact, and social structural factors, including marital status, parental status, and gender also play an important role such that siblings with sisters and those who are unmarried and childless have more contact (Connidis & Campbell, 1995). Also consistent with a life course perspective, life events and

transitions influence sibling contact including marriage, the transition to parenthood, divorce and widowhood, and a parents' declining health or death (Moyer, 1992). Finally, cultural values and practices matter. In non-Western cultures, for example, contact and companionship often extend across the life course because of cultural norms that support proximity including norms about shared households and family obligations (Nuckolls, 1993).

As we elaborate in the next section, contact between adult siblings is thought to be one key element of an attachment relationship between them, and is linked to health and well-being in later adulthood (Cicirelli, 1995). Longitudinal studies of sibling relationships in adulthood have yet to be conducted, however, and we know little about developmental precursors, including family experiences and individual characteristics, that explain why some siblings stay in close contact while other dyads are less involved in adulthood and old age.

A second dimension of the sibling relationship that has received empirical scrutiny is the *emotional tone* of the relationship, including both its valence and intensity. In her seminal review of sibling relationships in childhood and in a series of empirical studies, Dunn and colleagues argued that the emotional intensity of sibling relationships in childhood is a basis for the developmental significance of these ties (e.g., Dunn, 1983; Dunn & Munn, 1986). In childhood, the sibling relationship has been described as a love-hate relationship (e.g., Bryant & Crockerberg, 1980), with the same dyads exhibiting high levels of affection and high levels of conflict (Stocker, Lanthier, & Furman, 1997; Stocker & McHale, 1992). Other research on children and adolescents provides support for the common view that sibling relationships are fraught with conflict and rivalry: observational studies have shown that sibling conflict occurs up to eight times per hour (Berndt & Bulleit, 1985; Dunn & Munn, 1986), and survey data reveal that physical violence between siblings (hitting, biting, punching, and use of weapons like guns and knives) takes place in 70% of families, a rate higher than that of either child or spouse abuse (Strauss, Gelles, &

Steinmetz, 1980). Furthermore, how children get along with their siblings is the most frequent source of parent-child conflict in middle childhood (McHale & Crouter, 2003), and is reported by parents to be a chief child-rearing concern (Perlman & Ross, 1997).

What is the basis for conflict in sibling relationships? We address this question in more detail in the next section of this chapter. We note here, however, that, unlike relationships with friends, relationships with siblings, at least in childhood, are nonvoluntary, and many dyads spend large amounts of time together when their activities are not directly supervised by adults. Such conditions may afford opportunities for children to lose their tempers and behave aggressively. Norms and expectations also may play a role, however. Cross-cultural research suggests that sibling relationships may be less conflictual in cultures where roles of older and younger sisters and brothers are proscribed (e.g., Nuckolls, 1993). Further, some work suggests that there are important between-family differences in the emotional tone of sibling relationships in Western societies, with some dyads showing high levels of positivity and negativity, some exhibiting high negativity and low positivity, others behaving in generally harmonious ways and still others experiencing more distant relationships that are neither highly positive nor highly negative (McGuire, McHale, & Updegraff, 1996; McHale, Whiteman, Kim, & Crouter, 2007; Sheehan, Darlington, Noller, & Feeney, 2004).

We know less about the emotional tone of sibling relationships in adulthood. Extant data suggest, however, that most adult siblings feel close to one another, with dyads that live in proximity and those that include sisters reporting the highest feelings of closeness (e.g., Spitz & Trent, 2006; White, 2001). Furthermore, siblings often are identified as sources of support throughout adulthood, especially in old age (Cicirelli, 1995; Voorpostel & van der Lippe, 2007), and perceptions of close sibling bonds, especially with sisters, are linked with psychological well-being in old age (Cicirelli, 1995). Myers and Bryant (2008) identified concurrent behavioral correlates of "commitment" in adult sibling relationships,

including support provision, everyday talk, and protection, and Voorpostel and van der Lippe (2007) found that emotional support was related to siblings' contact frequency, but also, to their living further apart. The quality of adult sibling relationships may be influenced by the quality of their bonds earlier in life, but as we have suggested, the longitudinal data needed to test this idea have not been collected. Suggestive of the significance of early family experience, however, one study collected retrospective data from adults about their parents' marital conflict and found that these recollections were related to higher levels of sibling conflict and poorer sibling relationship quality in adulthood (Poortman & Voorpostel, 2009). Concurrent relationships in the family of origin also are important: Voorpostel and Blieszner (2008) found evidence for both consistency and compensation processes linking parent-child and sibling relationships, such that poor relationships and low contact with parents as well as high parental support were linked to sibling relationship support. In addition to family dynamics, normative life events of adulthood also can have implications for the emotional tone of sibling relationships. The death of a parent, for example, can provide siblings with opportunities to express and experience support (Moyer, 1992).

A third dimension of sibling relationships, and one that distinguishes them from other close relationships, is their *role structure* (Dunn, 1983; Furman & Buhrmester, 1985). In childhood, parent-child and peer relationships differ in the symmetry of partners' roles. The roles of parents and children are complementary, with parents serving as caregivers and sources of authority, and children in the role of dependents and the focus of socialization efforts. In contrast, friends' roles are more reciprocal or egalitarian. Sibling relationships differ from both parent and peer relationships because they include both complementary and egalitarian elements.

Importantly, however, the role structure of sibling relationships varies across time and place. For example, in childhood, sibling roles differ as a function of structural factors, including (a) gender constellation, with older sisters more so than brothers involved as teachers and caregivers in

childhood and sources of emotional support in adulthood (Cicirelli, 1991; Stoneman, Brody, & MacKinnon, 1986; Weisner, 1989; White & Reidmann, 1992); (b) age spacing and birth order, with complementary roles more common when siblings are further apart in age and older siblings providing more guidance and support for younger siblings than the reverse (Buhrmester & Furman, 1990; Dunn, 1983; Voorpostel, van der Lippe, Dykstra, & Flap, 2007); and (c) age, with the premise that sibling relationships become more egalitarian in adolescence and adulthood (Buhrmester & Furman, 1990; Cicirelli, 1991). Cultural norms and values also are implicated. Among non-Western societies, complementarity in siblings' roles in childhood is common and takes the form of sibling caregiving, with older sisters often serving as children's primary caregivers. Indeed, in such societies, siblings' caregiving roles are one of the building blocks of the social structure, and roles based on gender and age may persist across the lifespan (Nuckolls, 1993; Weisner, 1989).

Development of Sibling Relationships

Longitudinal studies of sibling relationship qualities are rare and thus a picture of how they develop across the lifespan has to be pieced together. This picture suggests that many children have positive reactions to the prospect of becoming a sibling, and that despite some initial adjustment problems, children maintain their positive attitudes over the first year of their siblings' lives (Dunn, Kendrick, & MacNamee, 1981; Stewart, Mobley, Van-Tuyl, & Salvador, 1987). During the course of early childhood, siblings become increasingly involved in social exchanges, and together with their involvement, rates of prosocial behaviors increase (Pepler, Abramovitch, & Corter, 1981; Stewart et al., 1987). As noted, role asymmetries in sibling relationships are common at this period: older siblings are more often leaders in social exchanges, younger siblings are more likely to imitate their older sisters and brothers, and older siblings are also more likely to see younger siblings as intrusive or annoying than the reverse

(Dunn & Munn, 1986; Pepler et al., 1981; Stewart et al., 1987).

During the first two decades of life, siblings may be the most positive and mutually involved during middle childhood, though their extensive time together may underlie the high rates of conflict during this period (Brody, Stoneman, & McCoy, 1994; Buhrmester & Furman, 1990; Cole & Kerns, 2001; Kim, McHale, Osgood, & Crouter, 2006). Some findings from cross-sectional (Buhrmester & Furman, 1990; Cole & Kerns, 2001) and short-term longitudinal (Brody et al., 1994) studies suggest that positivity and interest vis-à-vis the sibling relationship decline in adolescence. However, longer term longitudinal data collected from both older and younger siblings, suggest that patterns of change from early in middle childhood (about age 7) through early adulthood (about age 20) vary as a function of the sex constellation of the dyad, with mixed sex dyads becoming closer across the course of adolescence and same-sex pairs increasing in intimacy through early adolescence and then showing small declines across adolescence (Kim et al., 2006). Findings also revealed increases in sibling intimacy in early adulthood from before to after firstborns moved away from home (Whiteman, McHale, & Crouter, 2011). Furthermore, closeness between siblings in adolescence is evidenced by research showing higher rates of particular kinds of positive exchanges, such as intimate conversation (e.g., Cole & Kerns, 2001). Social cognitive development in adolescence may provide for more depth in sibling relationships even in the face of declines in companionship. In addition, the developmental tasks of adolescence and young adulthood, including a focus on the world beyond the family, may serve to reduce rivalry and increase feelings of closeness, at least for some dyads. In some family contexts, such as recent immigrant families, siblings may be a particularly important source of information and advice about the world beyond the family because they have knowledge and experiences that their parents lack.

Very little is known about changes in sibling relationships across adulthood and into old age in terms of either developmental patterns of change, or

stability of individual differences in relationship qualities. Results from cross-sectional research on adult siblings suggest that some aspects of the relationship, such as warmth (Connidis & Campbell, 1995; Milevsky, Smoot, Leh, & Ruppe, 2005) and social support provision (White & Reidmann, 1992) increase as siblings get older, whereas conflict decreases (Milevsky et al., 2005; Stewart et al., 2001). Whether these patterns reflect change in relationship qualities or cohort differences, however, is unknown. What we know about stability in individual differences is limited to childhood and adolescence, with some evidence indicating that positive relationships in childhood predict relationship positivity in adolescence (Dunn, 2007). The extent to which sibling relationships show stable individual differences from childhood and adolescence to adulthood and old age, however, remains unknown. From a life course perspective, early experiences are only one set of factors that shape the development of sibling relationships across the lifespan. Sociocultural and social structural factors and life and world events, along with ongoing influences from the family and the role of individuals' own needs and dispositions remain important targets for future research on sibling relationship development (Campbell, Connidis, & Davies, 1999; Voorpostel & Blieszner, 2008).

Limitations and Research Directions

Despite progress toward understanding sibling relationships and their development across the lifespan, much remains unknown. Limitations of existing research include its focus on child- and adolescent-age, full biological siblings, from White, middle class families in the US. Few longitudinal data are available, especially studies that follow dyads over extended periods of time and through adulthood, and we know much less about sibling relationships in adulthood and old age than we do in childhood and adolescence. Studying the timing and circumstances of individual and family transitions (e.g., one sibling's transition out of the household, a sister's early transition to parenthood) and their implications

for siblings' experiences across the lifespan may provide new insights into the development of these important relationships (East, Weisner, & Reyes, 2006; Whiteman et al., 2011). Another limitation is that many studies include data from only one sibling, precluding analyses of the potentially different experiences of the two relationship partners. Finally, due to small sample sizes, many studies that include both siblings lack statistical power to test whether sibling experiences vary as a function of such basic factors as the sex constellation of the dyad.

A direction for future research will be to move beyond a focus on single dimensions of sibling relationships to investigate how the different dimensions of these relationships provide a context for other dimensions and help to explain patterns of sibling relationship development. Analytic techniques such as cluster analysis and mixture modeling offer a means of investigating multiple dimensions of sibling relationships as experienced by both partners (e.g., Whiteman & Loken, 2006). Another direction is the integration of developmental approaches with an understanding of how cultural forces shape relationship development. In cultural groups that place more emphasis on collectivism than individualism and where family roles are formally defined (often on the basis of gender and birth order) siblings, rather than parent–offspring or marital relationships, may constitute the primary social bond, and sibling relationship development may exhibit quite a different pattern than has been observed in Western societies (Maynard, 2004; Nuckolls, 1993; Weisner, 1989). Finally, attention should be paid to the ways in which family structure serves as a context for siblings and sibling relationship development (e.g., Deater-Deckard, Dunn, & Lussier, 2002). Demographic changes in US families, including rising rates of cohabitation, divorce, remarriage, and single parenthood, mean that experiences of sibling-hood are changing dramatically. By one count, there currently are more than 26 different types of sibling dyads—full, step, half, adopted, etc. (Treffers, Goedhart, Waltz, & Koudijs, 1990)—a statistic that alerts us to the difficulties inherent in charting a “normative” course of sibling relationship

development. In short, the variety in forms of sibling relationships, coupled with limitations in our knowledge base suggest caution in drawing conclusions about typical developmental patterns in sibling relationship development and a plethora of directions for future studies.

Sibling Influence Processes

Research on sibling influences has addressed two issues: the factors that explain individual and group differences in the characteristics of sibling relationships and the ways in which siblings affect one another's behavior, health, and development across the lifespan. Generally, the same theoretical and conceptual frameworks have been proposed to account for both kinds of influence processes, and thus our review is organized around the key frameworks that have informed these areas of research. We describe mechanisms theorized to account for sibling relationship phenomena and empirical studies that are illustrative of four sets of perspectives: psychoanalytic/evolutionary perspectives that highlight potential biological bases of sibling relationship processes; social psychological theories that focus on the role of social interactional processes; social learning theories that target observational learning and reinforcement mechanisms in behavior; and family and ecological systems approaches that direct attention to the embeddedness of sibling relationships in larger social contexts.

Psychoanalytic/Evolutionary Perspectives

Alfred Adler's theory of individual psychology (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956) and John Bowlby's attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969) provide a basis for contemporary research on sibling relationship characteristics and influences. Both theories were grounded in psychoanalytic writings from the early 1900s, though these theorists departed in important ways from tenets of the dominant Freudian model. Adler's and Bowlby's theories also drew on ideas from the field of

ethology being advanced at this time, particularly ideas about instinctual/species-typical patterns of behavior within attachment theory, and about the significance of the adaptive value or survival function of social behavior that is evident in both perspectives (e.g., Tinbergen, 1951). The adaptive function of sibling dynamics has seen renewed attention by evolutionary thinkers in recent years. From both of these perspectives, early family experiences, such as with siblings, provide the foundation for personality development and psychological well-being and thereby undergird social relationship experiences across the lifespan.

Attachment Theory

The focus here is on both developmental changes and individual differences in social relationships. Attachment theory targets the adaptive functions of the early bond between infants and their primary caregivers as critical to infants' survival and as the foundation for future relationships. Infants' intrinsic or instinctual behaviors such as crying and clinging promote proximity to the primary caregiver early in life, and over the first year, an attachment relationship emerges that varies in its security depending on the sensitivity and responsiveness of the infant's caregiver. In turn, the nature of this primary attachment relationship, most often with the mother, is the basis for an internal working model of relationships, or individuals' expectations, emotions, and behaviors surrounding their future relationships, including with their siblings. Indeed, some longitudinal research suggests that infants who are *not* securely attached to their mothers show higher rates of sibling conflict and hostility in the preschool years (Teti & Ablard, 1989; Volling & Belsky, 1992).

Equally important from an attachment perspective is that individuals can form attachment relationships with others besides their primary caregivers. Secure attachment relationships are marked by proximity-seeking and distress at separation as well as feelings of security associated with a relationship partner. Early in life, the need for a sense of security means that attachment relationships are based in others' responsiveness

to infants' needs, and thus sensitive and involved older siblings may become objects of attachment. A small set of studies has investigated older siblings' roles as attachment figures and shown that they can serve as a secure base by facilitating their young children's exploratory activities (Samuels, 1980) and by providing comfort when a primary caregiver is unavailable (Stewart, 1983; Teti & Ablard, 1989).

Also of importance to sibling relationships is the idea that, with maturity, individuals increasingly form mutual and reciprocal relationships, wherein each partner's responsiveness to the needs of the other become important. In this way, each sibling's working model can influence the creation and quality of the attachment relationship between them. Not all close relationships are attachment relationships, but the contact and companionship and feelings of intimacy that are key dimensions of sibling relationships suggest that secure attachments may characterize the experiences of many sibling dyads (Cicirelli, 1995). One study examined siblings' attachment relationships from early- to late-adolescence and found a sharp increase in attachment in early adolescence, about age 12 in this Dutch sample (Buist, Dekovic, Meeus, & van Aken, 2002). An increasing focus on peer-like relationships in adolescence, shared social experiences, and increasing capacity for intimacy may be factors in this pattern of change, which clearly deserves more research attention. Other work suggests that characteristics of siblings and of the dyad, including shared experiences and empathy, may undergird attachment relationships between siblings, and some of the very few studies of multiple-birth siblings show that relationships between twins are most likely to involve attachment features (Neyer, 2002; Tancredy & Fraley, 2006). Evidence of the role of sibling influences is that attachment relationships with siblings are linked to adolescent well-being and positive development (e.g., Brook, Brook, & Whiteman, 1999).

A program of research by Cicirelli (1991, 1995) on adult sibling relationships provides the strongest evidence of the sibling bond as an attachment relationship. In this research, Cicirelli targeted contact, help and support, and feelings

of closeness and security as markers of sibling attachment. Findings reveal that most adult siblings maintain contact with one another and are identified as sources of support, especially in old age, and close sibling ties also are linked with psychological and physical health in old age.

Taken together this research suggests that an attachment perspective may provide a solid foundation for research on sibling relationships across the lifespan. In turn, research on the sibling relationship, the only lifelong relationship in most individuals' lives, could serve as a forum for testing lifespan tenets of attachment theory. Sibling relationships are characterized by both hierarchical and egalitarian elements, and these change across place and time. Whether and how sibling attachment relationships change—from older siblings serving as attachment objects to more reciprocal ties—is an important question for attachment theory and for our understanding of sibling relationships.

Adler's Theory of Individual Psychology

Adler targeted the role of the family system, including sibling influences, as central in personality development (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956). This theory focuses on how psychological dynamics such as feelings of inferiority have implications for individuals' style of life, and targets social comparisons and power dynamics in the family as key influences. Adler's insights led him to advocate the importance of egalitarianism—including equal treatment of siblings—as a means of promoting healthful personality development and self-esteem. He also highlighted the ways in which individuals compensate for a sense of inferiority such as by creating maladaptive styles of life.

Adler's ideas about the centrality of sibling experiences in personality development are reflected in his focus on sibling rivalry for parents' attention and time and family resources. According to Adler, rivalry between siblings is grounded in each child's need to overcome potential feelings of inferiority. As a means of reducing competition, siblings often differentiate or de-identify, developing different personal qualities and choosing different niches. In this way, sibling

differentiation is a key dynamic in families that supports the development of more harmonious and less conflictual sibling relationships. It also is a key dynamic in individual development and psychological adjustment. Indeed, a body of research on parents' differential treatment of siblings is consistent with Adler's theory in documenting links between parents' differential treatment and both the quality of sibling relationships and individual adjustment in Western cultures. Although Adler's theory places siblings at the center of family dynamics and personality development, to date there is almost no data on *how* differences between siblings' personal qualities emerge or, with some important exceptions (Feinberg, McHale, Crouter, & Cumsille, 2003; Whiteman & Christiansen, 2008), whether differences between siblings are related to more positive sibling relationships.

A resurgence of interest in sibling rivalry and competition for parent and family resources was led by Sulloway (1996) in *Born to rebel: Birth order, family dynamics, and creative lives*. Like attachment and Adlerian theories, Sulloway stressed the *adaptive significance* of sibling dynamics, though he grounded many of his ideas in an evolutionary perspective and also highlighted siblings' competition for limited resources within the family. Thus, Sulloway placed sibling rivalry at the core of family relationships and personality development. Building on Adler's ideas, Sulloway argued that sibling differentiation serves to minimize sibling competition, and that children will select unique niches within the family that maximize their access to resources. In the face of its conceptual appeal, Sulloway drew largely from data on adult outcomes. We still know little about the *development* of sibling rivalry and its links to sibling differentiation, as these processes emerge and change across the lifespan.

Behavior geneticists have investigated the role of genetic similarity in sibling differences and similarities through comparisons of siblings who differ in their degree of relatedness, from monozygotic twins whose genes are 100% similar, to dizygotic and full siblings who are 50% genetically similar on average, to half siblings and even unrelated children living together.

Results from this body of work suggest that, in general, siblings are no more similar to one another than they are to unrelated individuals, and that shared genetic factors account for most of the similarity that is observed between siblings. Differences between siblings, in contrast, are attributed to the nonshared environment, which until recently has not been directly measured in behavior genetics research. Parents' differential treatment, however, is thought to be a significant component of the nonshared environment (Dunn & Plomin, 1990).

Available data reveal that parents recognize differences between their children's behaviors, personalities, and needs. Consistent with the behavior genetics concept of gene-environment correlation, parents often cite children's personal characteristics as eliciting their differential treatment (McHale & Crouter, 2003). And, despite social norms in Western culture that call for parents to treat their children equally (Parsons, 1974), differential treatment of siblings is common across the lifespan. From an evolutionary perspective, genetically based sibling differences are adaptive because variation minimizes sibling competition for the same resources, and variation among siblings' traits also increases the likelihood that at least one sibling will survive under adverse circumstances (Belsky, 2005; Lalumiere, Quinsey, & Craig, 1996). Most research on the role of families in development and adjustment targets one child, but research ranging from behavior genetic (e.g., Dunn & Plomin, 1990) to demographic analyses (Conley, 2000) confirms that within-family differences between siblings in areas ranging from personality and adjustment to adult status attainment are as large and sometimes even larger than between-family differences.

Parental differential treatment of siblings appears to be responsible for at least some of these sibling differences. Differences in parents' affection, discipline, involvement, and other forms of preferential treatment toward siblings also are linked to less positive sibling relationships from early childhood through adolescence (Brody, Stoneman, & Burke, 1987; Shanahan, McHale, Crouter, & Osgood, 2008; Stocker,

Dunn, & Plomin, 1989) and to adjustment problems in siblings (Daniels, Dunn, Furstenberg, & Plomin, 1985; McGuire, Dunn, & Plomin, 1995). The context in which differential treatment occurs makes a difference for its adjustment implications, however. For example, siblings who view differential treatment as fair tend to have more positive sibling relationships (Kowal & Kramer, 1997), and in some cases, fairness ratings are linked more consistently with sibling positivity than the amount of differential treatment *per se* (McHale, Updegraff, Jackson-Newsom, Tucker, & Crouter, 2000). Differential treatment may also have different implications depending upon the domain (e.g., warmth, discipline) in which it occurs. Further, cultural factors may play a role, such that differential treatment has more negative implications in individualistic than in collectivistic cultures (McHale, Updegraff, Shanahan, Crouter, & Killoren, 2005; Nuckolls, 1993).

In adulthood, differential treatment dynamics persist (e.g., Sutor & Pillemer, 2006, 2007; Sutor, Pillemer, & Sechrist, 2006). This work suggests that differential treatment in adulthood is often linked to siblings' needs (Fingerman, Miller, Birditt, & Zarit, 2009; Sutor et al., 2006), but that structural and relational factors also make a difference. For example, daughters are more likely to be viewed by their mothers as "favorites" than are sons; further, though lastborns have the closest affectional ties with their mothers, firstborns provide more instrumental support; and, mothers also report closer ties to offspring who live close by. Beyond these structural factors, mothers report feeling closer to offspring with similar values (Fingerman et al., 2009; Sutor & Pillemer, 2007). Despite the recognition that differential treatment of siblings continues to operate in adulthood, there is little systematic research on its consequences for sibling relationships or individual well-being. Consistent with childhood research, one study found that adult sibling relationships were most positive when siblings were treated equally by parents (Boll, Ferring, & Filipp, 2003), and another showed that siblings' "justice evaluations" mediated the links between differential treatment and sibling relationship quality (Boll, Ferring, & Filipp, 2005).

Clearly, the implications of differential treatment in adulthood remain an important research direction. Challenges will be to move beyond a focus on individuals' reports to treat the family as the unit of study, including both mothers and fathers, and to expand on examinations of contextual factors to include cultural norms and parental beliefs and attitudes about differential treatment and its implications. In all of this work where social and psychological mechanisms are postulated, researchers also should measure those mechanisms directly and explicitly test their mediation effects (Whiteman, McHale, & Crouter, 2007). Finally, as in other areas of study, the field needs to move beyond its current focus on full biological siblings to learn about whether relationship processes operate differently across different family structures.

Social Psychological Processes in Sibling Relationships

Social psychological theories are directed at explaining how individuals are influenced by others, including the role of individuals' cognitive constructions, in social interactional behaviors. Social psychologists also are interested in group processes, including social norms, social roles, and social interaction dynamics. Despite their relevance to sibling relationships, however, social psychological theories are not typically applied in research on siblings.

Attribution theory (Heider, 1958) focuses on individuals' explanations of the causes of behavior and events, including their own and that of social partners, and stresses the significance of these cognitive constructions for reactions to interpersonal events and experiences. Attribution theory has rarely been applied in studies of sibling relationships, but one study showed that adolescents who attributed negative intentions to their siblings (e.g., the sibling behaved in particular ways "just to be mean") reported more negative sibling relationships over time (Matthews & Conger, 2004). Findings that children's ideas about the reasons for their parents' differential treatment moderate its effects on adjustment

(Kowal & Kramer, 1997) likewise support the significance of siblings' cognitive constructions of their relationship experiences.

A social psychological perspective of special relevance to sibling dynamics is social comparison theory. Proposed by Festinger (1954), social comparison theory holds that individuals are intrinsically motivated to evaluate themselves based on how they measure up against others, particularly others who are perceived to be like themselves. An important part of this inborn motivation system is self-esteem enhancement (Suls, Martin, & Wheeler, 2002). Individuals compare themselves to admired others, termed upward comparisons, and enhance their sense of self; via downward comparisons, individuals enhance their sense of self in a defensive way when they find themselves better off than others. Given their shared family background and experiences, siblings are obvious targets for social comparison, and indeed, analytic/evolutionary theories about sibling rivalry assume that siblings compare themselves and their family experiences to those of their sisters and brothers. And, as social comparison theory predicts, individuals who receive more favorable parental treatment relative to their siblings exhibit more positive psychological adjustment (Feinberg & Hetherington, 2000; Feinberg, Neiderhiser, Simmens, Reiss, & Hetherington, 2000; McHale et al., 2000; Shanahan et al., 2008). With some important exceptions (e.g., Connidis, 2007; Feinberg et al., 2000; Noller, Conway, & Blakeley-Smith, 2008), sibling researchers have not studied social comparison processes directly, however, and this important area remains a topic for future research.

Equity theory (Walster, Walster, & Berscheid, 1978) builds on the phenomena of social comparison in its explanations of the role of relationship dynamics in individuals' satisfaction and involvement in their relationships. From this perspective, individuals compare their contributions to and rewards from their relationship *relative to those of their partners*. Relationship dissatisfaction and efforts for relationship change, including withdrawing from a relationship, result from an imbalance between partners' ratios of rewards

vs. contributions. A related perspective, social exchange theory (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959), focuses on individuals' rewards from vs. investments in their social relationships. From this perspective, when a relationship's costs outweigh its benefits, individuals will choose to withdraw from that relationship, particularly when alternative, more satisfying relationships are available to them. There have been some efforts to apply equity theory to adult siblings' experiences, particularly around the care of their elderly parents. Although equity may be stressed in the family system, the provision of care for a parent usually falls on the shoulders of one offspring (Suitor & Pillemer, 1996). And, often the primary caregiver reports feelings of distress and disappointment when other siblings are not helpful (Ingersoll-Dayton, Neal, Ha, & Hammer, 2003; Suitor & Pillemer, 1996). Consistent with the idea that inequity motivates change, Ingersoll-Dayton et al. found that siblings engaged in a variety of behavioral as well as psychological strategies to reestablish equity, and that, when efforts to create equity were unsuccessful, distress increased. Strawbridge and Wallhagen (1991) found that siblings sometimes stopped interacting or even sought legal action against one another when distress over caregiving became too intense. As with the literature on parents' differential treatment, research within an equity theory framework highlights that perceptions of fairness or justice can mediate the links between inequity and relationship qualities (e.g., Boll et al., 2005).

Importantly, equity and exchange tenets are studied in the context of "voluntary" relationships, because these theories imply a level of autonomy and choice to withdraw from a relationship. As such, these processes may not be generally relevant to children's sibling relationships. To the extent that sibling relationships become more voluntary in adolescence and adulthood, however, equity and exchange theories could be usefully applied to explain differences between sibling dyads that remain close vs. those with more distant relationships, particularly when cultural norms regarding sibling roles are unscripted. These theories also could be applied in efforts to understand different types of sibling

dyads that may vary in their degree of "voluntariness" such as full vs. step-siblings. Applying these social psychological perspectives can advance our understanding of sibling relationships, and studying these kinds of processes over time in sibling relationships, as they presumably change from proscribed to voluntary ones, could also provide new insights into how equity and exchange processes emerge in the course of development. As in other areas, an important step will be to directly measure the social and psychological processes that are thought to explain individual, group, and possibly, developmental differences in sibling relationships.

Social Learning Theories

From a social learning perspective, individuals acquire novel behaviors, including cognitive behaviors such as attitudes and beliefs, through two key social mechanisms, observation and reinforcement (Bandura, 1977). These social learning processes are probably the most common set of mechanisms used to explain youths' sibling relationships, including both relationship characteristics and sibling influences on one another's development. To the extent that there is continuity in sibling relationships across the lifespan, social learning processes in the family of origin may have implications for adult sibling relationships, but this theoretical perspective tends not to be applied directly in studies of adult siblings.

The tenets of observational learning suggest that family members will be salient agents in social learning given that individuals are most likely to imitate models who are warm and nurturant, high in status, and similar to themselves (Bandura, 1977). These tenets also imply that parents will be important sources of influence on sibling relationships, particularly when parents are warm and loving and when they are viewed as competent and powerful. That is, in the course of their everyday interactions with parents, children may acquire social behaviors that they use in the context of the sibling relationship, such as supportiveness, self-control, and caregiving and

teaching strategies, and they also may learn controlling and coercive behaviors and ineffective conflict resolution styles when those behaviors are modeled and reinforced within the parent–child relationship. Research documents that warm and involved parent–child relationships are linked to more positive sibling relationships in childhood (e.g., Blandon & Volling, 2008), and similar findings have emerged for adults (e.g., Voorpostel & Blieszner, 2008).

Parents also influence their children’s sibling relationships when they help their children understand their siblings’ feelings or scaffold conflict resolution skills in the context of sibling exchanges. In childhood such parental behaviors are associated with siblings using effective conflict resolution strategies like compromise and perspective-taking, to resolve sibling disputes (Kramer, Perozynski, & Chung, 1999; Perlman & Ross, 1997). Indeed, intervention programs designed to train parents to manage sibling relationships have found positive effects for reducing sibling conflict, promoting positivity, and improving conflict resolution skills. Siddiqui and Ross (2004) trained mothers to use a four-step mediation with their children to promote conflict resolution. At the 1-month follow-up, children in the experimental (mediation) group used more conflict resolution strategies that promoted social understanding. Longer term studies of these types of interventions need to be undertaken.

We know less about the role of parents’ behavior in adolescent or adult sibling relationships, but parental interventions in sibling conflict may be ineffective after childhood (Felson & Russo, 1988). Indeed, adolescent sibling relationships actually may be more negative in the face of direct parental intervention, possibly because parents only continue to intervene in sibling relationships after childhood when those relationships are very poor (Kramer et al., 1999; McHale, Updegraff, Tucker, & Crouter, 2000).

Another line of study has examined how parents serve as models in the context of the marital relationship. The link between marital and sibling relationships is positive as evidenced by studies showing that negativity and violence in marital and sibling relationships are linked in

childhood and adolescence (e.g., Brody et al., 1994; Dunn, Deater-Deckard, Pickering, & Golding, 1999; Yu & Gamble, 2008), and that these associations extend to sibling relationships in young adulthood (Milevsky, 2004; Panish & Stricker, 2001). Retrospective accounts of parents’ marital conflict during childhood also have been linked to sibling conflict later in adulthood (Poortman & Voorpostel, 2009). In some of this research, relationships of siblings with divorced vs. nondivorced parents have been compared, and reveal that marital conflict and dissatisfaction account for more variance in sibling relationships than family structure per se (Panish & Stricker, 2001; Poortman & Voorpostel, 2009). In contrast, Jenkins (1992) found that in the context of intense marital conflict, some siblings actually grew *more intimate*, turning to one another for emotional support. In a longitudinal study linking sibling and both marriage and parent–child relationships, Kim et al. (2006) likewise found evidence of such a compensation process. These compensatory processes are inconsistent with predictions from social learning theory, and are rare in the sibling literature (see Voorpostel & Blieszner, 2008, for another example), but worthy of scrutiny in future research.

Some researchers have moved beyond patterns of bivariate associations between marriage and sibling relationships to learn more about the mechanisms linking them. For instance, parenting practices mediated the links between marital conflict and sibling relationship difficulties (Dunn et al., 1999; Stocker & Youngblade, 1999). Other work highlights reciprocal influences between marital and sibling relationships and effects of the sibling dyad on parents’ marriage (Ross, Stein, Trabasso, Woody, & Ross, 2005; Stoneman, Brody, & Burke, 1989). Taken together, these findings support the idea that parents model relationship behaviors in the context of their marriage, but suggest that observational learning is not the only process underlying the links between marital and sibling relationships.

Social learning processes within the sibling relationship also may account for sibling relationship dynamics as well as for siblings’ influences on one another’s development. First, siblings

influence one another and their relationship in everyday social interactions. Sibling relationships can serve as a “training ground for aggression” when siblings are involved in coercive cycles and learn that escalating negative behavior is rewarded (Patterson, 1984). Siblings also mutually promote negative behavior through deviant talk, when they reinforce one another with positive regard and by imitation for stories and plans about risky and delinquent behaviors and activities (Bullock & Dishion, 2002). In adolescence, siblings also serve as gatekeepers to delinquent peers and risky activities (Rowe & Gulley, 1992; Windle, 2000).

More generally, in her early writings on sibling relationships, (Dunn, 1983; Dunn & Munn, 1986) argued that sibling exchanges provided powerful opportunities for the development of social competencies. Because siblings interact on a daily basis, because of their shared understanding of family norms and roles, and because of the emotional significance of their relationship, siblings display social abilities that they are not pressed to exhibit in other social contexts. The fact that most sibling dyads differ in age also may be a factor in siblings’ unique influences (Howe & Recchia, 2005). And, a body of studies documents that siblings can learn social cognitive skills and prosocial behaviors in the context of their social exchanges, including conflict resolution, perspective-taking, emotional support provision, and emotion regulation (Brown, Donelan-McCall, & Dunn, 1996; Karos, Howe, & Aquan-Assee, 2007; Killoren, Thayer, & Updegraff, 2008; Kennedy & Kramer, 2008). Importantly, evidence from intervention studies reveals that siblings can be effectively taught to use a variety of prosocial skills (e.g., initiating play, resolving conflicts, regulating emotions) that enhance the overall quality of the sibling relationship (Kennedy & Kramer, 2008; Kramer, 2004).

Siblings also serve as models for individual development, a process that may contribute to findings of similarity between siblings in many different domains, including delinquency and aggression (e.g., Bank, Patterson, & Reid, 1996; Slomkowski, Rende, Conger, Simons, & Conger, 2001), substance use (e.g., McGue, Sharma, & Benson, 1995; Slomkowski, Rende, Novak,

Lloyd-Richardson, & Niaura, 2005), sexual behavior (e.g., Rodgers & Rowe, 1988), and social competencies (Tucker, Updegraff, McHale, & Crouter, 1999; Whiteman, Bernard, & McHale, 2010). With a few exceptions (e.g., McGue et al., 1995; Slomkowski et al., 2005), findings on sibling influences must be viewed with caution when studies fail to include information about the larger family environment. For example, siblings share genes, parental models, and other environmental influences, and thus it is important to conceptualize and study sibling influences by taking into account other family characteristics and processes.

Sibling modeling processes may be moderated by the personal qualities of the siblings. For example, the social learning tenet regarding model similarity means that observational learning may vary as a function of the sibling dyad constellation, with older and same gender siblings more likely to serve as models than younger and opposite-sex siblings. Siblings close in age may be imitated due to their similarity, but a larger age gap between siblings also may invest an older sibling with power and high status and thereby promote modeling. Sibling relationship qualities also may make a difference, such that siblings with close relationships are more likely to treat one another as models. Consistent with these principles is stronger evidence of modeling by younger siblings and in sibling pairs that are same sex, close in age, and in warm relationships (Conger & Reuter, 1996; Feinberg & Hetherington, 2000; McGue et al., 1995; McHale, Bissell, & Kim, 2009). The same characteristics that promote sibling modeling may also account for sibling relationship qualities. For example, sister–sister dyads tend to be the most intimate, perhaps by virtue of their shared gender and gender role scripts and socialization that promote nurturance and kin-keeping orientations in girls and women (Eagly, 1987; Kim et al., 2006; Tucker et al., 1999). In adolescence, opposite-sex pairs become more intimate, possibly because the sibling gains status as a source of knowledge and information that becomes increasingly relevant as youths become more interested in the other sex (Kim et al., 2006). Social learning

principles, however, do not completely account for sibling similarities or relationship qualities. For instance, older siblings often model their younger siblings (Branje, van Lieshout, van Aken, & Haselager, 2004; Pike, Coldwell, & Dunn, 2005), and complex interactions that involve sibling gender, relationship qualities, and temperament have emerged in some studies (e.g., Munn & Dunn, 1989; Shanahan, Kim, McHale, & Crouter, 2007a).

Although there are some small sample and anecdotal reports, we know little about variations in the qualities of sibling relationships as a function of genetic relatedness. Using data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, however, one study found that monozygotic twins reported the closest relationships (Rende, Slomkowski, Lloyd-Richardson, & Niaura, 2005), and using the same data set, a second showed that sibling relationship quality mediated the link between siblings' degree of relatedness and their similarity in sexual risk behavior (McHale et al., 2009). In other words, their closer relationship explained why monozygotic twins were more similar in sexual risk than other kinds of sibling dyads. A smaller scale study showed that, although full and half siblings reported more positive relationships than step-siblings, youths' relationship reports were generally positive (Ganong & Coleman, 1993). Given changes in family structure—divorce, remarriage, and use of fertility drugs that increase chances of multiple births, research that examines the role of structural characteristics in sibling dynamics is clearly warranted.

Taken together, social learning approaches target a multitude of processes through which family members and dyads influence sibling dynamics and each sibling's development. Importantly, social learning and other kinds of dynamics coexist in individuals' lives and should be studied in combination rather than in isolation. Further, the salience of different social learning mechanisms is likely to shift across developmental periods, highlighting the need for longitudinal work in this area and the paucity of research on sibling relationships in adulthood. Equally important to theory development are direct tests of these socialization

processes through experimental manipulations such as intervention studies designed to modify sibling relationships or sibling influences.

Family and Ecological Systems Approaches

The tenets of family systems theory are derived from general systems theory (Bertalanffy, 1950). Within a systems framework, families are seen as hierarchically organized into interdependent, reciprocally influential subsystems that range from individuals, to dyads (e.g., sibling relationships, marital relationships, parent–child relationships) and higher order groups (e.g., parent–sibling triad), and are best understood when studied holistically. Importantly, each new level in the hierarchy is emergent and not reducible to its component parts. Thus a dyadic relationship cannot be reduced to the characteristics of individual relationship partners, triads are not reducible to the component dyadic relationships, and so forth. In this way, a systems approach requires a departure from that taken by much of the family relationship research literature, wherein a single dyad is isolated for study apart from the larger context of family dynamics. In addition to the systems ideas of reciprocal influence, family systems theorists have described the family as an open and dynamic system, subject to influence from the outside world and in a continual process of change. Below we apply these ideas in considering sibling relationships in a family context.

Family Systems are Comprised of Interconnected Subsystems

The idea that subsystems in the family are interrelated and thus mutually influential is documented in research on siblings. Probably the clearest example is research linking sibling relationship qualities and both the marital and parent–child subsystems (e.g., Dunn et al., 1999; Stocker & Youngblade, 1999). Consistent with family systems theory, these links appear to be reciprocal, in that sibling relationships impact other subsystems and vice versa (Kim et al., 2006; Yu & Gamble, 2008).

Also related to the idea of connections between family subsystems is the concept of subsystem boundaries advanced by family systems theories in an effort to distinguish healthful from dysfunctional families. Family systems theory holds that subsystems within families should have flexible boundaries that allow for, but are not determined by, influences of other subsystems, and that some boundaries, particularly intergenerational boundaries such as those between the marital and child subsystems, are more important to maintain than other boundaries, such as those between pairs of siblings. Coalitions in families refer to subsystems with overly rigid boundaries and are thought to be a sign of family dysfunction. Research on sibling relationships and sibling well-being supports this idea in showing that coalitions involving a parent's favoritism toward one sibling are linked to problematic sibling relationships, youth adjustment problems, and marital discord (McHale, Crouter, McGuire, & Updegraff, 1995; Kan, McHale, & Crouter, 2008; Volling, 1997).

Subsystems in families can have both direct and indirect influences on one another. Most research focuses on how siblings directly influence one another in their everyday social exchanges, but sibling influences also are indirect. One line of study shows how a child can influence parents' expectations, knowledge, and parenting behavior, with implications for siblings. For example, parents can learn from their experiences with earlier-born children (Whiteman & Buchanan, 2002). Comparisons of siblings' relationships with parents at the same chronological ages, for example, show that parents exhibit more effective parenting behaviors with secondborn than with firstborn adolescents (Shanahan, McHale, Osgood, & Crouter, 2007b; Whiteman, McHale, & Crouter, 2003). Intervention studies also document how the experiences of one child can cross over to affect siblings. For example, an intervention designed to promote parental support for firstborns' school success revealed benefits for later born children (Seitz & Apfel, 1994). A similar pattern was apparent in intervention studies with high-risk families, with parent-focused interventions extending beyond the target child to siblings

(Brotman et al., 2005; Klein, Alexander, & Parsons, 1977). Not all of what parents learn from their experiences with one child has positive implications for other offspring, however. East (1998) argues that teenage childbearing by an older sister may increase the chances of a younger sister also becoming a mother in the teenage years because mothers come to believe that they are unable to control their daughters' sexual activities and give up on parenting efforts toward other daughters.

Siblings also may affect family life and ultimately, developmental outcomes of their siblings, by taxing parents' emotional resources and family material resources. For example, developmental and family research ranging from studies of handicapped and chronically ill children to studies of the transition to parenthood document how a sibling with special needs and dependencies may affect both parents' mental health and the quality of the marriage relationship (e.g., Demo & Cox, 2000; Dyson, 1991). Parents' well-being, in turn, has implications for their relationships with and the well-being and development of their other offspring. Research on becoming a sibling, for example, shows that firstborns react more adversely when their mothers report feeling tired and depressed after the sibling's birth (Dunn et al., 1981). Siblings also have implications for families' material resources. As East (1998) explains, teen parenting by an older sister may adversely affect the family's financial situation, with implications for a younger sister's probability of becoming a teen mother herself. Demographers have long been interested in the relations between sibship size and birth order and status attainment. Consistent with a "resource dilution" hypothesis, some studies show a link between larger family size and poorer academic achievement, lower occupational attainment, and less wealth (Downey, 1995; Keister, 2003). Importantly, in this line of study, the putative mediating processes linking childhood experiences and adult outcomes have rarely been assessed. Further, most of this research compares adults from different families as a function of family size or birth order rather examining within-family differences between siblings (e.g., Conley, 2000).

Siblings also influence the family system to the extent that the presence and characteristics of siblings provide new possibilities for family roles and relationships. A systems perspective directs attention to the emergence of new family subsystems that the presence of siblings entails. Novel family roles also are possible for both children and parents, as when older siblings take on caregiving activities or parents learn to play the mediator in sibling disputes. Family gender dynamics are also affected by siblings—specifically by whether individuals have sisters vs. brothers. When parents have both sons and daughters, those with traditional values have the opportunity to treat their daughters and sons in sex-typed ways (e.g., by spending more time with a same-sex child or assigning different chores to daughters vs. sons), and those with egalitarian values can compare their treatment to ensure that their sons and daughters are provided with similar resources and choices. The choice to engage in or refrain from sex-typed differential treatment of siblings, however, cannot be made in families with one child or with only same-sex children. More generally, siblings provide opportunities for social comparisons that have implications for children's adjustment (Feinberg et al., 2000). Less understood are parents' social comparisons vis-à-vis their offspring. Parental expectations and treatment of offspring may have more to do with how children compare to their siblings than how children behave or perform in an absolute sense. For instance, what counts as poor athletic or artistic ability in one family due to the presence of a very talented sibling may be evaluated quite differently in another family, and parents' evaluations of their children's *relative* talents may have implications for how they allocate family resources and guide their children's development. To date, however, such processes have not been a focus of study.

Families are Open Systems

Families have been described as open systems—subject to external influences, and also influencing the contexts within which they are embedded. We know little, however, about how forces outside the family influence sibling relationships.

Ecological and life course models of individual development (e.g., Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Elder, 1996) can also be applied in studies of how contextual factors shape sibling relationships, but have not been systematically applied to their study. Bronfenbrenner's ecological model targets the multiple, embedded systems within which sibling relationships develop, ranging from the proximal contexts of everyday life such as the family, to more distal, macro-level forces such as cultural norms and values. A life course perspective directs attention to the individual's position in the larger social structure; it also emphasizes the significance of historical time and developmental timing in how experiences have implications for individuals and their connections to others. Thus for example, a sister's transition to parenthood will have different implications for the sibling relationship when it takes place in adolescence than in mid-adulthood, and those implications also will vary across culture and historical time.

There is a limited literature on how forces outside the family affect sibling relationships. Environments shared by both siblings, such as culture, socioeconomic status (SES), and neighborhood, are contexts within which sibling exchanges occur. When SES has been measured, most sibling researchers treat it as a control variable, and available findings are mixed: some studies show that lower SES is linked with more negative sibling relationships (Conger, Conger, & Elder, 1994; Dunn, Slomkowski, & Beardsall, 1994; Updegraff et al., 2005), whereas others find the opposite (McHale et al., 2007; Updegraff & Obeidallah, 1999). Neighborhood characteristics have not been systematically linked to sibling dynamics, though Updegraff and Obeidallah (1999) found that young adolescents living in neighborhoods with many common play areas (parks, playgrounds) were more likely to develop intimate relationships with their peers than with their siblings. Finally, a small, but growing body of work has examined how cultural forces shape sibling relationships. For example, familism values, prevalent in collectivistic cultures, are linked to intimacy in Mexican American sibling dyads and may mitigate the negative effects of parental

differential treatment (McHale et al., 2005; Updegraff et al., 2005). Research on African American siblings also suggests that discrimination experiences, ethnic identity, and relationships with extended kin are key sociocultural forces associated with sibling relationship quality (Brody, Stoneman, Smith, & Gibson, 1999; McHale et al., 2007). Cross-cultural research also emphasizes the caregiving responsibilities of older siblings and the hierarchical structure of sibling roles in non-Western societies, as well as cultural differences in dynamics such as rivalry and competition (Maynard, 2004; Nuckolls, 1993; Weisner, 1989).

Families are Dynamic Systems

A systems approach highlights the dynamic nature of family structure and process and directs attention to the ways in which families adapt in response to changes in internal and external needs and circumstances. Although dynamic, systems strive toward a balance between stability and change. In families, some processes promote stability—for instance family norms regarding sibling involvement and support, whereas others promote systems change—such as developmental changes in young adulthood including entry into full time work and family formation that limit sibling involvement. Family systems theorists argue that both rigid adherence and continual fluctuations characterize dysfunctional relationships, but to date, this idea has not been tested with siblings. A systems perspective also suggests that systems are more open and susceptible to change during transition periods. Empirical work supports this idea in that changes in sibling dynamics are observed around the transition to adolescence (Kim et al., 2006; Brody et al., 1994), parental divorce (Sheehan et al., 2004), and when the firstborn sibling moves out of the family home (Whiteman et al., 2011).

In sum, research on sibling relationships fits well within a family systems perspective. In the face of its conceptual appeal, however, family systems theory is rarely applied in sibling research, and much work remains. One challenge is that family systems processes are often difficult to operationalize. Including siblings in studies of

families, however, can provide a window into systems dynamics by allowing researchers to move beyond a focus on individuals and dyads in the family. Importantly, a family systems perspective is limited in its theoretical propositions in the sense of defining specific mechanisms of influence. As such, bringing relationship dynamics proposed by analytic, social psychological and social learning theories to bear within a family systems framework will be a fruitful research direction.

Conclusions and Research Directions

As our review reveals, a range of theoretical perspectives can be applied to illuminate both the nature of sibling relationships—including individual, group and developmental differences—and sibling influence processes. Importantly, processes that affect sibling relationship dynamics operate at a variety of levels, ranging from intra-psychic processes such as attachment, to relational dynamics such as social learning, to distal influences such as sociocultural forces. And, although longitudinal research on sibling relationships is rare, our review underscores the necessity of a developmental perspective and suggests that different dynamics and influence processes may be apparent at different periods of the life course. Given that sibling relationships are the longest lasting relationship most individuals share, it is essential that future work examine them over longer periods of time. Longitudinal research on siblings offers family scholars a window into how family relationships develop and change as well as the opportunity to understand the multiple processes and contexts that influence lifelong bonds.

Another important direction will be to design studies that incorporate analyses of a broader range of influence processes in an effort to illuminate how insights from various perspectives complement one another. Research rooted in psychoanalytic traditions has been important in understanding how dynamics such as parents' differential treatment relate to sibling relationship qualities. Yet, a more complete understanding of these links is possible when other psychological and social processes such as

notions of equity and fairness, as proposed by social psychological theories, and sociocultural forces, as proposed by ecological and systemic perspectives, are taken into account.

Equally important to testing theoretical propositions regarding the nature and correlates of sibling relationship processes and influences are carefully designed experimental interventions (Kramer, 2004). Interventions focused on promoting positive sibling relationships or ameliorating negative dynamics are notably absent in the literature. The few exceptions document that sibling relationships can be improved through parent education (Siddiqui & Ross, 2004) or by teaching children social interaction skills (Kennedy & Kramer, 2008). Intervention research showing that nontargeted siblings benefit from interventions directed toward one at-risk child supports the systems notion of families as interconnected subsystems (Brotman et al., 2005; Klein et al., 1977). Identifying the processes through which interventions improve nontargeted siblings' relationships or adjustment is an important next step. In addition to providing insights on improving sibling relationships, intervention studies also allow testing of theories of sibling and family processes.

At a broader level, research that encompasses sibling dynamics and the perspectives of multiple siblings within a family moves the field beyond typical between-family comparisons to understand within-family differences and variability. Most developmental and family research assumes that studying one individual or dyad in a family is sufficient to understand family influences, but research on siblings reveals that two individuals from the same family are often as different as unrelated individuals (Conley, 2000; Dunn & Plomin, 1990). An important direction for research is to examine differentiation processes in families. In this way, the study of siblings can provide new insights into how families work. Recent advances in data analytic techniques have reduced some of the complexities typically associated with nonindependent data from siblings including in person-oriented techniques (e.g., Whiteman & Loken, 2006) and variable-oriented approaches such as multilevel modeling (e.g., Singer & Willett, 2003).

Our review directs attention to the embeddedness of siblings in a larger family system of relationships as well as within a larger sociocultural context (Maynard, 2004; Nuckolls, 1993; Weisner, 1989). Indeed, Weisner argues that what is most important to know about siblings is the "cultural place" in which they grow. From comparative work we can learn about similarities and differences across cultures in sibling relationships and roles. From ethnic-homogeneous studies we can learn how cultural values and practices shape sibling relationships and their influences (McHale et al., 2007; Updegraff et al., 2005). Greater attention to sibling relationships in minority families, through both ethnic-comparative and ethnic-homogeneous designs, is important given the rapidly changing demographics in the US and the increasing racial/ethnic diversity in families. The design of culturally appropriate interventions to promote sibling relationships also requires a foundation of knowledge on sibling relationships in a range of cultural contexts.

Taken together, our review reveals that the study of sibling relationships can inform the research literatures on individual development, close relationships, and family functioning. Siblings serve as social partners and sources of support across the lifespan. For students of close relationships, sibling relationships provide a model for the study of lifelong relationship development, and their unique properties may serve as a focus of comparison with other close relationships. Finally, sibling characteristics and dynamics help to shape larger family dynamics, and incorporating the perspectives and experiences of multiple siblings can provide new insights into how families operate as systems. Including the study of siblings and their relationships in the mainstream of family research is long overdue.

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William Marsiglio and Kevin Roy

According to an extensive review of five prominent child development and family journals covering the 1930–2006 period, social science scholars increasingly have focused attention on fathers (Goldberg, Tan, & Thorsen, 2009). Other scholars have also produced summary articles and edited volumes showcasing the breadth of research on fathering (Lamb, 2004, 2010; Marsiglio, Amato, Day, & Lamb, 2000; Marsiglio & Roy, 2012; Peters, Peterson, Steinmetz, & Day, 2000; Pleck, 2010; Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2004; Tamis-LeMonda & Cabrera, 2002).

We streamline our assessment of recent scholarship on fathering in the United States by accentuating how the concepts of *nurturance*, *intimacy*, and *responsivity* shape fathering across the life course. Dowd's (2000) recommendation that the definition of fatherhood be linked more directly to nurturance of father–child relationships in families guides our approach. She attempts to change expectations about who fathers are and what they do. In her words:

Nurture means care—physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual—gauged by one's conduct and the consequences for children's positive development. It is responsive to the different needs of

children at different ages. Thus nurture is not a static conception. It means more than simply doing; it also means the manner in which things are done, and their results for children (p. 176).

Promoting a more nurturing style of fathering is consistent with recent cultural discourses and fathers' everyday lives because fathers increasingly are providing direct care, and more of it, for their sons and daughters of all ages (Doucet, 2006).

In a related vein, notions of intimacy bring to the fore life experiences connected to familiarity, trust, self-disclosure, emotional vulnerability, and physical affection. Thus, we underscore how fathers interpret, negotiate, and express verbal and physical intimacy with children in different contexts over time. Fathers' intimacy displays imply that they share some type of affinity and sense of “we-ness” with their children.

Finally, nurturing fathers, presumably, must recognize some of their children's specific needs. Responsivity—the degree to which men recognize and respond to their child's and the mother's needs—varies and can have implications for the child and family (Matta & Knudson-Martin, 2006). Even though gender norms, power and partner influences, work schedules, emotional tradeoffs, and physiological conditions can affect fathers' responsivity, we suspect that social initiatives could help men develop this interpersonal skill set as well. More attuned and responsive fathers are likely to express nurturance in timely, developmentally appropriate, and effective ways.

Scholars in various fields have introduced similar and sometimes overlapping concepts into the

W. Marsiglio, PhD (✉)
Department of Sociology, University of Florida, 117330,
Turlington Hall 3108-A, Gainesville, FL 32611, USA
e-mail: marsig@ufl.edu

K. Roy, PhD
Department of Family Science, School of Public Health,
University of Maryland, 1204 Marie Mount Hall,
College Park, MD 20742, USA
e-mail: kroy@umd.edu

literature on father–child relationships (Lamb & Lewis, 2010). Similar to attachment theory, we are interested in the basic trust that fathers create with their young children, and the process of attachment has been measured as nurturance, closeness, and responsiveness. Psychological studies of paternal nurturance have utilized items such as showing love for children, understanding children’s worries, hugging and kissing children, caring for and paying attention to children, and making children feel better (Belsky, 1984; Reuter & Biller, 1973). More recent sociological studies of nurturing paternal involvement emphasize the importance of closeness as a measure of a bond between fathers and children (Amato, 1994; Coltrane, 1988). Other studies note reciprocal interaction between fathers and children and the intimacy that emerges as a result of that interaction (Brown, McBride, Shin, & Bost, 2007; Habib & Lancaster, 2006; Rane & McBride, 2000). However, Pleck (2010) argues that the application of attachment theory to paternal involvement is primarily limited to infancy and early childhood. We need to integrate other theoretical frameworks to find the conceptual tools required to study men’s nurturance of children over the life course.

Integrating Symbolic Interactionist and Life Course Perspectives

To focus on nurturance, intimacy, and responsiveness we turn to theoretical frameworks that assess meaning and dynamic processes. According to symbolic interactionists, various identity and social processes are implicated when a father nurtures, is intimate with, or responds to his child’s needs. These processes are often influenced by gendered perceptions of parenting and include efforts to either construct and manage identities or define and navigate familial situations. Consistent with Cooley’s (1964) looking-glass self concept, others inside and outside the family can influence both how a man sees his real or projected life as a father as well as his actual fathering behavior. Thus, a man’s disposition toward being a nurturing father can be inspired, reinforced, or restricted by

mothers, childcare workers, teachers, therapists, and the like who support or impinge upon his efforts to be a nurturing, engaged father. Others’ reactions may be critical in helping a man develop and sustain his nurturing disposition when he is removed from a child’s everyday life because of incarceration, work, nonresidency status, or other circumstances.

We frame our analysis by emphasizing how men/fathers perceive their lives and negotiate meanings associated with fathering. Moreover, we discuss relationship dynamics, including gatekeeping and alliance formation activities relevant to father–child, father–mother, and father–stepfather pairs. Although a fair amount has been written about father identities (Henley & Pasley, 2005; Marsiglio, 1995; Minton & Pasley, 1996; Rane & McBride, 2000) and fathering trajectories that include a man’s self-perceptions as a father (Marsiglio, 2004, 2007), little theoretical work has addressed fathering in terms of nurturance, intimacy, and responsiveness. Whether it be constructing a father identity separate from relations with a specific child, or a self-image forged out of interactions with a focal child, the emotional and caregiving dimensions to fathering can contribute to how a father sees himself.

Because men have the capacity to engage in varied forms of nurturance, intimacy, and responsiveness prior to having children and for decades thereafter, we prioritize a “long view onto fathering.” Our approach provides us more leverage to synthesize interactionist and life course themes in novel ways. We consider how motivations and meanings of fathering change over time, and emerge as a trajectory of nurturance in father–child relationships. This long view allows us to link findings from previously unrelated periods of fathering such as the transition to fatherhood alongside middle age and older men’s fathering.

With an interactionist eye toward transitional and developmental processes, we stress insights related to four main tenants of the life course perspective (Giele & Elder, 1998). First, we emphasize the theme of *human agency* in fathering by noting how fathers develop and modify their own style of nurturing their children. This life course concept complements the interactionist perspective

because fathers not only construct a style of nurturing but an identity that goes along with it. The link between self-reflection and behavior is consistent with many theoretical approaches, including a life course perspective, and accentuates men's efforts to create identities in families (Lupton & Barclay, 1997; Pellegrini & Sarbin, 2002). For instance, recent studies show that becoming a father provides a turning point in a man's narrative identity and subsequent behavior (Edin, Nelson, & Paranal, 2004; Sampson & Laub, 1993). When a father works at being an engaged and reflective parent (Palkovitz, 2002), the father identity then emerges and reflects an authentic biographic self over time (Gubrium, Holstein, & Buckholdt, 1994).

Men actively craft a father identity and regularly assign meaning to it. Moreover, this work takes place throughout the life course; father identities require monitoring and tailoring. Giddens (1991, p. 54) notes that identities require "keeping a particular narrative going" over time. Viewed as a process, identities encompass a sequence of events and meanings that guide future behavior and integrate goals, motivations, and feelings (Maruna, 2001; McAdams, 1985). In the reciprocal process of give and take with their children, fathers build identities that are lifelong projects, repeatedly shaped by new experiences (McAdams, 1993).

The concept of human agency illustrates how fathers respond as nurturers to their children, but guided as well by cultural discourses about and interpersonal processes involving mothers, children, stepfathers, biological fathers, and others. Public discourses about fathering shift over time (Griswold, 1993; Lupton & Barclay, 1997). The vision of "new fathers," or men who can blend providing and caregiving as priorities in their lives, reflects a shift in mainstream cultural discourses. The degree to which men embrace identities as nurturing fathers can be contrasted to how often men actually nurture their children.

This potential gap between the culture and conduct of fathering (LaRossa, 1997) suggests that men accept, resist, as well as contribute to social changes. A life course perspective on human agency highlights how fathers craft new

identities in social relations that lack clear definition. Contemporary fathers must confront what it will be like to be an engaged father of a 21-year-old son, and how to nurture or remain intimate (as a parent) with a 55-year-old daughter. There are few prescriptions for what nurturance means, or how one acts in these relationships. That individuals in recent decades are living longer, on average, means that more and more fathers and their adult children remake their relationships at different points in the life course.

Second, we highlight the notion of *linked lives* in that experiences and changes in one person's life ripple through others' lives. Many studies have examined how fathers respond to their young children, when the need for nurturance and intimacy has immediate and often clear consequences for children's development and well-being (Lamb, 2004; Paquette, 2004; see also Tamis-LeMonda, Shannon, Cabrera, & Lamb, 2004). Opportunities to be nurturing in this developmental stage can also be plentiful and clearly marked, as young children require guidance, support, love, and attention as they establish themselves and their physical, emotional, cognitive, and social capacities. However, adolescent children also have clear needs for nurturance that may call for a different style of responsivity or intimacy (Amato, 1994; Hawkins, Amato, & King, 2006, 2007; Larson & Richards, 1995). For example, youth who struggle with obesity and eating disorders, substance abuse, or early pregnancy need fathers to attend to their needs with a different type of maturity, honesty, strength, and confidence. Farther along the life course, scholars have rarely explored the complexities of intergenerational parenting, and specifically the demands of grandfathering youth alongside fathering adult children (Diamond, 2007). Again, it seems that later in life the opportunities for men's expressions of nurturance may increase, when older fathers may be called on to express a rich and diverse range of intimacy in their distinct relationships.

The notion of linked lives reflects how fathers' role transitions in work and family domains shape their children's role transitions in the same domains. For example, the duration, consistency, and quality of father involvement due to divorce

or job loss may shape children's identities, their entry into the workforce, or their family formation patterns (Elder, 1998; Kost, 2001; Marsiglio, Amato, Day, & Lamb, 2000). However, the concept of linked lives also implies that children can respond to and nurture their fathers as well. Reciprocal nurturance becomes more salient when the life course approach is used to chart trajectories of nurturance as men and their children age (Diamond, 2007; Snarey, 1993). How do youth and adult children support their fathers' cognitive or social development in the later years of life? How do fathers respond to their children's attempts to nurture them? Fathers and children may develop closer relationships over time if they share in reciprocal communication, physical contact, and even social or cognitive stimulation. Some suggest that narratives linking these generations may not be simple biographies, but emergent cobioographies, or linked identities of being fathered and being a father (Hagestad & Neugarten, 1985; Plath, 1980).

Father and child relationships are embedded in an extensive network of kin relationships and expectations as well (Hansen, 2005; Nelson, 2005; Roy & Burton, 2007). As these dyadic relationships change so does the need or capacity for nurturance, intimacy, and responsivity. After a divorce, kin networks shift to refocus on children's needs in the midst of possible parental conflict and separation. The sudden change in parents' intimate relationship ripples through children's lives, and the configurations that would allow for fathers' nurturance of children change as well. Although fathers may be challenged to be close to their children after divorce, the need for intimacy remains, and perhaps becomes more urgent. A life course perspective on linked lives underscores the varied implications of divorce on children of different ages. Divorced fathers with young school-age children are likely to express intimacy differently than fathers with young adult children (Cooney, 1994; Emery & Dillon, 1994). The entry of stepparents into children's lives also provides men with new opportunities to nurture children not biologically related to them (Marsiglio, 2004). Further, increasing numbers of single fathers confront distinct concerns that

they could be isolated and need assistance in nurturing their children as they grow (Hamer & Marchioro, 2002).

Third, we *locate fathers in context* by recognizing that they are embedded in social, historical, and physical circumstances (see Hofferth, Pleck, Stueve, Bianchi, & Sayer, 2002). These circumstances can inspire men to step up to nurture children in new ways, but they can also serve to constrain fathers' choices for caregiving as well. A life course perspective emphasizes that some men are afforded resources that foster generative behavior (Gerson, 1995), including employment, education, income, and age/maturity. In this way, social class differences may lead to different styles of nurturance over time. They may also frustrate men who face constrained choices as they aspire to greater levels of intimacy or closeness with their children, but cannot attain them. Obviously, relationship circumstances (e.g., marriage, cohabitation, single parent households) may inhibit nurturance. Likewise, children's attributes (e.g., health problems, temperament, gender, age) may constrain or encourage fathers' nurturing behavior.

Community values, norms, and interactions shaped by race/ethnicity, religion, politics, and language help inform messages about how fathers should or could nurture children. The life course lens highlights that fathers in recent decades have secured new opportunities to express their emotions physically and verbally with children. It seems more acceptable and expected, for example, that fathers hug their children, tell their adult sons and daughters "I love you," or engage in personal and intimate discussions with their children, regardless of age. In other words, socio-cultural contexts in recent years have opened up spaces for fathers to be more nurturing than previous generations of men.

Nurturance is also shaped by how it is situated physically in family worlds (Marsiglio, Roy, & Fox, 2005). Men's shared residence with children is a key indicator of how nurturance is played out in families. We recognize that daily contact and interaction, over many years and across different developmental periods, bring new opportunities to express nurturance. In this way, marriage or

cohabitation in a shared family household may be fertile ground for fathers to become more nurturing. However, as the number of never-married, nonresident fathers has increased, new barriers to close father-child relationships have arisen. So too, men who experience separation from children after divorce continue to encounter difficulties in sustaining relationships with their children. How does nonresidence constrain intimate interaction between fathers and children? How do fathers and children interpret and express physical intimacy when they do not see each other daily? In particular, if children only see their fathers outside the household, in public settings such as malls, restaurants, movie theaters, or churches, are reciprocal gestures of closeness discouraged? A life course focus on physical sites might suggest that fathers and children try to cope with barriers to intimacy resulting from nonresidence. Research might also discover strategies that fathers and children forge to develop a sense of closeness despite separation.

Fourth, because the form, quantity, and quality of men's nurturance of children can change throughout the life course, we attend to *multiple perspectives on time*. With a focus on time, a life course perspective weaves together the three previously described concepts (agency, linked lives, and location/context) by considering the interplay of different levels of change—within the individual, across generations and cohorts, and over historical time. This view parallels Eggebeen's (2002, p. 205) suggestion that "we need data that is sensitive not only to the diverse settings of fatherhood, but also to its dynamic and constantly changing nature." So too, fathering studies are no longer frozen in assumptions about presence or absence; in fact, as men's fathering perspectives and behavior have diversified in recent decades, the scholarly focus has shifted to understanding the meaning of presence and the transitions between presence and absence across contexts and over time (Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2004).

Researchers have investigated how father involvement changes *within* the lives of individual fathers (Harris, Furstenberg, & Marmer, 1996). Building on Hogan's (1981) research on early work transitions in men's lives, Palkovitz (2002)

discerned specific stages of men's involvement as they aged, and the impact that such involvement had on men as individuals. Nurturant fathering is related to a broader expression of men's generativity, and both processes likely benefit men's personal development by enhancing their sense of self and enriching interpersonal ties (Snarey, 1993). There are also typical patterns in nurturant fathering that cut across the *lives* of individual fathers. For example, some men's residential status changes in marked ways over time. A common pattern of involvement for middle- and low-income African American fathers is "flux" (Mott, 1990). In effect, snapshot measures of residence illustrate how a majority of these men move in and out of children's households. Perceptions of and motivation behind men's nurturing behavior shifts as well. Bowman and Sanders (1998) demonstrate how older African American fathers were preoccupied with their sense of generative commitment to younger generations, whereas younger fathers were concerned with fulfilling normative provider role expectations.

Men's style and degree of nurturance is tied to intergenerational processes in families. Researchers have been interested in how men are socialized to fatherhood, and they have examined intergenerational influences of fathers on their sons (Goldscheider, Hofferth, Spearin, & Curtin, 2009). Roy (2006) finds that a father's experience with his own father—whether as a stable presence, a transitory figure, or even a complete absence—is a strong motivator for paternal involvement. Low-income African American men related their own fathering to the barriers and dynamics that they experienced with their fathers. By examining men's nurturance within broad intergenerational networks of kin, we can trace patterns of transmission: how fathers' withholding or sharing intimate expressions influences subsequent generations to also value nurturant parenting.

Finally, to examine change, we must consider historical transitions in how the key motifs of fatherhood, such as, moral guide, breadwinner, model for gendered behavior, and nurturance are culturally represented and influence fathering (Lamb, 2000, 2002). Demographic patterns are

noteworthy too. Eggebeen and Uhlenberg (1985) identified an ironic cohort pattern: men of child-rearing age (20–50 years old) spent 40% less time in families with children in 1980 than they did in 1960. In 1980, fewer young adult men lived in environments with children present, which the authors speculated could lead to less political attention and less funding directed toward programs and facilities for children. Despite these cohort trends, however, relative ratios of fathers' to mothers' routine activity time with children have actually increased, in part due to the decreased amount of time that working mothers spend with children (Pleck, 2010). By examining how trajectories of men's nurturance emerge across families, and are clustered by birth cohorts, we identify developments in the social expectations of men as "new" fathers in contemporary society.

Although the burgeoning literature on fathers encompasses numerous topics beyond our coverage here, we address a matrix of timely issues most relevant to our focus on nurturance, intimacy, and responsivity. These overlapping conceptual and substantive topics include gendered and embodied fathering, metaparenting, transitions to and within fathering, situated fathering, complex social contexts for fathering (two-parent, social/step, single, nonresident, migrant, gay, multiple partner, fragile families), racial and ethnic diversity in fathering, father nurturance and social capital, and reciprocal influences between fathers and their children.

Gendered and Embodied Fathering

With an eye on gender and body themes, scholars in recent decades have begun to conceptualize fathering more broadly by focusing on when it begins, what it entails, and how coparents negotiate it. Marsiglio and Pleck (2005) use a critical gender lens to review the burgeoning literature on how fathering is connected to the production of masculinities and various structures on social inequality. Another noteworthy development has been the increasing attention given to the cognitive and emotional dimensions to fathering (Marsiglio et al., 2000; Marsiglio & Hutchinson,

2002; Nicholson, Howard, & Borkowski, 2008; Palkovitz, 1997; Walzer, 1998). Each of these literatures acknowledges that socially constructed perceptions of and responses to the male body shape fathering throughout the life course.

For some men, the energies that define fathering begin to surface prior to paternity. Although men cannot technically nurture children who are not yet born—or at least conceived—they can nurture their pregnant partners and engage in activities, including youth work, that refine their nurturing dispositions. Fathers who witness an ultrasound of their unborn child or who communicate through touch and talk with this emerging life engage in an early form of fatherly intimacy. Thus, even though men's transition to parenthood during the prenatal period is "disembodied" compared to what happens with mothers, men can experience "proxy" embodiment through "body-mediated-moments" fostered by their partner (Draper, 2003). In addition, those who care for their pregnant partners or support their partners' healthy habits related to prenatal visits, smoking, drinking, drugs, exercise, and diet may be seen as indirectly displaying nurturance or a type of responsivity because, ultimately, children tend to benefit if their mothers seek prenatal care early and regularly, stay fit, and avoid risky substance behaviors (Martin, McNamara, Milot, Halle, & Hair, 2007). Children's health is likely to be enhanced as well if their fathers are supportive of the mother breastfeeding (Sharma & Petosa, 1997). Likewise, those who make calculated decisions about their own health prior to conception are being responsive to their future children's needs. Fathers with better health habits are more likely to produce healthy sperm thereby lowering their children's chances of having pre- or postnatal health complications (Daniels, 2006). Granted, these activities typically have not been conceptualized as father involvement, but they are relevant to an expanded view of fathering (Marsiglio, 2009). Unfortunately, it is difficult to disentangle what men do during the prenatal period that stems from their desire to connect with or respond to their children's needs vs. their intent to respect their romantic partnerships—especially given the current limited measures of men's prenatal involvement (Marsiglio, 2008a).

Aside from the health-related advantages young children can reap from having nurturing men/fathers, supportive dispositions fostered or reinforced in the early period may influence fathers' involvement in subsequent years. Although early father-child connections may be tied to fathers' maturity and empathy skills, the warmth and attentiveness fathers display as new fathers sets the tone for how they might interact with their children later on. Compared to their older counterparts, teenage and young men who make the transition to fatherhood may be less likely to have the disposition, patience, and maturity to nurture children, even though some are impressive fathers (Marsiglio & Cohan, 1997). Life experience, coupled with a sense of being ready for fatherhood, can prime men to be more sensitive to children's behavior and needs.

Fathers of any age can experience intimacy with their children in nonphysical as well as physical ways. Situated in male bodies, fathers often navigate settings where others perceive and treat them in gendered ways. Thus, some expressions are uniquely tied to how male bodies are perceived and used. In her insightful analysis, Doucet (2006, 2009) underscores the value of understanding the embodied elements of how men experience fathering. As Doucet shows, stay-at-home fathers and those who have significant childcare responsibilities, often feel unwelcome by small children's mothers who mingle in play-date networks.

Fathers' bodies come into play more directly during infant care and play activities with young children. The literature clearly shows that fathers are more likely than mothers to engage in tactile, rough-and-tumble horseplay (Coltrane, 1996; Lamb & Lewis, 2010; Parke, 1996). How does playful touching in this way influence the bonds fathers and children forge? Intimacy shared in this physical modality can open doors to and be mixed with more tender forms of affection. Encouraging young children to take supervised risks that might lead to falls, scrapes, bruises, and the like can provide fathers with other intimacy opportunities that include consoling.

Fathers' opportunities to be intimate with their children and to respond thoughtfully to them

in other ways are sometimes linked to what coparents do. Unfortunately, most studies of father involvement have not controlled for mother involvement (Pleck & Hofferth, 2008). Doherty, Kouneski, and Erickson's (1998) model of father involvement prominently featured women as contributors to men's involvement with children, sparking a debate over "who is responsible for responsible fatherhood—mothers or men themselves?" Over the past three decades, fathers are doing slightly more child care and more work in the household, although this is likely due to a shift in the proportion of work that women do with children and at home, as women's work hours have increased (Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2004). Cooperative coparenting may lead to better child outcomes through more responsive parenting behaviors, higher quality relationships, and more frequent contact (Sobolewski & King, 2005). Couples' marital expectations and changes in relationship status are the most important predictors of men's involvement with children in low-income families (Carlson & McLanahan, 2004; Waller & McLanahan, 2005), though it is unclear how these conditions influence lower income men's nurturance, intimacy, and responsibility in particular.

Cognitive Map of Parenting

At a broader social level, all parents engage in cognitive reflection that encompass individual parent's thoughts as well as cultural scripts for parenting (LaRossa, Simonds, & Reitzes, 2005). Holden and Hawk (2003, p. 191) refer to a specific type of cognitive reflection as "metaparenting," defined as "a class of evaluative parental thought concerning the child-rearing domain that typically occurs before or after parent-child interactions" (see also Hawk & Holden, 2006). Building on this initial conceptualization, Nicholson et al. (2008) identified five areas (RPM3) that comprise a parenting cognitive map: (1) responding appropriately to children's needs, (2) preventing adverse situations, (3) monitoring influences on development, (4) mentoring child development, and (5) modeling appropriate behavior. Efforts to

examine “metaparenting” can push the field of fathering research in fresh directions relevant to our focus. Fathers’ reflections on their own fathering sometimes implicate matters related to nurturance, intimacy, and responsivity.

Exploring how fathers engage in metaparenting in these areas can expand understanding about father involvement. For instance, Marsiglio (2004) illustrated how stepfathers privately contemplate and sometimes discuss with others their options for being nurturing and intimate with their stepchildren. In these situations, stepfathers may reflect on whether their children would benefit from receiving safe hugs and caresses for support, acceptance, and comfort. They may wrestle with the prospects of being more reserved because they do not want others to misinterpret their behavior. Some fathers may reason too that showing affection—to stepchildren or the children’s mother—enables them to model healthy interpersonal behavior.

How do fathers’ life course experiences influence their metaparenting? As Walzer (1998) notes in her study of new parents, compared to their partners, new fathers tend to spend less time thinking about their children. But what conditions, if any, shrink this gap between fathers and mothers at various points during their coparenting, or encourage some fathers more than others to undertake reflective fathering? Perhaps metaparenting is fostered or discouraged by what parents, sons, and grandparents share directly and indirectly with one another in the course of their family interactions. Presumably, as men and fathers gain more life experience in- and outside a family context, they will acquire a more worldly perspective, experience, and practical insights that enable them to invoke a more active form of metaparenting. So too, as children’s needs change as a result of their transitioning into new phases of their lives in which education planning, work, and major consumer purchases become more salient, some fathers may become more adept at nurturing them through critical decision-making. Finally, other circumstances like men’s gendered style of friendship, having multiple children, previous youth work experience in the community, or more sibling caretaking growing up may influence the scope and style of fathers’ metaparenting.

Transitions to and Within Fathering

By definition, the life course perspective assumes that a key dimension to understanding fathers’ lives is to make sense of their transitions to fatherhood and their transitions within fathering (Cowan, 1988; Cowan et al., 1985). In summarizing the varied ways scholars have defined parental transitions, Palkovitz and Palm (2009) attempt to shed new light on the conditions that shape fathering careers. They extract four common themes from the different models of transitions:

- Growth is reflected by a higher level of integration and differentiation.
- Change in parents can be both progressive and regressive, representing developmental gains and losses.
- Integration occurs across different parenting domains: cognitive, behavioral, and affective.
- Transitions begin when a certain level of disequilibrium is reached and end when a new, more integrated level of equilibrium is reached (p. 6).

The themes earmark general changes fathers undergo when faced with either challenging or empowering circumstances, but they also hint at more specific ways fathers may alter their desire and options to be nurturing, intimate, and responsive.

Informed by these themes, we suggest five different ways to consider transitions in fathering that reflect a life course perspective. First, some transitions are anchored to a particular status (e.g., stepfather, nonresident father, gay father). A status as a father may shift in relation to a changing relationship status, such as getting married, divorced, or remarried. Many stepfathers learn to see themselves as having fatherlike identities in relation to stepchildren despite not having a genetic tie. Of course, biological fathers as well as stepfathers of daughters may feel awkward navigating their daughter’s journey through puberty, but stepfathers are likely to face unique difficulties because of their nonbiological status. The embodied identity work they do often involves closely monitoring and curtailing their physical contact. In addition, while we know that some fathers spend less time with their children once they become nonresident (Cheadle, Amato,

& King, 2010; Manning & Smock, 1999), these fathers may also experience shifts in the extent to which and how they engage in the physical and emotional expressions of fathering. They typically have fewer occasions to bathe and tell good night stories to young children and more limited chances to have spontaneous, personal talks and casual at-home interactions with older children. So too, fathers who transition from resident to nonresident and pay child support may feel their breadwinning responsibilities overshadow their attempts to be nurturing. Among attentive fathers, the less affluent may feel particularly challenged to create opportunities that allow them the time and place to emphasize the emotional aspects of fathering.

Second, a linked life transition involves a shift that is induced by someone else's status change. Grandfatherhood represents the primary example of this transition though situations like becoming an uncle or an ex-in-law raise similar issues. Becoming a grandfather provides a man an expanded set of opportunities to express nurturance, intimacy, and responsivity towards his adult children (and grandchildren) while sharing special memories and life lessons from his own early fathering experiences.

Third, another type of transition is rooted in historical shifts reflected in cohort experiences. For example, as mothers moved into the workforce in record numbers during the early 1980s, men increasingly were pushed to alter, at least in some small measure, how they behaved as fathers. To the extent fathers on average began to spend a bit more time in direct caregiving, they had more chances to be nurturing fathers.

Fourth, local, state, and federal policies can occasionally foster a transition in fathering practices. The most notable effects in this regard can be seen in how paternity leave policies in Sweden and Norway appear to have made a difference in fathers' willingness to take some leave from their jobs, though the increased pattern of leave taking has been less than ideal. In the United States, the Family Medical Leave Act of 1992 has offered fathers the most notable policy option, to take additional time off from work to manage a health transition in their families, usually around the birth or adoption of a child.

Fifth, other transitions reflect fathers' dispositions toward fathering. Some men, for instance, at various points in their lives as fathers become more nurturing and responsive in how they monitor their children's health, sex life, education, and so forth. Some may also begin to define coparenting differently; consequently, they respond to their children with a more or less palpable form of nurturance. On the other hand, specific work and community-related transitions can also shape men's dispositions toward fathering. Low-income men who cycle in and out of poor employment options, environmental risks, and fragile family relationships may jeopardize initial commitments to being nurturant parents. Their attention may turn from relationships with their children toward more urgent concerns, such as providing resources and finances to their families during an economic downturn.

Situated Fathering

The proximal and immediate contexts for men's nurturance of children are the physical spaces in which men "do" fathering, including local neighborhoods, family households, and even institutions. In a recent edited volume entitled *Situated Fathering*, Marsiglio et al. (2005) delineated five primary properties (physical conditions, temporal dynamics, symbolic/perceptual aspects, social structural, and public/private) and related secondary properties (institutional and cultural conditions, transitional elements, personal power and control, gender attributes, and fatherhood discourse) of physical and social space. Each of these properties can help researchers to understand how nurturance, intimacy, and responsivity between fathers and children unfold in real places and over time.

A focus on physical contexts for fathering allows us to examine critically places for nurturance. Shared residence is a status that many studies indicate is a critical factor in father-child interaction. However, what does it mean that a father is residential—or not—and how does this actually shape his close relationship with his child? A residential household, or even more specifically, a living room couch, a dining room

table, a child's bed, may be places for the emergence of intimacy, such as sharing ideas, stories, hopes, and dreams. Close interaction may also be threatened in such residential environments, with the intervention of spouses, partners, and other kin in father/child relationships. For example, Marsiglio (2005) interviewed stepfathers to examine how parenting inside a physical place, which is not "my own," complicated their disciplinary behavior. He also finds that these sites are places where stepfathers and biological fathers can both "do" parenting and establish "alliances" whereby children benefit from an array of fathers with common goals and approaches. Moreover, from a life course perspective, residential sites change over time. The same house may promote quiet and deep discussion between fathers of younger children, but may present barriers to interaction with older adolescents and young adults, who value independence in their own private rooms.

Even when fathers and children share residences, they may need to strategize to have "quality time" in the face of overstuffed family schedules (Daly, 1996). Fathers and youth may find ways to bond over television shows or online media that introduce sensitive topics that are salient in their own relationships, such as eating disorders or drug use. The traditional place for fathers to share their own stories of growing up with their children may be playing catch with a ball or going on vacation (LaRossa, 2005). Or, it may be that the preferred place for close interaction is in a family car, in transition between school and sports practice. These preferred areas for intimate interaction shift as fathers and children age, although they may continue to hold special resonance. Increasingly, fathers and children live apart in different residences at some point during childhood and adolescence. This separation may be due to the demands of work travel (for truckers or sales personnel) (see Sayers & Fox, 2005; Zvonkovic, Solomon, Humble, & Manoogian, 2005) or family disruptions (for nonresident and divorced fathers). Although these men may be "off the radar screen" in terms of living away from children's home residence, families find strategies to encourage nurturance "at a distance." For the half million fathers in active military

service (accounting for less than 1% of all fathers in the United States) (United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2007), a new cohort of children and youth has ushered their parents into intimate spaces and innovative solutions that technology offers to nonresident parents. Fathers and children may communicate about sensitive topics via email, cell phones, and text messages, each of which can accommodate mobile lifestyles (see McDermid et al., 2005). These communication techniques may become more commonplace during the transition to adulthood, as fathers and their children no longer live in close proximity, and seek to retain or even develop closer ties.

Finally, policies and social institutions shape men's nurturance in specific physical locations. Almost 750,000 fathers, or 1% of all fathers in the United States, were incarcerated in prisons or jails in 2007 (Schirmer, Nellis, & Mauer, 2009). Their nighttime discussions and sporadic visits with their children are often monitored and regulated in correctional facilities (Roy, 2005). Fathers and children who lack a place they call home—homeless families—receive very little support from agencies and programs that purportedly support disadvantaged families. Hamer's work (2005) on men's strategies to protect their children in dangerous neighborhoods is the latest in a string of studies of men's monitoring behavior as a core aspect of their fathering behavior (see also Letiecq & Koblinsky, 2004; Roy, 2004). Fathers' efforts to protect and nurture their fragile relationships in stressful places suggest a different level of intimacy, in which men share aspects of challenging realities with their children.

Complex Family Configurations

As Eggebeen (2002) notes, snapshot measures of family structure "obscure more than illuminate" the role men play in children's lives. In particular, our focus on coresident, biological fathers has taught us less about the nurturing style of parenting of cohabiting partners, stepfathers, nonresident fathers, and grandfathers. Studies over the past few decades have carefully revealed how fathers are embedded in complex family

configurations that shape their opportunities to respond to their children's needs and development through close interaction.

Linkages between paternal involvement and child outcomes draw almost exclusively on studies with resident fathers in two-parent families. Paternal engagement and accessibility in two-parent families has increased in recent decades, and nurturing, intimacy, and responsivity between fathers and children have also increased in the same period. Whereas children's achievement is influenced primarily through demographic background and economic status of their fathers (Hofferth, 2003; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994), children's behavior seems more directly related to having a father residing in the household—and more directly shaped by close interaction on a daily basis.

Because many families face physical separation between fathers and children when these two-parent households dissolve, researchers have begun to examine the effects of nonresident father involvement on children (Coley, 2001). In a meta-review of the literature, Amato and Gilbreth (1999) show that frequency of visitation and contact between nonresident fathers and children does not directly benefit children. Instead, they argue that children's well-being is enhanced by positive relationships and "active parenting." In effect, the quality of nonresident fathers' nurturance of their children—even at a distance—is perhaps more critical than the amount of time they spend together.

The ways in which mothers are involved with their children also set a context for fathering in families (Pleck & Hofferth, 2008). Previous studies have identified how mothers mediate men's involvement, through encouragement as well as discouragement of fathers' nurturance of children. Researchers of middle-class, White families indicate that mothers' perspectives and beliefs about men's involvement with children, defined as maternal gatekeeping, can be associated with declining paternal involvement (Allen & Hawkins, 1999; DeLuccie, 2001). Such negative gatekeeping may be particularly relevant in postdivorce families (Braver & O'Connell, 1998). However, mothers also manage the emotions of

fathers and children in an effort to promote more interaction (Seery & Crowley, 2000). Even when incarcerated, some fathers rely on their partners to facilitate close relationships with their children during visits and over phone calls (Roy & Dyson, 2005). Roy and Burton (2007) describe the process of low-income mothers' recruitment of fathers and father figures for the purpose of kin care of children. Ultimately, mothers have their children's safety as the highest priority and often seek social fathers and other kin as fathers if biological fathers present too many risks to their families. However, these mothers welcome responsive fathering, consistent contact, and men's attention to children's needs and well-being, which is often in short supply in their stressed kin networks.

Similarly, sequential parenthood with different partners (or multipartnered fertility) is a prevalent status for both fathers and mothers, and it is associated with poor outcomes for children in low-income families. Nearly 8% of American men aged 15–44 report having had children with more than one partner, with sharp differences by age, race/ethnicity, and income—over one-third of poor black men aged 35–44 report having had children with two or more mothers, and 16% report children with three or more mothers (Guzzo & Furstenberg, 2007). If men have multiple children with different mothers, they are likely to see their children less frequently and to contribute less financially (Carlson & Furstenberg, 2006). However, multipartner parenting is a complex process that unfolds over time across multiple family systems. To the extent that men are responsible for their own nurturing behavior, there is potential for fathers to develop uniquely close relationships with children in these families. Children may express concerns about being connected to or valued by fathers, due to direct comparisons with their step siblings, and fathers must learn to manage such concerns.

Moreover, fathers in multiple family systems must develop sensitivity to their relationships with children's mothers in order to receive information about their children from these mothers. In effect, mothers can interpret fathers' involvement with children across multiple families, and

a capacity for nurturance may depend on strong and trusting relations between coparents (Roy & Burton, 2007). The first few years of multipartner parenting is especially challenging and limiting for fathers with young children. Over time, however, these father–child relationships, if they survive, may become close and reciprocal, as children become young adults and achieve a more independent relationship with their fathers.

Quality of nurturance becomes more significant when we recognize that fathers' ties to children and family households become increasingly complex over time, as blended families emerge after marital dissolution, or as unmarried parents try to transition into stable coparenting arrangements (Mott, 1990). Do these new family structures allow fathers and children to develop close relationships? In part, what may distinguish these complex family configurations is the necessity for fathers to manage relationships with their children. If mothers are not facilitating father involvement, men may need to become more assertive, especially if they desire to develop a nurturing and responsive relationship with their children. Again, the need for fathers to take responsibility to find opportunities for intimacy and responsive interaction in complex families may be different from the experiences of biological, married, and resident fathers whose involvement is in part managed by their partners. Given the increasing number of blended families and nonresident fathers in the United States in recent decades, there may be more fathers who have chosen to pursue nurturing relationships on their own with their children.

Another timely and contested context for fathering involves gay men. Historically, most gay men became fathers in the context of a heterosexual marriage and then either lived sexually closeted lives as married men or divorced and, in many instances, subsequently came out to their children (Patterson, 2004). However gay men today increasingly skip heterosexual marriage and pursue fatherhood in the context of a committed gay relationship through adoption or surrogacy, and this pattern is likely to become more common (Berkowitz, 2007; Lewin, 2009; Stacey, 2006). Although researchers have not demonstrated

that gay fathers are more nurturing, intimate, or responsive than heterosexuals to their children's needs, cultural stereotypes that depict gay men as presenting a more feminine self when relating to others suggest that gay fathers, on average, may relate to children differently in some of the ways central to our review. We do know that gay men who adopt are often directed toward children who are perceived by other prospective parents as less desirable (children with special needs, abused children, older kids, and minority youth) (Lewin, 2006). Thus, many gay adoptive fathers not only have to figure out ways to bond with children without the benefit of experiencing the children's infant and toddler years, but they must also navigate new relationships potentially strained by other challenging circumstances. In other words, they will have ample opportunities to respond to children's needs. In a homophobic society, gay fathers' everyday realities and parental decision-making are likely to be more complicated and scrutinized. The extent to which gay men draw upon their own marginalized identities to help children manage their own trials and tribulations is an open question. Gay fathers must also grapple with unique circumstances as they attempt to integrate coparents, surrogate mothers, grandparents, and other relatives into familial networks that are not conventionally defined. As American culture slowly grows more tolerant of gays and lesbians, gay fathers are likely to feel more at ease crafting and expressing their identities as nurturing fathers.

Racial and Ethnic Diversity in Cultural Contexts

A life course perspective is critically situated to provide insight into the important conditions and historical experiences that shape individual development, and most importantly, father and child relationships in diverse racial and ethnic contexts (Dilworth Anderson, Burton, & Boulin Johnson, 1993). However, the "form and meaning of [father involvement] are culturally dependent and have not been explored widely" (Cabrera & Garcia Coll, 2004). For example, men without steady family-supportive jobs have not historically been

defined in public or by policymakers as responsible fathers. Reviews of research with African American fathers (Allen & Conner, 1995; Jarrett, Roy, & Burton, 2002; Roopnarine, 2004) suggest that providing is only one aspect of valued fathering. Perhaps more important is the contextually defined prospect of "being there" for one's children, by nurturing their development, fulfilling care obligations, and linking them to family members. "Being there" is a motivator mentioned by fathers across race and class, and Toth and Xu (1999) find that American fathers are almost equally likely to be expressive, affectionate, and encouraging with 5–18-year olds. White, Black, and Latino youth are similar in their likelihood of simultaneously having close bonds to stepfathers and nonresident fathers (King, 2006).

Cultural contexts differ in how they encourage or discourage fathers to be nurturing. Toth and Xu (1999) showed that African American and Latino fathers were more likely to monitor and supervise their children, and that Latinos spend more time with their children than White or Black fathers. Similarly, Hofferth (2003) found that Black and Latino fathers take more responsibility for child rearing: Black fathers use a less warm and more controlling approach and Latinos are less controlling but just as warm as White fathers. She suggests that these differences are related to economic and neighborhood factors, as well as cultural expectations related to engagement. Cabrera, Fitzgerald, Bradley, and Roggman (2007) find that Black and Latino nonresident fathers are more involved than nonresident White fathers, a pattern explained in large part by the quality of their relationships with children's mothers. Fathers' close relations and nurturing ties with children reflect considerable intra-cultural diversity in studies of racial and ethnic contexts as well. Roopnarine (2004) contrasted subtle differences between African American and African Caribbean fathers, and argued that less emphasis on family structure would redirect attention to factors such as fathers' involvement at different stages of the life course with children of different ages.

Even within the same cultural context, many fathers are caught between traditional masculine expectations as patriarchs and providers, and more

contemporary expectations of fathers who can nurture their children and maintain close relations as friends, contributors, and coparents. As men negotiate the dramatic economic shifts in global and local job markets, they redefine themselves as fathers within a cultural context, such as White working-class men struggling with downward mobility (Weis, 2006) or Black working-class men finding a space for themselves between dominant and street masculinities (Roy & Dyson, 2010). Recent studies of Asian and Asian American fathers (Kwon & Roy, 2007; Shwalb, Nakawaza, Yamamoto, & Hyun, 2004) and Native American fathers indicate that cultural conflicts and acculturation processes may be at the very core of relationships between fathers and children. Often, these cultural shifts occur across physical contexts. For example, researchers have identified how structural factors that force mobility have altered father-child relationships. The demands of immigration and work policy have altered the roles of Mexican fathers in their families (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1992), and African American fathers (similar to fathers in South Africa) have coped over many decades with residential mobility due to job searches and incarceration, both of which place them far away from their children's daily lives (Roy, 2008). In these environments, men's abilities to be responsive and intimate with their children are challenged by their nonresident status, stressful jobs, poor education, and social policies that govern physical mobility.

Many low-income and minority families have adapted to challenging circumstances by expanding opportunities for men to offer nurturance to children in families, through creating of a range of flexible roles for fathers and father figures. In African American families, ethnographic studies have identified the importance of biological fathers, boyfriends and godfathers, uncles, brothers, cousins, and "ol' heads" (community elders) as significant male parents in communities and kin networks with flexible expectations for men's participation as caregivers with a higher goal of nurturing children in extended families (Jarrett et al., 2002; see also Waller, 2002). Although men's place as caregivers in kin networks is better established in research with African American

families, recent studies (Hansen, 2005; Nelson, 2005) indicate that men across racial, ethnic, and class boundaries prioritize nurturance as critical family care providers for children.

Fathers' Nurturance and Social Capital

Although scholars continue to debate how to conceptualize and measure social capital, Furstenberg (2005, p. 810) defines it as, "the stock of social goodwill created through shared social norms and a sense of common membership from which individuals may draw in their efforts to achieve collective or personal objectives." Over the course of a child's life, fathers can forge family-based and community-based social capital that affects their child's well-being. The former results from a father sustaining a relationship with the mother (and kin) based on trust, mutual respect, reciprocity, and a sense of loyalty. The latter implicates the father's set of nonfamily relations with the individuals and organizations directly involved with the child. Fathers' contribution to generating social capital appears to vary based on social class, family demography, and religious involvement (Furstenberg, 2005; Reynolds, 2009). In addition, if the family system is characterized by mistrust and a lack of shared values, many fathers' efforts to build community-based social capital may be compromised. Finally, children's sentiments and interpersonal connections can either foster or hinder social capital development.

Researchers for some time have accentuated how children can benefit in varied ways from the social capital their fathers (parents) construct (Amato, 1998; Coleman, 1990; Furstenberg, 2005; Furstenberg & Kaplan, 2004; Marsiglio, 2004; Marsiglio & Cohan, 2000; Reynolds, 2009). While children reap advantages related to cultural values, discipline/monitoring, education, employment, and health, among others, we selectively highlight social capital issues as they relate to fathers' motivation and ability to nurture, be intimate with, and responsive to children's developmentally appropriate needs.

In children's early years, engaged fathers can provide and acquire insights about them through

discussions with daycare workers, teachers, and other health-related professionals. Ideally, these talks enhance fathers' sensitivity to their children's moods and behaviors, thereby enabling them to be more responsive to their emotional and other needs? They can, for example, cultivate "insider" information about the circumstances surrounding their children being bullied at school. Unfortunately, compared to mothers, fathers are significantly less likely to take on tasks associated with what Doucet (2006) labels, "community responsibility." Consequently, because fathers are less apt to develop effective lines of communication with those who monitor their young children, fathers may limit their ability to respond effectively to some of their children's needs.

Questions about what and how much parents and youth workers (e.g., coaches, teachers, childcare professionals, youth ministers) should disclose about a child helps to circumscribe the sharing adults do on behalf of the child (Marsiglio, 2008b). Alone, or in combination with another parental figure, fathers implicitly or explicitly decide how much private information to reveal to others. For example, do they discuss how a child might be coping in response to previous physical family abuse, a family crisis such as divorce or a parent in prison, an ADHD diagnosis, a physical disability or illness, and the like? Youth workers also face the conundrum about how much if anything they should tell parents that might be construed as "secrets" about a child. To our knowledge researchers have not systematically explored this issue, but we suspect that the rapport fathers build with youth workers will shape the extent to which and how certain matters are discussed. Furthermore, fathers equipped with certain types of human capital may be better positioned and more motivated to develop connections with youth workers that generate social capital.

As children age and begin to contemplate alcohol, drugs, smoking, body image, sex, contraception, and pregnancies, as well as other serious matters, they and their fathers may at times benefit if the fathers have built family- and community-based social capital. From a life course perspective, fathers who have an established pattern of developing connections with those adults

in the community who interact with the fathers' children may be more apt to continue this pattern. Of course, nonresident fathers' tendency to hinge their involvement with their children on whether they are romantically involved with the mother may discourage fathers from sustaining their involvement with youth workers. Some fathers, though, may feel more inclined and equipped to reach out on behalf of their children to youth workers if certain types of behavioral problems arise (e.g., fighting, carrying a weapon).

Reciprocity Between Fathers and Children

When a "long view" is applied to the life course, researchers recognize that nurturance in father and child relationships stretches many decades. Father involvement is typically framed as a one-way street; fathers influence their children by their behavior or values. But reciprocity emerges early as children also shape men's behavior. During adolescence this reciprocity becomes more apparent. In fact, Hawkins et al. (2007) found that while fathers seem to have little influence on their adolescent children, the adolescents influenced men's behavior as fathers. As we move further out into the life course, we find that fewer studies have been conducted on relations between aging fathers and adult children. This section, therefore, is in large part speculative, as we indicate potentially promising directions for understanding how men's nurturance of children shifts over many decades.

As children mature into adults, they find that they share experiences with their fathers in interactions at the workplace, struggles through education, or changes in families, such as marriage and even divorce or remarriage. These shared experiences generate intimacy between fathers and children. For example, as children become parents themselves, the birth of a child transforms fathers into grandfathers. Fathers and their children who are first-time parents may grow more distant (Aquilino, 1997), but others may develop closeness by supporting each other during family births or tough economic times (Roy, Vesely,

Fitzgerald, & Buckmiller Jones, 2010). As adult children ask for and fathers offer up life advice, there may be reciprocity as well, with fathers increasingly valuing their children's insights into the fathers' own lives.

If fathers and children take a "long view" on their relationships, there are opportunities for men who were sporadically involved in their children's lives to reenter and reestablish ties with them (Roy & Lucas, 2006). This reclaiming of a father-child relationship may happen in early adulthood, as adult sons and daughters become independent and seek nurturing relationships that are not negotiated through their mothers. Fathers and their children may reach new levels of responsive interaction during the transition to adulthood, but relationships can become more complicated as well (Snarey, 1993). As children build their own families, the dyadic nurturance is negotiated through a complex web of kin relationships, including children's spouses and in-laws, grandchildren, and possibly stepmothers and stepsiblings. Moreover, when fathers and adult children move apart from shared residences, they will likely find it difficult to be as responsive on a daily basis without the opportunity to sit down to dinner or to watch TV together.

Fathers can find novel ways of nurturing their adult children as they age. They may provide support for their children's marital relationships. Through active and engaged grandfathering, men can also support their children as parents (Bates, 2009; Bullock, 2005; McWright, 2002). Adult children, in turn, can learn new strategies to nurture their fathers, especially if their parents require more care due to declining health (Campbell & Carroll, 2007). If a trusting relationship has emerged over decades, fathers may welcome their children's emotional and financial support, as well as physical and daily care. This might involve transporting fathers to buy food, to attend church, to exercise, or to visit friends and family.

However, if relations between fathers and children have become strained or have dissolved over time, fathers may pay a high price (Calasanti, 2004). Compared to previous cohorts of older men, they may be isolated without social support (Klinenberg, 2002). The numbers of men living

alone in late old age may climb as the Baby Boomers reach their final decades, in part because of the high rate of divorce among that cohort. Even fathers and children who maintain a workable but not necessarily close relationship may be challenged as they grow older. Their communication may be marked by ambivalence and conflict, with limited chances for either to nurture the other.

The potential benefits of increased longevity may outweigh possible disadvantages. As aging fathers enter into relationships with their adult children, families have few firm expectations about how these relationships should unfold. There is room for improvisation, for creativity, and for crafting new expectations based on nurturance, respect, attentiveness, and intimacy (Thompson, 1994). Fathers and their children may encounter a real test of reciprocity when they work together to secure intergenerational family legacies. By supporting their own and each other's generative urges, fathers and their children can share responsibility for caring for future generations, by cooperatively saving for college, building vacation homes or planning family reunions, or exchanging family pictures, videos, letters, or stories.

Methodological Issues and Future Research

Having articulated a more refined conceptualization of how fathers interpret, negotiate, and express verbal and physical intimacy with children in different contexts over time, we now selectively discuss the methodological implications of our vision. Over the past 15 years or so researchers have launched more expansive data projects that include more varied measures of fathering dimensions. These efforts take seriously the call to broaden the definition of fathering (Marsiglio et al., 2000). However, the pursuit of operational and methodological precision may have cost researchers greater attention to processes and dynamics of fathering over time (Palkovitz, 2009).

A number of prominent large-scale surveys have recently expanded their foci on fathering by

including new measures of men's parenting. Several include longitudinal data: Fragile Families and Child Well-Being, Welfare Children and Families: A Three Year Study, Early Head Start Evaluation (Father Involvement with Toddlers Component, FITS), National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 97 and 79 (NLSY97 and NLSY79), Panel Survey of Income Dynamics, and the National Survey on Families and Health (Hofferth et al., 2007). From a life course perspective, the surveys are notable because they reflect a growing commitment to foster longitudinal research. This longitudinal focus is limited though because few surveys follow fathers into middle or later life. In addition, the availability of new fathering data has outpaced the development of methods to analyze fathering over time (Mayer, 2009).

Unfortunately, even the new survey measures of fathering have significant shortcomings that affect the quality of research on fathers (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 1998). Specifically, most data collection efforts focus on conventional measures of father involvement while providing little on nurturance, intimacy, and responsivity between fathers and children. Perhaps most promising has been the inclusion of measures of closeness between fathers and children. These measures may tap the existence of a father-child bond and a level of emotional investment from both fathers and children. Children's reports on close relationships with their resident and nonresident fathers foster comparisons between the quality of fathering while controlling for residence. Scholarly review panels have strongly encouraged family researchers to measure quality, commitment, and strength of family relationships in future projects (Morgan et al., 2008).

Although scholars have made inroads in conceptualizing and assessing ways of measuring parental attachment and closeness, far less has been achieved in terms of the three domains of fathering we address. As we have argued in this chapter, our understanding of the processes of fathering over time can be enhanced by theoretical development and refined measurement of these domains. How is closeness related to nurturance, if at all? Intimacy has been measured in

dating and marital relationships, but is it expressed uniquely between parents and children? Can we adapt these measures, or must we develop new measures of intimacy? Likewise, researchers attempt to gauge couples' levels of responsiveness—but measuring dyadic interaction is a challenge with a single source of information. To capture effectively how responsive they are to each other, do we need to observe fathers and children, and elicit their responses to each other's behavior?

A multidimensional approach is needed to measure these aspects of father-child relationships. Each is part of active family processes, infused with meaning and embedded in rich contexts (Palkovitz, 2009). Morgan et al.'s (2008) recommendations for research on family change suggest that conflict, positive connection, trust, commitment, problem-solving, decision-making, and cooperation help shape the processes of crafting nurturing bonds.

Unlike surveys, qualitative approaches are well-designed to capture process, context, and meaning in families (Roy & Kwon, 2007). For instance, collecting men's narratives about their experiences as fathers over the life course offers researchers the chance to explore men's feelings about the changing bonds with their children (Handel, 2000; Pratt & Fiese, 2004). Ethnographic techniques in particular can capture the emergence and maintenance of local and family-specific cultural contexts, which may support or inhibit nurturance in ways that are difficult to replicate in large-scale surveys (Hamer, 2001; Lareau, 2003; Roy, 2004, 2005; Waller, 2002).

Perhaps most importantly, we need methods that help delimit what nurturance, intimacy, and responsiveness between fathers and children looks like or how these expressions change over time. Researchers turn to grounded theory approaches to tackle new questions, discover hidden processes, and construct interview opportunities for participants to build narratives. Projects could encourage men to develop their own cognitive maps of nurturance. Using semi-structured in-depth interviews is one viable approach (Marsiglio, 2007). Additionally, a photo elicitation technique would place cameras in fathers' hands, so they

could locate, document, and then talk about how nurturance emerges in their everyday interactions with their children. Each of these qualitative approaches contribute to a broader range of multiple and/or mixed method strategies that “may play a crucial role in developing a rich understanding of cultural context and interpersonal processes associated with...how fathers are directly or indirectly involved in their children's lives [in a nurturing way]” (Marsiglio et al., 2000, p. 1179).

As measures of nurturance are developed, other methodological issues will become more urgent. Can we rely on a single source of information for men's nurturance, or do we need multiple sources? Mothers and fathers reports may be similar in some aspects, but many studies show that mothers report lower levels of father involvement (Coley & Morris, 2002). Also, how do we measure fathers' nurturance over time? Life course researchers have worked on new methods to analyze patterns of events and transitions with event history analyses, longitudinal ethnographies (Burton, Purvin, & Garrett-Peters, 2009), cumulative processes (O'Rand, 2009), and patterned trajectories, including recent developments in latent growth curve analyses and latent class analyses (George, 2009). These new methods could be adapted to identify trajectories of fathers' nurturance toward each of their children. They show promise for conceptualizing how economic and social institutions shape family processes like nurturance over time as well. For example, how are fathers' levels of nurturance with their children affected by paternal job loss during an economic recession? Are there cohort differences such that men at different ages struggle to maintain close bonds with their children during tough times?

Finally, there are specific subsamples of fathers about whom we have limited understanding of the contexts of nurturance. Fathers in prison and in the military have been particularly under-represented in family research. Although incarcerated fathers are restricted in their opportunities to be involved with their children, especially in ways that might resemble nurturance and intimacy, some opportunities do exist. Just as importantly, research has not systematically explored the process by which incarcerated men

and deployed soldiers transition back into family rhythms in which they have more direct opportunities to nurture their children, share intimate time, and respond to their needs. Preparing children for their fathers' imprisonment or deployment can tap into all three fathering expressions central to our analysis, especially for those fathers who were involved in their children's lives prior to their changing circumstances. Although their conditions complicate matters, prisoners and soldiers may still have occasions to express their nurturing self, but the physical and social psychological conditions associated with these forms of situated fathering make it difficult (Marsiglio et al., 2005).

Similarly, we know little about father–adult child interaction in later life. Do these special bonds become intimate as fathers move into later life? Do adult children become more nurturing and responsive to their aging fathers? Few datasets collect information on older fathers, but Midlife in the United States (MIDUS) and the Health and Retirement Study (HRS) are two exceptions because they are designed for intergenerational analyses of fathering in later life.

Conclusion

Public discourses on fathering have increasingly embraced the notion that fathers should be far more than breadwinners; they can and should be key nurturing forces in their children's lives. At the aggregate level fundamental changes in fathers' behavior are occurring, though they are relatively slow and uneven, and the data are limited that speak directly to matters of nurturance, intimacy, and responsiveness. Much more needs to be done to explore these issues over the entire duration of the father–child relationship.

As we look to the future, several trends should encourage researchers to study and promote a more expansive vision of fathering along the lines we highlighted in our review. First, demographic shifts in family configurations mean that fathers increasingly face a more complex set of conditions that influence their opportunities to nurture their children. Second, because of recent advances

in life expectancies, fathers and children today are more likely to share a greater number of years in some form of a father–child relationship. Even though men, on average, are having their first child at later ages, more fathers and children will experience multiple, overlapping transitions of becoming fathers and grandfathers. Third, the shifts in cultural expectations are creating more supportive environments for fathers to be far more than breadwinners. And in some circles, those expectations have considerable bite.

Drawing largely from life course and symbolic interactionist perspectives, we selectively highlighted what we know and should explore in terms of the three understudied, interrelated themes of fathering that anchor our discussion. Furthermore, we framed our analysis by emphasizing the dual and overlapping aspects of social process and context that underlie a life course perspective. More specifically, we illustrated: options fathers have to make choices in how they nurture and respond to their children, how their lives as fathers connect them to others, some of the ways fathers' experiences are embedded in a larger sociocultural landscape, and how using multiple perspectives on time sheds light on specific types of fathering.

Broadly speaking, our framing of the father–child relationship draws attention to how nurturing processes are related to healthy relationship development and personal well-being over the life course. The socially constructed gender and embodied dimensions to fathering point to important opportunities to explore how men perceive and manage their options to be nurturing, intimate, and responsive fathers. In some instances, these dimensions operate to constrain fathers' inclinations or opportunities to be more nurturing with their children and stepchildren. Aspects of situated fathering, cultural conditions, and complex family configurations can also discourage fathers from being nurturing and attentive.

Ultimately, though, fathers have considerable freedom to adopt a more heightened style of meta-parenting that accentuates their children's needs. Becoming more mindful of the joys and struggles that certain life transitions (e.g., unemployment, migration, military deployment, incarceration,

nonresident fathering) can bring to fathering can help men adapt and be more thoughtful, nurturing fathers. Researchers should explore more fully how father's changing lives affect their orientation toward their children so that policies and programs can be tailored to account for fathers' everyday realities. Some of those initiatives may increase fathers' chances to develop social capital on their children's behalf that will benefit the father-child relationship more generally.

Because researchers have not used longitudinal designs to examine systematically how fathers' navigate the world of nurturance, the potential for new research avenues is considerable. More detailed descriptions of what fathers think, feel, and do are clearly needed that enhance understanding about fathers' attempts to nurture, be intimate with, or responsive to their children of all ages. More extensive and nuanced data need to be collected through multiple methods and, ideally, using multiple family members. As we've argued here, new data collection should be informed by the life course and symbolic interactionist perspectives. Refining analytic approaches to reap the full benefits of longitudinal data should also be a high priority.

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Adam Davey and Emiko Takagi

Introduction

Looking Back: Assessing the Literature

Aging and the family is an area of research in which many of the key trends and areas of emphasis can change more quickly than either theory or research can keep up. As a result, this topic has generated a vast body of empirical literature. Although a number of theoretical perspectives have been developed and applied to many issues pertaining to aging and the family, it is rare to find much strong support for any single theoretical perspective, despite a number of attempts, and even when application of a theory remains a central guide to research. For this reason, we have tried to strike a balance between theoretical and empirical considerations, attempting to situate both within time and place. In this way, we hope that we can provide a more dynamic appreciation for issues at the intersection of aging and the family.

A. Davey, PhD (✉)
Department of Public Health, Temple University,
1301 Cecil B Moore Avenue, 9th Floor, Ritter Annex,
Philadelphia, PA 19122, USA
e-mail: adavey@temple.edu

E. Takagi, PhD
Gerontology Program, Department of Health Science,
Towson University, Towson, MD, USA
e-mail: etakagi@towson.edu

Reviews and Trends

Numerous reviews of the empirical literature on aging and the family have appeared at fairly regular intervals over the past half century, beginning with Townsend's (1957) vivid treatise on the family life of older adults in the Bethnal Green neighborhood in the East End of London. The previous editions of this Handbook also provided reviews which remain relevant both for the scope of topics they consider as well as to help situate scholarship on aging and the family in its appropriate sociohistorical context (Treas & Bengtson, 1987; Treas & Lawton, 1999). Each edition of the *Handbook of Aging and the Social Sciences* has also included a review on aging and the family (Bengtson, Rosenthal, & Burton, 1990; 1996; Hareven, 2001; Sussman, 1976, 1985) except the most recent edition which separated out historical (Haber, 2006) and intergenerational (Silverstein, 2006) perspectives. Adding to these thorough and extensive reviews is the series of "decade reviews" regularly published in the *Journal of Marriage and the Family* (Allen, Blieszner, & Roberto, 2000; Brubaker, 1990; Streib & Beck, 1980; Troll, 1971). Beyond these, there are any number of chapters and volumes directed toward specific themes or audiences such as clinicians (e.g., Davey, 2000; Davey, Janke, & Savla, 2005; Davey, Murphy, & Price, 2000; Hargrave & Hanna, 1997; Zarit & Eggebeen, 1995, 2002), and aging in a global context (e.g., Kinsella & Phillips, 2005; Sunström, 2009).

Reading these reviews, one can trace the “problems” of aging and the family. Early work was derived from theoretical perspectives of disengagement (Cumming & Henry, 1961), modernization (Cowgill & Holmes, 1972), role theory (Rosow, 1967), and to some extent intergenerational solidarity (Bengtson, 1971). As such, this early work was often directed toward remediating the inevitable loss of family and independence, and navigating the perils of aging. As the empirical literature grew, much of it ran counter to these expectations, and in some cases the myths of aging were dispelled so successfully as to create a picture of aging that was often rosier than the reality.

Research in the 1980s included an emphasis on a number of secular trends that could be seen as a harbinger of negative consequences for the future. These included the decline of the family (Popenoe, 1988), difficulties associated with rising rates of divorce and remarriage, women’s increased labor force participation, and so on. Research topics transformed from consideration of the “empty nest” to “crowded nests” as “boomerang kids” (or “incompletely launched young adults,” ILYA; Schnaiberg & Goldenberg, 1989) contributed to “returning young adult syndrome” and the “sandwich generation” (a.k.a, “women in the middle,” Brody, 1990) provided many of the new problems for aging and the family.

In the 1990s, a dominant focus was to address the problem of inadequate attention and understanding of rich diversity in family forms and functions. Grandparents raising grandchildren was one of the new areas of research which captured considerable attention (e.g., Davey, Savla, Janke, & Anderson, 2009; Fuller-Thomson & Minkler, 2007; Minkler & Fuller-Thomson, 2005; Szinovacz, DeViney, & Atkinson, 1999). Availability and emergence of major nationally representative data sets relevant to aging and the family (National Survey of Families and Households and the Health and Retirement Study/Aging and Health Dynamics of the Oldest-Old) also served to provide shared data resources to facilitate development of a common knowledge base.

In the beginning of the twenty-first century, much of the research has expanded to consider issues such as families across time and place, and

the perspectives of multiple family members from within the same family. These important developments have provided a situation where in many cases data precede theory adequate for making strong predictions. While several methodological approaches have tended to predominate, it is clear that there is still ample room for expanding our repertoire here.

As this section has clearly indicated, the literature on aging and the family has been reviewed in detail in many different places. In the following sections, in order to maximize the unique contribution of this chapter, we concentrate on two broadly-defined concepts that have guided the past research on aging and the family: intergenerational family relationships and familism. Each concept has been addressed and studied in many different ways; and review of literature on these concepts reveals both the shortfalls and potentials of the field to be further expanded. In reviewing these concepts, we will specifically focus on their potentials and implications for cross-national and cross-cultural frameworks, as we believe there is a heightened need of recognizing sociocultural context in relation to these concepts.

Looking Forward: Advancing the Literature

Much of the study of aging is culturally bound. Issues such as demography, family structure, health and social care, and retirement orient much of the social gerontological literature, but policies and practices vary widely across nations and regions. With this in mind, several areas stand out as being of particular interest.

Baby Boomers and Aging

Since the beginning of the twentieth century fertility rates have generally been declining. The baby boom cohort represents individuals born in the period between 1946 and 1964 which was characterized by higher levels of fertility than the generations which preceded or followed it.

As this relatively large (some 76 million births in the United States) cohort has marched through the life course (what Easterlin (1987) described as a pig moving through a python), it has exerted large and lasting changes on the structure of society itself, whether considering institutions such as education, marriage, or employment. In terms of the experience of the baby boomers moving toward what has typically been defined as “old age” (the oldest Baby Boomers became eligible to begin drawing Social Security benefits in 2008, and they will become eligible for full benefits beginning in 2013), they are certain to change that as well. In particular, their first experiences with the aging process are likely to be with their parents’ aging, rather than their own. As more and more baby boomers become acquainted with the range of changes in health, family, and retirement, we are likely to see changes in the range of supportive services (both in terms of quantity and quality) related to aging. For the baby boomers themselves, it is clear that the number of potential caregivers per disabled elder is likely to decline considerably in the coming decades (Uhlenberg & Cheuk, 2008), that marital transitions such as divorce, remarriage, and widowhood affect children within the same family differently depending on their ages, and that stepchildren appear only half as likely to be involved in flows of instrumental assistance compared with biological children (Davey, Eggebeen, & Savla, 2007).

Family Life of the Oldest-Old

It is difficult to overstate the significance of population aging for society, or to fully capture the extent of changes which are occurring as a result of these demographic shifts, despite the fact they have been anticipated for quite some time. There have always been older adults in society, but it is only recently that living until old age has become a normative and expectable part of the life span. Rowe and Kahn (1998) suggest, for example, that of all the individuals who have ever lived to be 65 years of age or older, fully half of them are alive today. Recent demographic research suggests

that these changes are likely to continue for the foreseeable future. Olshansky, Goldman, Zheng, and Rowe (2009) suggest that official government projections are even likely to underestimate the extent of population aging in the coming decades because they do not account for likely advances in biomedical technology that can delay the onset and progression of major fatal diseases or perhaps slow the aging process itself. Likewise, there have also been considerable changes within the older population itself, such that it is the “oldest-old” (usually considered as 85+) population that is growing most rapidly. This is the group which is most likely to experience health problems such as cancer, osteoporosis, and dementia, and limitations in daily activities (Davey et al., 2010). Growth in the centenarian population has also been staggering. In 1990, there were an estimated 37,306 centenarians in the United States, representing approximately 1 in 5,000 members of their birth cohort, but this number is projected to rise to more than 800,000 by 2050 (Krach & Velkoff, 1999). Recent projections from Vaupel’s group (Christensen, Doblhammer, Rau, & Vaupel, 2009) suggest that fully half of all children born in industrialized nations today can expect to live until their 100th birthday.

To this point, it has been difficult to find good quality information on the family life of the very oldest members of society (Krach & Velkoff, 1999). The US Census, for example, only provides population estimates for individuals 85+. The most recent phase of the Georgia Centenarian Study, however, can provide at least preliminary data on the family life of society’s oldest members. Participants were drawn from a population-based sample of 244 community-dwelling and institutionalized centenarians and near centenarians drawn from 44 counties in northeast Georgia. Few studies of centenarians have used a true population-based sample. Even large nationally representative samples on older adults tend to include very few centenarians. For example, of the 30,888 participants in the Health and Retirement Study (HRS), only 143 were aged 98 and older in their oldest interview. The 2004 wave of the National Long-Term Care Survey 2004 (NLTC) had a sample size of 20,474 which included an

oversample of those 95+, but provided data on only 253 individuals aged 98 and older. High mortality rates mean that the population aged 98 and older is not stable over the 2 year data collection period. In order to achieve control over the number of participants and maximize the proportion of respondents who were over age 100, the 44 counties were divided into four strata, defined to be mostly contiguous and with approximately the same number of centenarians according to the 2000 census population enumeration. Comparisons with special tabulations from the 2000 census data and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services suggested the sample was broadly representative of the underlying population. Likewise, our achieved sample represented fully 19.6% of all centenarians living in these 44 counties. The multidisciplinary aim of this study is to characterize what it were like to be 100, and included information ranging from genetics to social functioning (Poon et al., 2007).

Consideration of the family life of centenarians in the GCS was very informative. As would be expected, very few centenarians reach this age with a living spouse, making widowhood the modal marital status (87.7%). In fact, approximately the same proportion of centenarians was married as never married (4.5% for each). Of centenarians who are currently married, just over one quarter (27.3%) were not in a first marriage, a somewhat higher proportion than for ever-married centenarians as a whole (18.1%). A very small proportion of centenarians were also divorced or separated (3.3%). These overall figures mask very large gender differences. All of the centenarian men had been married, for example, and women were only 10% as likely as men to reach this age with a living spouse.

Most centenarians (73.1%) in this data set had at least one living child, but there were also gender differences in this probability. Whereas 89.2% of centenarian men had at least one living child, only 70.2% of centenarian women still had a living child. Taken together, these differences have very important implications for centenarian women. Spouses are the most likely caregivers for married individuals, followed by adult children. In both cases, centenarian women are likely

to be considerably disadvantaged in this regard. Interestingly, however, it is important to note that there were no differences in either marital status or availability of living children as a function of whether individuals resided in the community or in an institutional setting, something that is not true at younger ages.

Finally, in terms of lifetime fertility, the key differences observed were between whites and African Americans. Whereas 77.1% of white centenarians had ever had at least one child, this was true for 86.3% of African American centenarians. African Americans were also more likely (29.4%) than whites (10.4%) to have had four or more children. Higher fertility earlier in life did not translate into more living offspring for African American centenarians, however. African American centenarians were 2.4 times as likely to have lost at least one child by the time they reached this age, with 63.5% of African American centenarians experiencing this event compared with 26.6% of white centenarians. To some extent this finding illustrates the race crossover effect in mortality which occurs at some point (the precise age subject to considerable demographic debate) in later life. If African Americans survive into very late life, their survival is greater than whites.

Review of the Literature

Intergenerational Relationships: Theory

Many of the theoretical attempts to understand aging and the family have been devoted to analyzing the formations and functions of intergenerational family relationships. Previously, two approaches have dominated the study of intergenerational relationships; one focuses on the aspect of solidarity and the other concerns the problems of family relations. While the solidarity approach mainly addresses the strength of the family ties, the problem approach investigates the mechanism and the cause of the problems that arise within the family (Connidis, 2001). Against these two approaches to intergenerational relationships, Lüscher and Pillmer (1998) present

another concept called ambivalence and they argue that family relations entail a variety of ambivalent status, which makes it impossible to categorize them either the positively framed solidarity or the negatively pictured family problem. As debated continuously by scholars (e.g., Bengtson, Giarrusso, Mabry, & Silverstein, 2002; Connidis & McMullin, 2002a, 2002b; Lüscher, 2002), these three approaches present distinctive assumptions regarding how we analyze and understand intergenerational family relationships. We will briefly present each of the three theoretical perspectives and discuss their applicability to one of the emerging research areas of aging and the family: cross-national comparison.

Intergenerational Solidarity: Systematic Approach to Family Relations

The intergenerational solidarity perspective emphasizes the strength of the relational bonds between generations. The concept of intergenerational solidarity presents six dimensions of intergenerational family relationships: associational (type and frequency of activity shared by family members), structural (physical settings such as geographical proximity), functional (exchange of instrumental support), affectional (emotional closeness), consensual (similarity in opinions and values), and normative aspects (shared family expectation) (Bengtson, Rosenthal, & Burton, 1995; Silverstein & Bengtson, 1997). Several formal tests of this model have failed, but it has nonetheless influenced nearly every study of intergenerational relations over the past 40 years.

The multiplicity of the dimensions of intergenerational solidarity suggests that family connections constitute some distinct functions and they create diverse patterns of family relationships (Bengtson et al., 2002). For instance, Silverstein and Bengtson (1997) developed a typology of adult child–parent relationships by classifying the multiple combinations of the six dimensions of intergenerational solidarity. Similarly, Silverstein and his colleagues (Silverstein, Giarrusso, & Bengtson, 1998) created a typology of grandparent’s social role by categorizing the ways in which

different dimensions of intergenerational solidarity are emphasized by family members. Also, some studies have focused on a particular solidarity dimension and investigated its connection with individual and family outcomes such as individual attitudes toward the political debates of intergenerational equity (e.g., Lawton, Silverstein, & Bengtson, 1994; Ward, 2001), gender differences in motivation of taking care of parents (Silverstein, Parrot, & Bengtson, 1995), and the way in which social support is exchanged between parents and child across times (Silverstein, Conroy, Wang, Giarrusso, & Bengtson, 2002).

The concept of intergenerational solidarity assumes a systematic approach to family relations, which considers family as an organized social system with smaller subsystems (Cox & Paley, 1997). Scholars who seek a better understanding of intergenerational relationships from this perspectives attempt to explain the relational structure and mechanism developed within the family by using a classificatory and typological scheme. Thus, the systematic approach shares its methodological rationale with the positivistic perspective that acknowledges the existence of general patterns and rules of family relationships that can be discovered with an objectified measurement (White & Klein, 2002).

Intergenerational Family Problem: Critical Approach to Family Relations

The theoretical approach of intergenerational family problem specifically focuses on the problems experienced by family members. This approach generally integrates the critical perspective, which intends to provide “emancipatory knowledge” to empower particular groups of family members who tend to be neglected by the “mainstream” sociology of family (White & Klein, 2002). Exemplary family studies as such can be found in the feminist argument of family caregiving issues, which contends that the ultimate source of physical and emotional burdens suffered by female family caregivers derives from the gender-biased social structure that treats family as the most ideal caregiver for elderly parents

(Hooyman & Gonyea, 1995, 1999; Ward-Griffin & Marshall, 2003).

The focus of the critical perspective is the analysis of the unfairness in social structural arrangements that disadvantage one social group against another. The proponents of the critical approach in family studies generally negate the positivistic approach and instead they advocate for the qualitative examination of diverse family experiences by appreciating the individual reflexivity with his/her own cultural perceptions and social background (Allen, 2000; Daly, 2003).

Intergenerational Ambivalence: Interpretive Approach to Family Relations

Lüscher and Pillmer (1998) criticize the concepts of intergenerational solidarity and conflict as overly dichotomized, and they instead propose the concept of intergenerational ambivalence. As their theoretical argument, Lüscher and Pillemer (1998) state that; “Intergenerational relations generate ambivalences. That is, the observable forms of intergenerational relations among adults can be social-scientifically interpreted as the expression of ambivalences and as efforts to manage and negotiate these fundamental ambivalences” (Lüscher & Pillemer, p. 414). As a major component of the concept of ambivalence, Lüscher and Pillemer (1998) bring up the issues of conflicts and contradictions in family lives. For example, some family caregivers express their conflicting sense between emotional solidarity and normative sense of obligation (e.g., Brody, 1985; Ganong, Coleman, McDaniel, & Killian, 1998; Harris & Long, 1993, 1999; Hashimoto, 1996; Jenike, 1997). Also, some family members in elder abuse cases experience both emotional closeness and distance to their elderly parent (Lüscher & Pillmer, 1998). Connidis and McMullin (2002b) refer to the sources of ambivalence to the conflicting structural setting for families, where multiple social relations are embedded differently according to their social position and status.

The methodological approach to assess the state of ambivalence has not been clarified yet. For example, Lüscher and Pillmer (1998) present some methodological suggestions such as the modifications of the existent measurements to better account for both positive and negative aspects of the relationship and the triangulation of methods to more accurately capture the conflicting family situation. Furthermore, the subsequent paper by Lüscher (2002) added a conceptual scheme to capture ambivalence by integrating multiple types of relational states, including the state of solidarity. On the other hand, other scholars such as Connidis and McMullin (2002a) favor a qualitative approach that intends to capture a variety of “ambivalent” relational states without utilizing any standardized measurements, although in the long-term family scholars will need to overcome this issue successfully if the field is to move forward in an empirically supported fashion.

The concept of intergenerational ambivalence holds the interpretive perspective that considers family experiences as socially constructed through the interaction between individual and social structure (White & Klein, 2002). Because of the multiple kinds of social structural arrangements that do not always agree with each other, individuals often have to negotiate their family relationships with other structural opportunities and constraints. Thus, as Lüscher and Pillmer (1998) specified in their theoretical argument of ambivalence, the state of ambivalence reflects one of the social construction processes of family relationships, the process where individuals interact with their surrounding structures and try to settle their own family arrangements.

Three Approaches to Intergenerational Family Relationships in Cross-National Studies

Strengths and weaknesses of the three approaches to intergenerational family relationships become clearer when we consider their ability to accommodate diverse formations of intergenerational family relationships. One way to achieve it would

be to examine their applicability to cross-national studies of families and aging, where differences and similarities of family lives need to be delineated in a cohesive manner.

The systematic approach of intergenerational solidarity is beneficial particularly for presenting differences and commonalities across nations. The concept of solidarity may not necessarily be the most ideal way of representing family relationships in all countries however, the utilization of a carefully standardized measurement at least provides an arbitrary template for a comparison. In fact, some recent cross-national studies of intergenerational relationships that applied the measurement of intergenerational solidarity have been quite successful in presenting a systematic analysis of cross-national differences and commonalities of family relations (e.g., Bengtson, Silverstein, & Giarrusso, 2003; Katz & Lowenstein, 2003).

The family problem approach, on the other hand, is useful when it comes to a structural argument that compares national political arrangements among different countries. For example, the study of family caregiving with the critical perspective can address the issues of national welfare systems that create nation-specific family caregiving problems (Biggs & Powell, 2003; Goodman & Peng, 1996; Lechner & Sasaki, 1995). Thus, with the critical perspective, family problems observed in each country can be transformed to a macro-level discussion of sociopolitical environments for families.

The concept of intergenerational ambivalence has its own strength in presenting the process of individual negotiations with surrounding socio-cultural environment. In cross-national studies of family relationships, this interpretive approach is especially relevant to the issues of cultural norms and expectations that often create dilemmas for family members to negotiate their family arrangements. In this context, cross-national differences in ambivalent status highlight the process of culturally unique family experiences in each country (e.g., Harris & Long, 1999; Hashimoto, 1996).

In sum, the three theoretical approaches to intergenerational family relationships hold distinct functions in examining cross-national differences

and commonalities of family lives. The systematic approach represented by the intergenerational solidarity concept provides a useful arbitrary scale to delineate general cross-national patterns of intergenerational relationships. The critical approach taken by the family problem perspective, on the other hand, provides an analytical framework to relate the diverse patterns of family relationships to the problems in national-level structural conditions. Finally, the concept of intergenerational ambivalence benefits family studies by highlighting the individual negotiation processes where culture in each country exerts a significant influence. Empirical studies which incorporate these perspectives are now appearing in the intergenerational literature (Birditt, Miller, Fingerman, & Lefkowitz, 2009; Fingerman, Pitzer, Lefkowitz, Birditt, & Mroczek, 2008; Pillemer et al., 2007; Pillemer & Suitor, 2008; Suitor et al., 2009).

Familism

Another major theoretical concept that runs through the literature on aging and the family in various styles is familism. The term familism has been defined in various ways in the literature of family studies. For instance, in classic work by Bardis (1959a, 1959b) familism was defined as strong in-group feelings, emphasis on family goals, common property, mutual support, and the desire to pursue the perpetuation of the family. Other groups of researchers refer to the concept of “the centrality of the family” or “family identity” as familism (cf. John, Resendiz, & De Vargas, 1997).

Familism generally contains two interrelated conceptual dimensions: structural manifestation and normative beliefs (John et al., 1997; Wallace & Facio, 1992). Structural manifestation entails measurable phenomena such as the extended multigenerational family households and kinship networks. On the other hand, normative beliefs define familism as a cultural ideology that directs people’s attitudes and values to prioritize family needs over individual needs. These components are intricately interrelated with each other.

For instance, multigenerational households are generally based upon beliefs in normative components of familism; at the same time, the norms of familism tend to be enforced by such family structures (Takagi & Silverstein, 2006).

Filial Responsibility: Familism in Intergenerational Contexts

One of the specific concepts of familism that is relevant in intergenerational relationships is filial responsibility. Filial responsibility defines adult children's obligations to satisfy their parents' basic needs (Seelbach & Sauer, 1977). Filial responsibility tends to create a positive drive for intergenerational exchange between adult children and elderly parents (Lee, Netzer, & Coward, 1994).

In American society, the way in which a sense of filial responsibility is shared and practiced varies across ethnic groups and cultures. Generally, studies show that non-Hispanic whites express lower expectations of filial responsibility than other racial/ethnic groups such as African Americans, Hispanics, and Asian Pacific Islanders. For instance, the study conducted by Lee, Peek, and Coward (1998) suggests that older African Americans feel higher filial responsibility expectations than older whites, even after controlling the relatively disadvantaged socioeconomic status of the African Americans. Similar trends have been observed with Hispanic families (e.g., Sabogal, Marín, Otero-Sabogal, VanOss Marín, & Perez-Stable, 1987).

Diversity in cultural expectations of filial responsibilities is associated with not only racial and ethnic groups but also other social dimensions, such as social class, religious affiliation, gender, and so on. The interactions between cultures and other social dimensions further diversify filial expectations across ethnic groups, as well as within each ethnic group in the United States.

For example, a qualitative study with 20 white families in the Los Angeles area conducted by Pyke and Bengtson (1996) highlighted a wide range of filial responsibility expectations within the white population. In this study, the variability of familial attitudes to filial responsibilities was

measured in the continuum of collectivism (i.e., familism) and individualism. What differentiated these white families in the continuum was obviously not their ethnic background but other factors such as family size and religious beliefs.

Purdy and Arguello (1992), on the other hand, illuminated some specific social conditions that ethnic minority groups (particularly Hispanic families in this study) are facing in American society. Difficulties faced by ethnic minority families include lifetime experiences of racial prejudice, severe poverty, and lack of access to social services. These create a sense of distrust of the dominant Anglo cultures in the United States, leading Hispanic people to solidify familial support as their primary resource, a finding which may also apply with African American families (Dilworth-Anderson, 2001). In such a social milieu, expectations for filial responsibilities tend to become much higher than those for more socially dominant ethnic groups (predominantly non-Hispanic whites). As these examples indicate, filial responsibilities in the United States are shaped by intricate interrelationships between cultural norm commonly believed by the ethnic group and socioeconomic conditions where the family is embedded.

The Confucian concept of filial piety, which is commonly believed by people from East Asian cultures, is one type of filial responsibility. In general, filial piety emphasizes mutual love between children and parents as well as children's obligations to parents (Sung, 1998). For instance in Japanese society, compared with American society, the sense of filial responsibility derives more exclusively from the Confucian norm of filial piety, mainly due to its high level of ethnic homogeneity. Because of its uniformity, the social expectations of filial piety seem to be imposing more pressures on family members in Japan than in the United States.

The Confucian norm of filial piety emphasizes children's unconditional obedience to their parents and parents-in-law (Koyano, 1996). The norm of filial piety was strongly emphasized in the moral education in wartime Japan. Children were educated to obey their parents no matter what happened; and the responsibility to assure

their parents' well-being in their old age was repeatedly stressed (Koyano, 1996). Although social attitudes towards the traditional norm of filial piety have become increasingly negative over the last several decades, the norm still exerts a significant influence on the way families perceive and practice their responsibilities for elderly members.

Structural Phenomenon of Familism: Intergenerational Living Arrangement

One of the structural manifestations of familism is coresidence of family members from different generations. In general, when there is a strong sense of familism, the living arrangement of the family is more likely to be a multigenerational household. The linkage between the shared sense of familism and family living arrangement, however, is also influenced by larger socioeconomic and cultural contexts where the family is embedded. Examination of intergenerational living arrangement within a single national context, as well as between different nations, over time therefore highlights differences and similarities in the extent to which the sense of familism is shared and practiced, as well as the ways in which socioeconomic conditions alter normative and structural reflections of familism.

In the United States, dominant social values of individualism generally negate multigenerational living arrangements. Instead, both adult children and elderly parents prefer living separately in order to maintain their independence. However, this does not necessarily mean that adult children and elderly parents in the United States have no feeling for each other. Rather, the independent living arrangement is considered the most desirable arrangement to respect elderly parent's independence. This has been a consistent finding within the Western social gerontological literature a very long time (Rosenmayr and Köckeis (1963)). Hamon and Blieszner (1990) suggest that neither adult children nor elderly parents in American society perceive living together or living close to each other as an important filial responsibility. Instead, both generations tend to

emphasize emotional support for each other; instrumental support is only expected when there is actually a need from parents.

There is also significant racial and ethnic variation in intergenerational living arrangements as structural manifestations of familism. Generally, non-Hispanic white elderly people are more likely to live alone or live with only a spouse than other ethnic groups. For instance, statistics in 2008 indicated that about 14% of elderly white women lived with other relatives, whereas about one third of black, Asian and Pacific Islander, and Hispanic elderly women lived with other relatives (Federal Interagency Forum on Aging-related Statistics, 2008). This indicates that ethnic groups with relatively strong norms of familism are more likely to have a living arrangement with extended family members.

Japan again illustrates a culturally unique practice of familism, as reflected by the relatively high prevalence of multigenerational living arrangements comparing with other similarly developed countries. While less than 10% of the elderly in the United States reside with their children (Maeda & Ishikawa, 2000), 44% of elderly people in Japan live with their children (Cabinet Office, 2009). The significant difference can also be observed in the percentage of elderly people living alone; while 22% of the elderly aged 60 and over live alone in Japan (Cabinet Office, 2009) about 40% of older people in the United States are living alone (Maeda & Ishikawa, 2000). For comparative purposes, data from the European SHARE data set indicate that between 17–18% (Spain, Italy), and 43–45% (Austria, Denmark) of older people live alone (Sunström, 2009).

The relatively high rate of intergenerational coresidence in Japan at least partially is considered as a structural manifestation of familism defined by the norm of filial piety, which guides adult children to prepare a shared living arrangement for the expected caregiving needs of aging parents (Hashimoto, 1996).

Japanese society generally has a higher acceptance of old age dependence than does American society. It is also noteworthy that Japan has a higher rate of bedbound elders than most other

countries (Hoshi, 2000), a finding which is consistent with Kuypers and Bengtson's (1973) social breakdown syndrome in which too much assistance to older adults can undermine their self-efficacy, leading to greater impairment. In addition, cultural norms of familism tend to create social ties that are strictly family-centered support networks (Hashimoto, 1996). In this context, the needs of the older tend to be considered inevitable tasks for all the families in Japan (Hashimoto, 1996). Because of such a familial assumption that regards dependency of the elderly as something that eventually all families encounter, the traditional multigenerational living arrangement is often considered a protective familial approach to prepare for the future needs of elderly parents (Hashimoto, 1996). This is very much contrastive with (white) families in the United States, who tend to create family living arrangements contingent upon the needs of elderly parents (Hashimoto, 1996).

Historical analyses of the trend of intergenerational coresidence in Japan also provides an illustrative example of the way in which socioeconomic transformations in society alters the manifestations of familism. Arguably due to the dramatic transformations of socioeconomic environment initiated by the postwar modernization in the last several decades, the strength in which the public supports the traditional filial obligations for aging parents and parents-in-law has dramatically declined (Ogawa & Retherford, 1993). Similarly, the prevalence of intergenerational coresidence has steeply declined over the last 3 decades: from 70% of households with older adults being intergenerational coresidence in 1980 to 44% in 2007 (Cabinet Office, 2009). The reasons for these increasing negative attitudes possibly entail the rise of individualism driven by modernization and the increase of gender equality in Japanese society (Koyano, 1996). Japan has also introduced long-term care insurance in 2001, which may further decrease the importance of intergenerational coresidence.

Recent studies on intergenerational coresidence in Japan suggests an increasingly loose linkage with the filial norms, as current coresident households seem to be formed contingent on

the need of elders (or adult children) for support, rather than being a culturally-driven arrangement that is made well before the actual caregiving needs arise (Martin & Tsuya, 1994; Takagi, Silverstein, & Crimmins, 2007). The trend as such suggests that familism is consistent with cultural norms and values that are dynamic, particularly in a rapidly changing social environment such as Japan.

Practices of Familism: Family Caregiving

Another family practice that is strongly influenced by the normative sense of familism is family caregiving for elderly parents; in particular, the impacts of familism norms on the caregiver's perceived stress. In the United States, the patterns of family caregiving vary significantly among different ethnic groups. The research conducted by Knight and his colleagues (2002), for instance, examined the relationship between familism values and the sense of caregiver's emotional distress across five different ethnic groups in the United States: Latino, Korean American, Japanese American, African American, and non-Hispanic White. Among these, Korean Americans expressed the highest sense of familism, closely followed by Latinos. Among the three ethnic groups with a relatively low sense of familism, Japanese Americans indicated slightly higher levels of familism norms compared with African American caregivers. White caregivers showed the lowest sense of familism values.

In addition, their analysis showed inconsistent relationships between familism value and perceived caregiving burden across ethnic groups. While Latino and African American caregivers reported a high sense of familism as a factor to reduce their perceived caregiving burden, for Korean Americans, their belief in familism seemed to increase caregiving distress. On the other hand, Japanese Americans expressed a relatively high sense of familism; however, their sense of caregiving burden was about the same as the non-Hispanic White caregivers. These results indicate that the norms of familism can be either a positive or negative force for family caregivers

in the United States, depending upon where the sense of familism is derived from and level of acculturation.

As explained in the section on filial responsibilities, such ethnic variability of familism norms is closely related to specific social contexts that each ethnic group is situated within American society. Youn, Knight, Jeong, and Benton (1999), for example, highlighted the cultural dilemma of Korean American caregivers as new immigrants in the United States. Through their comparative study of caregiving among Korean, Korean American, and White American caregivers, Youn et al. (1999) reported that Korean American caregivers tend to feel acculturative stress, struggling between the two competing values: traditional familism values from Korea and individualistic values predominant in the United States.

The socially disadvantaged status of some Hispanics is another example of family caregiving situations in minority cultures in the United States. Acknowledging the crucial role of familism in Hispanic families, Wallace and Facio (1992) suggest that research on Hispanic families needs to go beyond their exclusive focus on familism and situate Hispanic caregiving in a larger social picture. As components of this larger social framework, Wallace and Facio (1992) identify social conditions specific to Hispanic caregivers and care recipients, which includes social and economic difficulties resulting from their immigrant status in the United States and cultural distrust of social services for caregivers.

Familism also provides cultural expectations and guidance regarding who should be the primary caregiver for an aging family member. For instance, in many of the East Asian societies where the norm of filial piety prevails as a main form of familism, responsibility to take care of elderly parents generally falls into the eldest son's hands. However in reality, most of the care tasks are carried out by his wife, as a duty of the daughter-in-law in the family (e.g., Hashizume, 2000). In this context, the norm of familism that automatically imposes caregiving responsibilities on daughters-in-law tends to exacerbate caregivers' physical and psychological stress (Harris & Long, 1993), however a study with Korean caregivers

suggests that filial obligation moderates the effects of primary and secondary stressors on negative consequences of care (Lee, 2002). The dynamic nature of familism discussed earlier is also applicable to the changing attitudes towards family caregiving responsibilities. The qualitative study conducted by Elliott and Campbell (1993), for instance, shows that generations with different levels of cultural expectations try to negotiate with each other, integrating more pragmatic solutions with what was traditionally expected. They made this point by drawing cases where adult children in Japan, regardless of their birth order, negotiate their responsibility to take care of their elderly parents in exchange for material inheritances (e.g., house and property). In contrast to the automatic caregiving arrangement based on normative expectations, family members in today's Japanese society consider more pragmatic factors (Izuhara, 2002).

Familism in Different Social and Cultural Contexts

Up to this point we have discussed issues of familism across different cultures and national contexts between the United States and Japan. As presented in the sections on filial responsibility, intergenerational living arrangements, and family caregiving, there is a significant cultural variability in terms of how much familism norms are believed and how these norms are practiced. These cultural differences are usually treated as "residual effects" of culture in literature, something persisting even after controlling for socio-economic factors.

When studying familism and its influences on intergenerational relationships, such "residual effects" of cultural beliefs always have to be linked with the particular social environment where cultures are situated. Cultures do not exist in a vacuum; rather, they are intricately interwoven with other social dimensions. Such interactions between cultures and social structures then create new cultural interpretations. As the unique social experiences of family caregivers in ethnic minority groups in the United States indicate,

norms of familism need to be located in a larger social picture that encompasses other social dimensions such as race and class in the United States. Also, the changing norms of filial piety in Japanese society suggest that the concept of familism is not necessarily so stable in the midst of a rapidly changing social milieu.

To grasp the social interpretations of familism in different cultures more accurately, two things need to be addressed in the cross-cultural studies of familism and intergenerational relationships. These are: (1) differences between obligatory and voluntary aspects of familism, and (2) fluidity and flexibility in practicing familism.

First, obligatory and voluntary aspects of familism norms need to be differentiated. With the obligatory forces, norms of familism could impose stress on family members. On the other hand, if the familism suggests voluntary practices to respect their elderly family members as a group, norms of familism could be a positive drive to strengthen the solidarity of intergenerational family relationships.

For example in family caregiving, the norms of familism for Hispanic families in the United States may mean positive familial cooperation to overcome their social disadvantages as a group. On the other hand, the similar concept of familism for Japanese daughters-in-law may primarily mean their unconditional and exclusive obligations to take care of their parents-in-law. This could reflect the contradicting findings of relationships between familism norms and caregiving stress between the two cultures; while familism norms tend to decrease stress for Hispanic caregivers, familism notions are likely to increase stress for Japanese caregivers. In this context, even with the fairly similar concept of familism, its connotations and impact on families can differ significantly depending upon how much autonomy is allowed for each family member. Differentiation of obligatory aspects and voluntary components of familism can be one way of highlighting the divisions between negative and positive connotations of familism norms for families.

Second, the fluidity of cultural beliefs and expectations of familism requires greater recognition. Culturally desired practices of familism

constantly change when it becomes difficult for families to fulfill traditional expectations in changing society, such as over time and with industrialization. When such dilemmas arise, many families attempt to negotiate between traditional norms and surrounding social structures, seeking for a better way of carrying out their cultural expectations. Here, the concept of “structural lag” proposed by Riley, Kahn, and Foner (1994) seems to provide a good theoretical explanation. With this concept in the field of aging, Riley et al. (1994) presented a misfit between social opportunity structures and actual situations of the older population that are constantly changing.

The similar analogy, but on a more micro level, can be applied to the misfit between traditional norms of familism and changing family circumstances in today’s society. As explained in the normative changes of filial piety in Japanese society that now integrates more affection-based relationships and pragmatic solutions of family management, many families and individuals try to correct the misfit by modifying the normative expectations. Similar negotiations can be seen in the cultural struggles of many immigrant families in the United States who struggle to reconcile dominant American values of individualism and their generally group-oriented cultural values of familism.

Through such negotiations, social notions, and expectations of familism change depending upon the social and cultural context where each family is located at a particular point in time. Therefore, when studying families on a cross-cultural/cross-national basis, examination of the fitness of cultural norms with surrounding social structures is quite important. In this context, studies of families always have to include an accurate understanding of both sides—traditional cultural values and the social environment that encompasses such values.

When studying intergenerational relationships, normative forces represented by familism are a key factor to be examined. Family members’ cultural beliefs in familism certainly indicate some aspects of their attitudes and expectations towards their family. However, the better understanding of familism norms and intergenerational relationships

require further examination of social contexts that embrace certain familial styles in practicing (or not practicing) familism. A misfit between the social environment and cultural norms of familism may intensify obligatory pressures on family members to fulfill their cultural expectations. On the other hand, if the social environment is well equipped for the notions of familism, beliefs in family may exert positive force to strengthen family solidarity. What is expected from family and what is considered best for family vary across various dimensions such as cultures, national contexts, and historical times. To improve our understanding of families in today's society, family studies need to carefully consider constant changes and interactions of the notions of familism with other social dynamics.

Evaluation of Research Methodology

Multilevel Models

Importance of considering socioeconomic, historical, and cultural contexts in relation to intergenerational relationships and familism raises the methodological need for multilevel modeling in the study of aging and the family. In many studies of family and aging, individual outcomes tend to be interpreted without sufficient considerations for the social and familial contexts where individuals are embedded, what Marshall, Matthews, and Rosenthal (1993) termed "methodological individualism." Hagestad and Dannefer (2001) present a similar argument in the field of social gerontology, referring to the "microfication" of research on aging, which tends to ignore the crucial impacts of sociohistorical contexts on individual aging experiences.

At least four levels of contexts are important for the study of families and change and these include: (1) macro-level contexts, such as community characteristics and political environment which are similar for all families within a specific community; (2) familial contexts such as family structure and norms, which are similar for all members of a specific family; and (3) individual contexts, which may be unique to each member

of a family, with (4) time representing an additional source of nonindependence.

Macro-Level Context

Characteristics of community and neighborhood indicate what sorts of environmental resources and constraints exist for families. Depending upon the kind of community where families reside, family interactions may vary significantly. For instance, the comparative studies of family lives between urban area and rural area delineate some significant differences in family structure and intergenerational support system. The migration of younger generations to urban cities has made the size of social network in rural families relatively small (e.g., Ling & Rogerson, 1995; Wenger, 2001). On the other hand, rural families generally develop more extensive intergenerational support exchange than families in urban areas (e.g., Hofferth & Iceland, 1998; Silverstein, Giarrusso, & Bengtson, 2003). Also, people who grew up in a rural family are more likely to hold a "traditional" attitude toward familial support than people who grew up in urban area (e.g., Goto, 1994; Lee, Coward, & Netzer, 1994).

Ethnic and cultural compositions of the community are another important feature of the macro-level social context of family lives. For example, a study of Hispanic families in the United States shows that Hispanic elderly parents in the community with a relatively high proportion of the Hispanic population are more likely to live independently from their adult children (Burr & Mutchler, 2003).

In addition, characteristics of the sociopolitical system in the community constitute another important component of the macro-level context. The availability of public support for families such as health care services for the elderly and community support for family caregivers can either limit or promote particular types of family support exchange within and across generations (e.g., Anderson, 1977; Killian & Ganong, 2002; McDonald, 1994). The inclusion of the sociopolitical characteristics as such becomes particularly crucial in cross-national studies that compare

different types of sociopolitical structures across nations. As these examples show, the macro-level contexts consist of factors that characterize the environment of families at community level. The analysis of social environment as such indicates what sorts of structural resources and constraints exist as a condition of family interactions.

Familial Context

As for the familial context in the study of family relationships, two components particularly play an important role; one is the characteristics of the family structure and the other is the nature of family norms shared by family members. Family structure refers to the characteristics of physical familial settings such as the number of family members, living arrangement, and household characteristics. Structural components as such suggest what sorts of structural settings and resources are available for family interactions. For instance, a study conducted in the United States shows that adult children and elderly parents who have a higher level of household income tend to experience more monetary exchange but less time physically spent together (Couch, Daly, & Wolf, 1999). Another study in Belgium also reports that the lower level of socioeconomic status of the household tends to increase the frequency of family contacts (Bawin-Legros & Stassen, 2002). Also, intergenerational living arrangement such as coresidence of adult children with elderly parents tend to promote financial and emotional security of family members in need (e.g., Albrecht, Coward, & Shapiro, 1998; Aquilino, 1990; Glaser & Tomassini, 2000; Ward, Logan, & Spitze, 1992).

On the other hand, another component of the family context, the social norms shared by family members, serves as an underlying assumption of family interactions (Bawin-Legros & Stassen, 2002; Pyke, 1999). Family norms are rooted in multiple-levels of social contexts, ranging from nationally prevalent norms (e.g., Eun, 2003; Katz et al., 2003) to norms that vary among social groups within the national context (e.g., Lee et al., 1998; Pyke & Bengtson, 1996). Shared

value defines how individuals in the family should support each other (Killian & Ganong, 2002; Pyke, 1999). Family norm does not have any visible physical structure, but it constitutes an important aspect of the family structure that shapes the style of family interactions.

Individual Context

In the study of intergenerational family relationships, individual context needs to be clearly defined in terms of his/her location within the family. As Blieszner and Bedford (1996) point out, research on families and intergenerational relationships should specifically define whose perspective is examined for what aspect of family lives (e.g., Freedman, Wolf, Soldo, & Stephen, 1991). This involves not only the examination of the basic demographic characteristics of the individual but also his/her generational location in the family. For example, some studies show that the reported quality of family relationship can significantly differ depending upon the informant's generational position within the family (e.g., Aquilino, 1999; Giarrusso, Stallings, & Bengtson, 1995; Silverstein et al., 2003). Thus, the inclusion of individual familial position provides key information about the particular perspective reflected in the observed family phenomenon.

Multilevel Approach in Family Studies

One of the major methodological challenges in the study of intergenerational family relationships is to analyze the relational dynamics among various family concepts within and across the contexts. For example, Davey, Tucker, Fingerman, and Savla (2009) used a within-family model to investigate the association between recalled parental treatment and current positive and negative affect controlling for family characteristics, relationship characteristics, and individual characteristics. Available statistical methods in this context would include hierarchical linear modeling and structural equation modeling. Hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) is a method that accounts for

multilevel measurements, including both within-difference between individuals and between-difference among a set of clusters (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). This becomes particularly a useful method when examining the impacts of independent variables across multiple levels. Thus, in terms of the examination of the multilevel dynamics of family relationships, HLM enables researchers to test a variety of environmentally-nested impacts on individual outcomes.

Families come in all shapes and sizes. No research methodologist worth his or her salt would ever design families the way(s) in which they come. Family structure is confounded with family function, and families seldom have enough members to adequately identify many of the methodological questions of potential interest. HLMs are examples of random effect models. Alternatives to random effect models are available and need to be considered.

Fixed-effects models (in which each member's values on each variable are deviated from family mean values) can provide an indication of the importance of any variable which varies within a family (i.e., variables such as age and gender, but not typically of variables such as parent's gender or parent's race). One advantage of fixed-effects models is that they can be used even in contexts where the assumptions of random effect models are not met (i.e., when unobserved heterogeneity is identified or suspected).

In contrast to random effect models, which provide inferences about individuals within families, assuming they had different characteristics (i.e., generalizations within families), population-averaged models provide generalizations to individuals in the population, assuming they had different characteristics (i.e., comparable to differences between daughters and sons within a family, compared with daughters and sons in families, generally). In practice, random effects models and population-averaged effects models often yield similar parameter estimates.

On the other hand, structural equation modeling (SEM) examines the empirical fitness of the theoretical constructs with latent factors (Davey & Savla, 2010; Hox & Bechger, 1998; Maruyama, 1998). This statistical capacity of SEM allows

researchers to simultaneously analyze multiple paths of indirect effects of exogenous variables on multiple endogenous variables (Musil, Jones, & Warner, 1998). For example, Davey and Szinovacz (2004) examined the effects of husbands' and wives' retirement on each partner's marital solidarity and conflict over time. In general, each level of the contexts entails a number of concepts, many of which are difficult to be represented with a single measurement. Thus, the statistical capacity of SEM is quite beneficial for the development of the theoretical model that integrates various measurements in an organized way.

One of the best methods currently available for the multilevel analysis of intergenerational family relationships is the multilevel covariance analysis (MCA). MCA is also referred as multilevel structural equation modeling, which combines the two statistical approaches of HLM and SEM (Farmer, 2000). Some exemplary studies with MCA can be found in the studies of student performance at school (Farmer, 2000) and organizational family support at workplace (Korabik, Lero, & Ayman, 2003). These studies generally examine the multilevel environmental factors (e.g., school, neighborhood, workplace, family, etc.) and their impacts on individuals by clustering several measurements as a latent factor. Other recent applications have considered families in contexts over relatively short periods of time, such as comparing outcomes on days in which parent care is provided with days in which it is not (e.g., Savla, Almeida, Davey, & Zarit, 2008).

Conclusions

Theory and Data Continue to Lag Methods

Scholarship on the intersection of aging and the family has always been "data forward" in the sense that there is a much greater volume of empirical data than theoretical perspectives. In general, there has been little harm as a result of putting the data cart before the theory horse. However, as we look ahead, it will become increasingly important to ensure that our theoretical

frameworks are sufficiently well developed to ensure that the right kinds of data are being collected. In terms of aging and the family, although we have made good strides toward understanding families *in* contexts, we still have much more work ahead to help us understand families *as* contexts (cf. Davey et al., 2005; Szinovacz & Davey, 2008).

Data Resources for Studying Aging and the Family

Although some researchers may disagree with us in this regard, we believe that development of a shared set of data resources which can be used by many different scholars has generally aided the cause of developing a replicable and shared knowledge base about families and aging. Regardless of the extent of agreement, the success of this approach suggests that it is likely to dominate scholarship in this area for the foreseeable future. Several data sets have been of particular value over the years, and so we very briefly consider some of the strengths and limitations of each.

Health and Retirement Study/SHARE

The Health and Retirement Study (HRS, <http://hrsonline.isr.umich.edu/>) was started in 1992 with a cohort of individuals aged 51–61 years and now also includes the Asset and Health Dynamics Among the Oldest-Old (AHEAD) study, in order to represent the United States population over age 50. It now includes information from more than 30,000 individuals, with data collected biennially. Although the primary aim of the study is to provide current data on the antecedents and consequences of retirement, additional topics include constructs such as physical and cognitive functioning, family structure and transfers, demographic characteristics, and labor force participation. Additional linkages are possible between survey data and other data resources such as the National Death Index, Social Security Administration earnings and projected benefits data, and Medicare files.

The Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE, 2004, <http://www.share-project.org/>) is a multidisciplinary and cross-national panel database on health, socioeconomic status, social and family networks and includes data from more than 45,000 individuals 50 years of age or older. Baseline data represent 11 countries representing Scandinavia (Denmark and Sweden) Central Europe (Austria, France, Germany, Switzerland, Belgium, and the Netherlands), and the Mediterranean (Spain, Italy, and Greece). In 2005–2006, data were added from Israel, and two newly added EU states, Czech Republic, and Poland along with Ireland were added for the second wave of data collection (2006–2007). A third wave of data collection (2008–2009) adds retrospective life-histories.

The Nihon University Japanese Longitudinal Study of Aging (NUJLSOA, <http://www.usc.edu/dept/gero/CBPH/nujlsOA/>) is a longitudinal nationally representative survey of individuals aged 65 and older in Japan. The survey contains longitudinal data on participants who survived and returned to the study at five different points in time: in 1999, 2001, 2003, 2006, and 2008. Major aims of the study were to investigate status and change in health, as well as to evaluate the impact of implementing a long-term care insurance system on service utilization by older adults in Japan. Detailed information is also available about coresidence and use of long-term care services. Additional data are available on topics such as intergenerational exchange, living arrangements, caregiving, and labor force participation. Together, these data sets provide a powerful set of resources for family scholars interested in issues such as retirement, economics, caregiving, and health, particularly from a cross-cultural perspective.

Longitudinal Study of Generations

The Longitudinal Study of Generations (LSOG, <http://dx.doi.org/10.3886/ICPSR22100>), began in 1971 as a survey of intergenerational relations within 300 three-generation families in California. Initially, grandparents were in their 60s, parents were in their early 40s, and grandchildren were

aged 15–26 years. In 1991 the study expanded to include a fourth generation, the great-grandchildren of these same families. The LSOG allows comparisons of sets of aging parents and children at the same stage of life but during different historical periods in order to evaluate effects of social change on intergenerational solidarity or conflict across 35 years and four generations. With information on family structure, household composition, affectual solidarity and conflict, values, attitudes, behaviors, role importance, marital relationships, health and fitness, mental health and well-being, caregiving, leisure activities, and life events and concerns, the study can also evaluate effects of intergenerational relationships on individuals' well-being. There is likely no better data resource for family scholars interested in studying relationships of multiple family members over time.

Midlife Development in the United States

Sponsored by the MacArthur Midlife Research Network, a national survey of over 7,000 Americans aged 25–74 (Midlife Development in the United States (MIDUS), <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/ICPSR/series/00203>) was carried out to investigate the role of behavioral, psychological, and social factors in understanding age-related differences in physical and mental health. The original MIDUS samples (core, $N=3,487$, metropolitan over-samples, $N=757$, twins, $N=998$ pairs, and siblings, $N=950$), were followed up in 2004–2006 with support from the National Institute on Aging at ages 35–86 years. Data collection largely repeated baseline assessments (e.g., phone interview and extensive self-administered questionnaire), with additional questions in selected areas (e.g., cognitive functioning, optimism and coping, stressful life events, caregiving). In MIDUS II, an urban African American sample ($N=592$) was recruited from Milwaukee, Wisconsin for a personal interview and questionnaire paralleling the above assessments. Also administered was a modified form of the mail questionnaire, via telephone, to respondents

who did not complete a self-administered questionnaire. MIDUS provides access to a valuable set of psychological constructs which are not typically available in such scope and detail in many more sociological or economically driven surveys.

National Survey of Families and Households

The National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH, <http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/nsfh/>) was designed to provide information on numerous aspects of family life drawn from multiple disciplinary perspectives. Baseline data include a national sample of 13,007 individuals drawn from 9,637 households along with an oversampling of blacks, Puerto Ricans, Mexican Americans, single-parent families, families with stepchildren, cohabiting couples, and recently married persons. Three waves of data collection were conducted in 1987–1988, 1992–1994, and 2001–2003, and include data on a wide variety of topics such as childhood living arrangements, marital and cohabitation history, intergenerational, sibling, and marital relationships, and psychological and economic well-being. Data were collected from multiple family members. Because it was one of the first data sets made widely available to family scholars, it has contributed to a very large body of published research. The NSFH collects a wider range of data about family life than nearly all other available data sets.

Recommendations

There are numerous areas in which the theoretical and empirical body of knowledge remain insufficiently developed, and so provide fertile areas for future development. In particular, the area of sibling relationships is in need of substantial updating in ways which take full advantage of methodological advances. For example, we are learning more about adult child care networks, but existing data resources are typically insufficient to provide information about the help that siblings

provide to one another. Likewise, existing data resources are often provided from the perspective of a primary respondent, but could be substantially enhanced by better “round robin” type data.

With the expected increases in life expectancy, the time is also ripe for enhancing three- and four-generation studies. Challenges in developing and sustaining studies of this kind have been exacerbated by changes in federal and foundation funding, but can provide extremely valuable information about new and emerging family forms and functions such as flows of assistance across and through multiple generations, and how the experiences of one generation affect members of other generations. Roles for great-grandparents and great-great-grandparents also warrant further development.

These new methods also afford opportunities to better understand the daily experiences of families. Daily diary data are beginning to enhance our understanding of family processes, but there is still a great deal to be learned about design, measurement, and analysis of data of this type. It is clear that key events in the lives of families are not uniformly distributed over time. How best to track families over time in order to capture the most relevant events and experiences set against the backdrop of “ordinary” family experiences is a challenge.

Another area where data need to be strengthened is with regard to the study of ethnocultural differences in care networks. Existing data resources are heavily slanted toward collection of intra- and intergenerational data along lines of blood and marriage, rather than along kinship lines more generally. To the extent that members of the extended family and non-blood relatives may play a greater role in family relations in different ethnocultural groups, current data sets may not fully capture them.

Finally, as is true in many areas of the social sciences, different disciplines may address the same topic areas, albeit with widely divergent theories, methods, and measures. Economists have keen interest in many of the issues relevant to aging and the family, but the economics and family literatures have proceeded along largely parallel tracks. Economists bring strong

approaches to theory and analysis, but these methods alone often require stronger assumptions about families than many other social scientists would be comfortable with. What do we learn about intergenerational relationships if our analyses must be confined to unmarried older adults in order to meet stringent assumptions about the family? How best should key family variables be operationalized? Is number of children the best available instrumental variable to capture family structure? Stronger collaborations with economists have considerable promise for advancing the field, and may also point to implications than family scholars might otherwise have overlooked.

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Velma McBride Murry,
Lindsay Satterwhite Mayberry, and Cady Berkel

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

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.

V.M. Murry, PhD (✉)

Department of Human and Organizational Development,
Vanderbilt University, Peabody College, 230 Appleton
Place, Peabody Box 90, Nashville, TN 37203, USA
e-mail: velma.m.murry@Vanderbilt.Edu

L. Satterwhite Mayberry, PhD

Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN 37203, USA
e-mail: lindsay.mayberry@vanderbilt.edu

C. Berkel, PhD

Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ 85281, USA
e-mail: cady.berkel@asu.edu

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 breadwinning 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 a 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 subordination 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 explanation 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 household 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 Brighthouse 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 ecological, 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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Sexuality in Families: The (Re-) Creation of Sexual Culture

19

Katherine A. Kovalanka,
Judith L. Weiner, and Stephen T. Russell

Sexuality and family are concepts that are interconnected in multiple, complex ways (Fisher, 2004; Oswald, Blume, & Marks, 2005). Family is the context in which meanings of sexuality are initially learned: our understandings of sexuality, as well as our attitudes and values about sexuality, are influenced by our familial experiences in childhood and across the life span. Likewise, our understandings of “family” (i.e., what constitutes a “genuine” or “real” family) are grounded in our ideas and beliefs about sexuality. More concretely, many family relationships are born out of and maintained through sexual feelings and behaviors. Further, our families and our sexualities are shaped by social locations and statuses, including race, social class, age, and gender. Thus, sexuality is basic to family life; it is a

multifaceted concept with intra-psychic, interpersonal, and socio-cultural meanings rooted in family. In this chapter, we review social science literature on sexuality in family life, considering the ways that sexual culture gets created and recreated in families across generations. Our goal is to describe a “positive” vision of sexuality for families—a “sex education” that embraces sexuality as a natural, healthy dimension of personal development and family relationships over the life course. We first consider and define several key constructs that are important for understanding sexuality, and then describe the parameters of this chapter in light of our goals.

The Many Meanings of Sexuality

We begin by describing what we mean by *sexuality*. There are many dimensions of sexuality that each may have multiple meanings depending on historical time, place, culture, and an individual’s personal characteristics and experiences. These include not only behaviors, but also desire and attraction, knowledge, thoughts, and identities (DeLamater & Hyde, 2004; Mahay, Laumann, & Michaels, 2001). Sexuality-related research has primarily focused on the incidence and frequency of various sexual behaviors (DeLamater & Hyde, 2004), oftentimes leaving the meanings that people attach to these behaviors unexamined (Savin-Williams & Diamond, 2004). Savin-Williams and Diamond identify vague or undefined terminology as a crucial methodological issue in

K.A. Kovalanka, PhD (✉)
Department of Family Studies and Social Work,
Miami University, 101 McGuffey Hall,
Oxford, OH 45056, USA
e-mail: kovalanka@muohio.edu

J.L. Weiner, PhD
Department of Communication, Miami University,
148 Williams Hall, Oxford, OH 45056, USA
e-mail: weinerjl@muohio.edu

S.T. Russell, PhD
Department of Family Studies and Human Development,
Frances McClelland Institute for Children, Youth,
and Families, The University of Arizona,
P.O. Box 210033, Tucson, AZ 85721-0078, USA
e-mail: strussell@arizona.edu

adolescent sexuality research that restricts our knowledge. For example, although researchers often interpret the term “sex” to mean vaginal–penile intercourse, the meaning of sex can vary among individuals and groups of individuals, oftentimes dependent upon age, gender, and sexual identity, as well as race, ethnicity, and/or social class. Savin-Williams and Diamond note that there is no singular definition of sexual behavior among adolescents themselves; these authors make the case for the critical importance of examining the “diverse and multifaceted meanings that adolescents attach to their sexual feelings and behaviors” (p. 196). Such information is invaluable for understanding how youth develop their conceptualizations about sexuality, as well as for understanding the influence of the family in shaping those conceptualizations.

Further, sexuality does not only refer to private behaviors, emotions, cognitions, or identities of individuals or families; it is also very much a public part of social life—and consequently is a subject for social regulation (Foucault, 1990). Public institutions regulate sexuality in such a way that directly influences family life. Specifically, heterosexuality is privileged in the United States: marriage is defined by the federal and numerous state governments as being between one man and one woman; more than 1,100 federal rights, benefits, and protections that go along with marriage (U.S. General Accounting Office, 2004) are automatically bestowed upon heterosexual married couples. Government policy also plays a role in socializing sexuality by determining what youth are taught in public schools in regard to sexuality education; decades of funding for abstinence-only approaches have constrained public sexuality education to an exclusive focus on heterosexuality (Santelli et al., 2006). Thus, for the purposes of this chapter, our definition of sexuality is multifaceted. Our definition acknowledges that the various meanings associated with dimensions of sexuality are influenced by individual-level factors such as social location and status, relational factors because our partners’ sexual expectations and desires may be similar to or different from our own, as well as by institutional forces that shape (or constrain) these many dimensions of sexuality.

Sexual Socialization in Families

How does this multidimensional understanding of sexuality get transmitted within families? One of the primary functions of family is the socialization of its members, including socialization of sexuality. *Sexual socialization* is “the process through which an individual acquires an understanding of ideas, beliefs and values, shared cultural symbols, meanings and codes of conduct” regarding sexuality (Shtarkshall, Santelli, & Hirsch, 2007, p. 116). Sexual socialization is thought to occur explicitly through purposeful conversations and lessons regarding aspects of sexuality, as well as implicitly through conscious and unconscious verbal and nonverbal communication of attitudes and values (Stotzer, 2009; Townsend, 2008). Parents, who are thought to be the earliest and primary source of sexual socialization for children, send a wide variety of messages about sexuality (Lefkowitz & Stoppa, 2006). For example, through both observation and parental reactions, young children learn familial norms regarding nudity and privacy, as well as gender-specific expectations of conduct (Shtarkshall et al., 2007). Beyond childhood, families continue to influence their members’ attitudes and values related to sexuality. Although most discussions of family sexual socialization focus attention on adolescence, people continue to develop as sexual beings throughout the life span (DeLamater & Friedrich, 2002). Thus, family sexual socialization is a life-long process, creating the grounding for knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors about sexuality over the life course. Finally, sources outside the family, which may provide conflicting messages about the meanings and consequences of sexuality and sexual behaviors, must also be considered agents of sexual socialization, and family members participate in and are influenced by these forces. Family sexual socialization practices are influenced by government policy, education practices, and religion; the influence of the media also has been well documented, with a growing focus on the media’s impact on adolescent sexual socialization (Wright, 2009b). These societal influences provide the broader context within which family sexual socialization occurs.

Sexual socialization produces *sexual scripts*, the shared understandings and beliefs about appropriate, desirable, and expected sexuality-related behavior (DeLamater & Hyde, 2004). According to Gagnon and Simon (1973), these scripts exist at three levels—cultural, interpersonal, and intrapsychic—and provide “a cognitive map to the domain of the sexual” (Kimmel, 2007, p. xi). Families help shape the social norms and standards that exist at the cultural level, and which have an influence on individuals at the interpersonal and intrapsychic levels. Evidence of these norms is apparent in the traditional scripts that continue to characterize many heterosexual relationships (e.g., Seal & Ehrhardt, 2003). For example, when asked to describe a typical first date of a heterosexual couple, both women and men tend to describe similar traditionally gendered sequences of behavior, as well as roles, for women and men (Laner & Ventrone, 1998; Rose & Frieze, 1993). Thus, even individuals who reject the gendered basis for these sexual scripts or engage in behaviors that contradict them are aware of dominant sexual scripts for individual behavior. Sexual scripts, however, seem to be shifting for heterosexual women and men: studies have revealed women as initiators of sexual activity, along with men’s desire for their female partners to initiate sexual activity (Dworkin & O’Sullivan, 2007; Ortiz-Torres, Williams, & Ehrhardt, 2003). Dworkin and O’Sullivan (2007), citing Messner (1992), state that “women’s and men’s everyday interactions might not simply derive from larger cultural scenarios but might actively reproduce, contest, or shift the gender order” (p. 118). Indeed, although individuals are thought to follow traditional scripts due to the strong influence of cultural norms, individuals also have the power to deviate from these scripts and, eventually, to change the very nature of societal sexual norms.

Overview and Parameters of the Chapter

Before turning to the heart of this chapter, it is important to acknowledge that much of the prior research and thinking in the area of sexuality has

framed sexuality and sexual behavior as “risky.” Individual-level studies often approach sexuality from a framework of negative outcomes to be prevented (unwanted pregnancy; sexually transmitted infections), or in terms of sexual function and dysfunction (Russell, 2005). Much of the focus on family sexuality has emphasized the role of family socialization in preventing negative sexuality-related outcomes for youth. This literature has been reviewed elsewhere and is not our current focus; what is relevant is that the dominant frame of risk, dysfunction, and disease has overshadowed holistic, positive, or affirmative understandings of families and sexuality.

Why is the risk framework for understanding sexuality so intractable? Cultural factors, such as religious perspectives that view sexuality as “taboo” and/or “sinful” (Harris, 2010), media portrayals in which women’s bodies are objectified (Gordon, 2008), and the overriding societal view that thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that do not strictly align with heterosexuality are “abnormal” and, perhaps, “dangerous” to family life (Oswald et al., 2005) fuel the persistence of this dominant frame, which remains an obstacle to a more positive approach to sexuality. That said, we acknowledge that “risk”-perspective research can be appropriate and necessary, especially when certain groups disproportionately experience negative, sexuality-related outcomes [e.g., HIV/AIDS rates among gay men and Black Americans (Harris, 2010)] due to systemic barriers to knowledge, education, and/or treatment. However, we believe that a fundamental emphasis on more positive approaches to sexuality and sexuality education is one of several ways to address some of these negative outcomes.

In this chapter we begin with an analysis of theories and perspectives that have been central for understanding sexuality in families. A family life course perspective (Bengtson & Allen, 1993) provides a guide for understanding the sexual socialization of children and adolescents, but also of adults and the elderly, in multiple family contexts (e.g., single-parent, two-parent, or same-/different-sex couple families). Because they are statuses that shape the possibilities of the family life course, we give explicit attention to gender, culture, class, and race in our synthesis of prior work.

We consider social learning theory, symbolic interaction, and queer theory as important contributors in recent decades to understanding sexuality in families.

Following the discussion of important recent theoretical advances, we delve more deeply into questions of family sexual socialization, considering how sexuality is taught and learned in families. We then consider the sexuality expectations of family life across the life span, emphasizing the dominant expectations to be coupled and to have children. Contrasting with these dominant expectations, however, is a growing pattern: the lives of more and more people do not conform to these family sexual scripts. These alternative scripts are strategic areas of inquiry. What characterizes family sexual socialization for single adults or the aging adult population? With this background, we then consider positive sexuality development over the life course.

There are multiple issues that are beyond the scope of this review. There exists a huge research literature on sexual behavior in families: marital, cohabiting, and dating relationships (e.g., Christopher & Sprecher, 2000); the initiation, meanings, and implications of sexual behavior across the life span are beyond our focus here. There have been important advances in the literature on parent–adolescent sexual communication in recent years, particularly research on culturally distinct practices and perspectives (e.g., Kim, 2009). Other recent work has begun to consider the dynamics of sexual attraction, desire, and relationships (e.g., Diamond, 2008). Finally, a growing body of work in the last decade reminds us that “family” is not necessarily nuclear, co-residential, or even colocated; for example, the growing body of research on transnational families [i.e., families in which parents and children live in different countries (Dreby, 2006)] has pointed out implications for socialization and expectations of sexualities. Given the growing number of transnational families around the world, we predict and hope to see a growth in studies of transnational family sexuality. Lastly, we refer at times to sexual abuse, coercion, and violence throughout this chapter, topics which are crucial to discussions of family sexual socialization.

These dimensions of sexuality (i.e., “problems” or negative experiences) are defined in part by the loss of personal agency, as well as imbalances of power based on gender, race, class, age, and other social location factors. Because our focus is on a positive vision of sexuality in families, we do not attempt to review literatures on problems in sexuality; the issues are beyond our scope and we could not possibly do them justice here.

Theoretical Perspectives on Sexual Socialization in Families

A host of theories have offered different lenses through which researchers have studied and sought to understand human sexuality. A life course perspective frames this chapter (Bengtson & Allen, 1993); we emphasize the importance of context, process, and meaning when examining sexual socialization across the life span. More specifically, a life course perspective prompts the examination of intergenerational transmission of family values, beliefs, and expectations in regard to sexuality (Bengtson & Allen). Further, this perspective highlights the importance of interpreting experiences in the context of historical time and as linked to the lives of others who are close to them (Elder & Shanahan, 2006). That is, generational differences in individual and societal attitudes in regard to sexuality are thought to impact the sexual socialization of family members. Moreover, sexual development continues across the life span, as family members continue to have an influence on each other as they each interpret (and re-interpret) their own sexualities and expectations for their sexual behavior throughout their lives.

When considering sexual socialization within families, then, we must look not only at childhood and adolescence but also at adulthood, and ask the question: How does the sexual socialization process continue throughout family members’ lives? Importantly, a life course perspective of sexuality is not so rigid as to specify normative progressions through set developmental stages that do not allow for transgressions from the norm (Bengtson & Allen, 1993; Diamond, Savin-Williams, &

Dube, 1999). Thus, in this chapter, we take a life course perspective when examining sexual socialization in families, and ask: What messages do individuals receive across the life span about familial and larger social norms in regard to sexuality, and how do they uphold or resist these expectations at different stages of their lives? First, however, we will briefly discuss other prominent theories that have been utilized in the study of sexuality (for a more detailed discussion, see DeLamater & Hyde, 2004).

Biology vs. Society

Historically, the theoretical study of sexuality—especially sexual orientation development—has fallen into one of two camps: biological or social (DeLamater & Hyde, 2004; Tolman & Diamond, 2001). Sociobiology (Symons, 1979) and evolutionary (Buss & Schmitt, 1993) theories focus on biological, or “natural,” drives or determinants of sexuality. Those firmly grounded in this camp tend to attribute sexual thoughts, feelings, and behaviors to essential qualities with which a child is born, and which result from human adaptations to mating challenges. For example, according to sexual strategies theory, men generally have stronger desires than women to engage in multiple, short-term sexual relationships due to the historical and adaptive imperative for men to “spread their seed” and ensure the procreative continuation of the species (Buss & Schmitt; Schmitt, Shackelford, & Buss, 2001).

On the other hand, a sociological or constructionist perspective focuses on the importance of cultural norms in regard to sexuality that are learned (DeLamater, 1987a). From this perspective, people are not “hard-wired” to think, feel, or behave in certain sexual ways but are taught from a very early age, by family, cultural group, religion, government, etc., what is “appropriate” for their gender. For example, script theory and role theory point to the cultural norms that shape interactions and expectations when it comes to sexual behavior (DeLamater, 1987b; DeLamater & Hyde, 2004). To continue with the example of sexual reproduction strategies, script and role

theorists would look to social forces that have taught men that they should seek and initiate short-term sexual encounters, and women that they should not. Individuals are thought to be socialized to behave in certain ways (i.e., to “follow a script”) in particular situations and as holders of distinct positions (e.g., eligible bachelor, single female; for more detailed discussions of script theory and role theory in relation to sexuality, see DeLamater & Hyde; Laumann, Gagnon, Michael, & Michaels, 2005; Oliver & Hyde, 1993).

Neither the biological nor the social camp alone can account for all of the variations that exist among people in regard to sexuality. Diamond (2008) elaborates on and critiques this debate between “die-hard” theorists on either side, emphasizing the importance of each perspective and the need to consider both biological and social determinants to truly understand the complexities of sexuality. Indeed, as theorists acknowledged the limitations of each polarized camp, more integrative “biosocial” perspectives emerged (e.g., Kenrick & Trost, 1987). We also take the perspective that it is important to consider both biological and social factors when considering sexuality (DeLamater & Hyde, 2004; Trost & Filsinger, 1993); however, we do focus more heavily in this chapter on the cultural, or “learned,” aspects of sexuality, given that our primary focus is on sexual socialization and the re-creation of sexual culture in families. Below we consider the ways that well-known theories—social learning theory, symbolic interaction, and queer theory—have been utilized in the study of sexuality.

Social Learning Theory

We first turn to social learning theory, also known as modeling or observational learning, given our focus for this chapter is on sexual socialization in families. Social learning theory combines elements of operant conditioning and social cognition (Bandura, 1986; Rotter, 1954, 1982); from this perspective it is assumed that people are goal-oriented, social beings who are aware of, and can be influenced by, their environment

(Hogben & Byrne, 1998). Behavior is thought to be strengthened and sustained through actual or anticipated positive reinforcement (i.e., reward) and/or enhanced self-efficacy, as well as avoidance of negative reinforcement (i.e., punishment), or weakened by aversive stimuli or loss of reward. Social cognitions mediate the cues individuals receive from their environments; thus, the same cue can be interpreted differently by different people (Mischel, 1973). Although social learning theorists may acknowledge aspects of sexuality as innate, most “believe in the powerful reinforcing value of sexuality and sexuality-related variables at all ages, (and) tend to dismiss the notion of sexuality as an exogenous force such as a drive” (Hogben & Byrne, 1998, p. 59).

Hogben and Byrne (1998) noted four areas of human sexuality research in which social learning theory has been most often applied: sexuality development, adolescent sexuality and contraceptive use, health-related sexual behavior, and coercive sexual behavior. Research utilizing social learning theory in the examination of the latter three areas has tended to focus on the reduction of undesirable behaviors/outcomes, such as teen pregnancy (e.g., Franklin & Corcoran, 2000), high-risk sexual behaviors associated with sexually transmitted infections (e.g., Nangle & Hansen, 1998; Paul, Catania, Pollack, & Stall, 2001), and dating violence (e.g., Christopher, Madura, & Weaver, 1998; O’Keefe & Treister, 1998). Social learning theory is known more, however, for its application to sexuality development, namely sex-typed gender role development (e.g., Bandura, 1977; Mischel, 1966). Through the processes of differential reinforcement and modeling, children learn sex-typed behavior from parents, as well as from the many observations children make of “typical” or “appropriate” male and female behavior inside and outside their families (Perry & Bussey, 1979). Even very young children are aware of and influenced by gender role stereotypes (Stern & Karraker, 1989), as well as the anticipated or actual reinforcement they receive for adherence to or violation of gender stereotypical behavior. Because families are one of the first environments where children learn which behaviors are rewarding or punishing, the

family serves as an important social group of influence in this regard.

Although a classic interpretation of social learning theory would emphasize a child’s imitation of a same-gender parent’s behavior, later versions of the theory have recognized the importance of multiple influences, including extra-familial forces (Perry & Bussey, 1979). Thus, children observe and learn aspects of sexuality not only from their parents but also from other family members, teachers, peers, media, etc. This would pertain to children’s development of sexual orientation identity as well. For example, although it is a commonly held belief that lesbian and gay parents are more likely than heterosexual parents to raise children who identify as lesbian or gay themselves (Tasker & Golombok, 1997), research has not, as of yet, substantiated this claim. Studies have found that the vast majority of youth/adults with lesbian/gay parents identify as heterosexual, and are similar to the offspring of heterosexual parents in regard to same-sex attraction (Bailey, Bobrow, Wolfe, & Mikach, 1995; Gottman, 1990; Tasker & Golombok, 1997; Wainright, Russell, & Patterson, 2004).

A social learning perspective, however, would also prompt us to imagine that children growing up in lesbian- or gay-parent households would hold less stereotypical views about gender-role behavior than children with heterosexual parents, and might be less likely to be discouraged from entering into same-sex intimate relationships. Indeed, as a result, we could postulate that children with lesbian and gay parents would be more open to, or likely to consider, the option of having same-sex intimate partners (Tasker & Golombok, 1997). Research has substantiated these hypotheses: studies have found, for example, that children of lesbian mothers tend to hold less traditional gendered role attitudes than the children of heterosexual parents (Green, Mandel, Hotvedt, Gray, & Smith, 1986; Sutfin, Fulcher, Bowles, & Patterson, 2008). Further, Tasker and Golombok found no significant differences between young adults of lesbian mothers and young adults with heterosexual mothers with respect to sexual identity or experiences of same-sex sexual attraction; however, the young adults

from lesbian families were more likely to have considered the possibility of having a same-sex relationship and to have actually been involved in a same-sex relationship. In addition, Goldberg (2007) reported in her qualitative study of adults with lesbian, gay, or bisexual (LGB) parents that some participants felt that growing up with a non-heterosexual parent led them to develop “less rigid and more flexible notions and ideas about sexuality” (p. 557). These findings are consistent with social learning theory, in that having one or more LGB parents appeared to broaden the range of acceptable options for these individuals, in terms of the types of sexual relationships they considered possible for themselves (Tasker & Golombok, 1997).

Social learning theory, like psychoanalytic (Chodorow, 1978) and cognitive (Bem, 1981) theories of gender development, has been criticized for treating gender (and, indeed, sexuality) identity as a stable characteristic that forms in childhood and remains static throughout adulthood (Connell, 1987; Kimmel, 2000). Lack of attention to issues of power and institutional forces in society is cited as additional limitations of these theories (Connell, 1987; Kimmel, 2000). We turn now to symbolic interactionism, and then queer theory, which address some of these shortcomings.

Symbolic Interaction Theory

The symbolic interactionist perspective—credited by some as an early source of constructionism (Plummer, 2007) and queer theory (Epstein, 1996)—focuses on individuals’ use of symbols and how the meanings of various symbols emerge out of social interaction (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993; Stryker, 2008). More specifically, the core concepts of symbolic interactionism include meaning, language, and thought, which lead to the creation of a person’s sense of self, or identity, and socialization into a larger community. According to Mead (1934), identities are critical in that they help people define and frame interaction by supplying shared meanings for behaviors and situations. Mead also posited that our symbols (i.e., words) are defined behaviorally. In

other words, as social actors, our world is mediated, as well as, created by symbols. The meanings attached to symbols (e.g., sex, sexuality, heterosexuality, bisexuality, marriage, “hooking up”) are created and *changed* through the process of social interaction.

Talk/language use is the quintessential form of symbolic interaction and is the process through which individuals gain their identities and construct meanings. Gecas and Libby (1976) examined the use of sexual language and how linguistic choices convey sexual attitudes and values. Language is rarely neutral; words have connotative and denotative meanings. Hence, the language used to talk about various sexual acts reveals different values or attitudes toward certain behaviors. Additionally, language use can vary based on individuals’ gender, social class, educational level, religious affiliation, etc., all of which influence understanding and meaning. Further, language use is intricately tied to our social scripts. Individuals learn the meanings of words and the labels attached to events as part of the learning process associated with social and institutionalized scripts (Mead, 1934). Even before children are able to master spoken language, they are taught various social scripts through interaction. More specifically, children learn to *do gender* (West & Zimmerman, 1987) as they interact with their parents/guardians, siblings, peers, etc. There are scripts of appropriate “male” and “female” behavior that are revealed within social contexts. In addition to the spoken word, *how* information is conveyed cannot be ignored. Nonverbal communication is a powerful component of social interaction. Lefkowitz and Stoppa (2006) noted parents’ nonverbal messages about sexuality may contradict the verbal message (i.e., conversations around sexuality are embarrassing and/or uncomfortable). Hence, symbolic interactionism offers a useful framework to examine how children develop/create sexual identities and attitudes toward sexuality.

Lastly, symbolic interactionism is often mentioned as a useful tool to study how sexual scripts (Cahill, 1983) and sexual identities and the sense of self (Longmore, 1998; Weis, 1998) are created and maintained through social interaction.

According to Plummer (2007), as “the biological and the social interact; chance, choice, and determination interact; childhood learning and adult life interact; symbols and the material worlds interact,” symbolic interactionism is a “hands-on ‘down-to-earth’ empirical approach” that can embrace the “messiness” of people’s realities (pp. 22–23).

Queer Theory

Queer theory, stemming from symbolic interaction and feminist theories, is a framework that has been used to deconstruct categories of gender, sexuality, and family (Epstein, 1996; Oswald et al., 2005). The unique contribution of queer theory is the unit of analysis: heteronormativity (Oswald, Kivalanka, Blume, & Berkowitz 2009). Queer theorists have argued for a more critical and nuanced examination of heteronormativity as an ideology that treats traditional gender roles, heterosexuality, and the nuclear, biologically related family as normative (Oswald et al.). Further, queer theorists focus on the role of power in the perpetuation of false binaries that exist in relation to gender, sexuality, and family (i.e., male/female, homosexual/heterosexual, and genuine/pseudo families), and prompt us to question who benefits from maintenance of the status quo. For example, a critical analysis of the discrete groupings that are used to categorize sexual identities urges us to consider what is meant by *homosexual* and *heterosexual* (Berkowitz, 2009). It would also prompt examination of identities and relationships, such as bisexuality,¹ asexuality,² and polyamory,³ that exist—yet often remain invisible—outside (or within) the standard binary structure. Thus, “queering” refers to ideas, perspectives, and behaviors that resist heteronor-

mativity by contesting gender, sexuality, and/or family binaries (Oswald et al., 2005).

Queer theory has the capacity to reveal the complexity of gender, sexuality, and family relations by prompting researchers to investigate how heteronormativity is both upheld and resisted by everyone (Oswald et al., 2009). For example, a queer theoretical approach urges against a reductionist perspective that would view all lesbian- and gay-parent families as intentionally challenging traditional notions of gender, sexuality, and family (Goldberg, 2010). Indeed, Goldberg noted: “Just as it is very difficult to generalize a particular descriptor or statement to all heterosexual parents or heterosexual-parent families, it makes little sense to describe all lesbian- and gay-parent families as either assimilationist or radical” (p. 11). Further, a person or a family may simultaneously uphold *and* resist heteronormativity in different ways (Goldberg). For example, Kivalanka and Goldberg (2009) interviewed lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) young adults with lesbian/bisexual mothers and found that although the mothers resisted heteronormativity through their own embodiment of queer parenting, some of them also upheld heteronormativity with reactions to their children’s disclosures such as: “I wish you weren’t gay.” Thus, queer theory demands that the limitations of existing perspectives be critically analyzed, and also allows for the development of new perspectives and ways of thinking (Goldberg, 2007).

Keeping these theoretical groundings in mind, we now turn to the heart of the chapter to consider how sexual socialization in families—the creation and re-creation of sexual culture—occurs across the life span. We begin with a discussion of sexual socialization in childhood and adolescence.

¹*Bisexuality* refers to an identity of someone who is attracted (sexually, emotionally, and/or romantically) to both men and women (Rust, 2001).

²*Asexuality* refers to an identity and/or the experience of someone who does not experience sexual attraction or desire (Scherrer, 2008).

³*Polyamory* refers to a relationship orientation that assumes “it is possible to maintain multiple love relationships and desirable to be open and honest within these” (Barker, 2005, p. 76).

Sexual Socialization of Children and Youth: What Do Families Teach and How Do They Teach It?

Sexual socialization of children and youth begins in family life; sexual socialization practices and intentions become a foundation for understandings and enactments of sexualities for the rest of

one's life. These socialization messages are sent explicitly through direct, purposeful teachings, but also implicitly or indirectly through conscious and unconscious verbal as well as nonverbal communication of sexual attitudes, values, and expectations. This diversity in family sexual socialization of children is often rooted in cultural and ethnic group differences. In this section we consider childhood sexual socialization, emphasizing gender socialization because it greatly overlaps with, and has received far more attention than, sexual socialization in childhood. We then examine family sexual socialization in adolescence, including the intersections of parent and child gender and communication, and recent research on culturally distinctive socialization practices.

Sexual and Gender Socialization in Childhood

Although parents are generally thought to be the earliest and primary source of sexual socialization during early childhood (Lefkowitz & Stoppa, 2006), little research exists beyond the gender development literature on the family sexual socialization of young children. This is likely due to the fact that preadolescent children are rarely thought of in relation to sexuality.⁴ It has been noted, however, that although children do not generally engage in sexual intercourse until later developmental stages and are not "sexual" in the same way as adolescents or adults, even very young children are sexual beings who are exposed to sexual messages from family and society (Christopher, 2001). For example, parents' values and beliefs about sexuality are thought to influence their children's values and beliefs in this regard (Lefkowitz & Stoppa, 2006). A recent study by Martin (2009) explored how heterosexuality is reproduced and normalized in families with very young children. Martin found that most of the mothers in her study assumed their preschool children to be heterosexual, described to their children adult loving relationships as exclusively hetero-

sexual, and did not discuss with their children the existence of non-heterosexual sexual orientations. Thus, it seems that many parents of young children begin laying the foundation for the perpetuation of heteronormativity (Martin). Conversely, another recent study found that heterosexual young adults who were deemed to have positive attitudes toward LGB people identified early normalizing experiences in childhood (e.g., their heterosexual parents making their acceptance of LGB people known to their children from an early age, including their disapproval of heterosexism and homophobia⁵) as a key feature of their attitude formation (Stotzer, 2009). Indeed, Christopher (2001) asserted that "children do not enter into adolescence with a blank sexual slate" (p. 11).

As is true of the larger literature on sexual socialization, the topic of childhood sexuality is typically approached from a perspective of risk. According to Fisher's (2004) review, the few existing studies in this area have focused primarily on the influence of family environmental factors, including witnessing parental sexual behavior, family nudity, and co-sleeping, on children's later sexual attitudes and behaviors. Fisher concluded that these studies have provided little evidence for the common claim that such experiences are detrimental to children's adjustment. As a result of the relative inattention to childhood sexuality, little research exists on normative, healthy aspects of children's sexuality, such as engagement in activities that provide them with physical pleasure (e.g., masturbation) and information-seeking regarding sexual topics (Christopher, 2001⁶; for exceptions, see Bancroft, 2003; Sandfort & Rademakers, 2000).

⁵*Heterosexism* is defined as "an ideological system that denies, denigrates, and stigmatizes any non-heterosexual form of behavior, identity, relationship, or community" (Herek, 1992, p. 89); *homophobia* has been defined as the negative emotions targeted at lesbian and gay individuals, their children, or their families and stems from heterosexism (Sears, 1992).

⁶A consequence of this inattention to childhood sexuality is a juggernaut for research: there are few empirical examples to follow, few well-documented methodologies for appropriate approaches, and persistent aversion from scientific authorities (funders; human subjects review boards) that undermine support for further research (O'Sullivan, 2003).

⁴A notable exception is research on childhood sexual abuse (e.g., see Fisher, 2004).

The majority of research related to young children's sexuality focuses on gender development. Although sexuality and gender are typically acknowledged as interrelated, they "have remained largely distinctive fields of inquiry" (Kitzinger, 2001, p. 272)—a divide we do not intend to perpetuate. Sexual socialization is closely tied to gender socialization, for example, in that how gender is defined and expressed within families contributes to children's ideas and beliefs about sexuality. Parents and other family members, along with extra-familial influences, play a primary role in influencing children's ideas about gender and the behaviors that are "appropriately" associated with being female or being male. Children learn at a very early age that women are expected to marry men, and vice versa (Martin, 2009), and that all women should be nurturing caregivers of babies. These concepts and constructs situate the roots of sexuality in the context of gendered family life. Although a thorough review of the gender development literature is beyond the scope of this chapter, some key points are necessarily highlighted here (see Powlishta, Sen, Serbin, Poulin-Dubois, & Eichstedt, 2001, for a more extensive discussion).

Powlishta et al. (2001) provided a review of the literature on gender development from infancy through middle childhood. According to their review, parents' attitudes about gender roles, as well as their personality characteristics, play a role in influencing children's gendered attitudes, preferences, and behaviors. That is, children who live in "nonconventional" households in regard to gender roles exhibit less traditionally gendered attitudes and behaviors than children who live in "conventional" households (p. 129). Likewise, more traditional parental gender-role socialization practices are associated with less flexible gendered attitudes and preferences in children. Gender socialization begins early, such that even toddlers have some knowledge of gender stereotypes in relation to many common activities, such as caring for children. By the time children are 5 years old, they have broadened their stereotypes to include roles and traits, such that being strong, loud, hard, and

powerful are among traits associated with males, and being weak, quiet, soft, and helpless are among traits associated with females. Powlishta et al. report group differences in gender socialization relative to socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, and family structure. In general, children's higher socioeconomic status tends to be associated with less traditional gender-related attitudes and behaviors, while African American children seem to exhibit less stereotypically gendered behavior than European American children. Finally, boys living with single mothers have been found to display less traditional gender roles than do boys living in homes with fathers present. Consistent with Powlishta et al.'s review, a recent study found that lesbian mothers and their children held less traditional gender role attitudes than heterosexual parents and their children (Sutfin et al., 2008). Gender socialization in childhood sets the stage for sexuality development and socialization in adolescence and beyond.

Sexual Socialization in Adolescence

Sexual socialization in the adolescent years has received much more attention in the social science literature. Indeed, research has typically treated early adolescence (i.e., puberty) as the "starting point of sexual development" (Savin-Williams & Diamond, 2004, p. 191). The majority of research—and, thus, our focus—has been on parental influences on the sexual socialization of youth. Undoubtedly, other factors, namely peers and media, are also important sources of influence on adolescents' sexuality-related behavior, attitudes, and beliefs. Indeed, there is some evidence that youth may turn to or rely on peers and media more frequently than parents for information about sexuality (Heisler, 2005; Sutton, Brown, Wilson, & Klein, 2002 as cited in Wright, 2009b). Parents, however, may be able to assist youth in interpreting the sexuality-related messages received from these various sources, while also sharing their own perspectives (Lefkowitz & Stoppa, 2006). Other family members, including

siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and fictive kin, also play a role in this regard, acting as potentially important role models and/or sources of information. Fisher (2004) reviewed the sparse literature on siblings' roles in sexual socialization of youth in the family, and found some evidence to support the notion that older siblings may influence the sexual behavior of younger sisters and brothers. Fisher reported that younger siblings tend to have sex at earlier ages than older siblings, and younger sisters with older sisters who get pregnant in adolescence are more likely to get pregnant themselves, and to hold permissive values regarding nonmarital adolescent childbearing. These few studies seem to be consistent with the "risk" focus of most adolescent sexuality research; thus, studies examining how siblings serve as positive role models for one another and, especially, as confidantes, who offer support and guidance, would be highly beneficial to a discussion of positive sexual socialization in families.

In terms of familial influence on adolescent sexuality, researchers have primarily focused on: (a) explicit socialization practices, namely the discussions between parents and their adolescent children about sexuality, and (b) family correlates of adolescent sexual behavior, such as family structure, socio-economic status, and race/ethnicity (Fisher, 2004). Thus, we know that family sexual socialization differs for single-parent compared to two-parent families. For example, youth with single parents may be confronted with their parents' sexuality if their parents are dating, while children in two-parent families witness parents showing affection to each other (or not) and, thus, implicitly learn about adult sexual relationships (Lefkowitz & Stoppa, 2006). Further, there may be social class and ethnic/cultural group differences in the ways families socialize adolescents regarding sexuality. In addition, the sexual socialization of adolescents is based in a complex interplay between family role (parent and child) and gender (mother/father; daughter/son). These dynamics are a backdrop for family sexual socialization, which we discuss below, considering the distinctive nature of these processes across culture and social classes.

Parent-Adolescent Communication About Sexuality

Much of the research on adolescent sexual socialization in families has focused on direct parent-adolescent communication about sexuality. This is one area for which there is a robust body of research (Fisher, 2004). It is clear from the research on family sexual communication that many parents and youth (at least in the United States) are generally uncomfortable discussing sexual topics with one other (Lefkowitz & Espinosa-Hernandez, 2007). Indeed, fear of embarrassment was cited by both mothers and adolescents as a reason for their lack of communication about sexuality (Jaccard, Dittus, & Gordon, 2000). Certain sexuality-related topics may be particularly taboo; for example, studies have found that parents rarely discuss sexual desire or pleasure with their adolescent children (Lefkowitz & Stoppa, 2006). Some research has found that Black/African American parents are more likely to discuss sex-related information with their children than parents from other racial/ethnic groups (Fisher, 2004; Sprecher, Harris, & Meyers, 2008), while higher family social class seems to be associated with more extensive sex education between parents and adolescents (Sprecher et al.).

Mothers seem to engage their children in sexuality-related communication more often than fathers (Lefkowitz & Stoppa, 2006; Sprecher et al., 2008); certainly, more research has focused on mother-child communication than father-child communication in this regard. According to Lefkowitz and Stoppa's (2006) review of the literature, the most frequently discussed sexuality-related topics between mothers and adolescents were STDs and AIDS, dating and sexual behavior, pregnancy, abstinence, and menstruation. Although studies have shown conflicting results in associations between frequency of mother-adolescent discussions of sex and adolescent sexual behavior, it seems that more extensive sex-related communication has been associated with reduced frequency of intercourse and unprotected sex among adolescents (Lefkowitz & Stoppa). Further, group differences by ethnicity have been explored in regard to mother-child communication; one study reported that Latina

American mothers dominated sexuality-related conversations with their adolescent children more than European American mothers, perhaps due to a cultural difference whereby Hispanics are more likely than non-Hispanics to expect parents to be directive and children to be obedient (Lefkowitz, Romo, Corona, Au, & Sigman, 2000). Lastly, studies exploring how lesbian mothers teach their children about sexuality-related topics reported that lesbian participants aimed to educate their children regarding all aspects of sexuality, including options beyond heterosexuality, and to provide an open atmosphere in which to discuss such topics (Gabb, 2004; Mitchell, 1998).

Although most studies have focused on mothers as the primary sources of direct sexuality communication between parents and adolescents, studies have also included fathers in this regard. A recent review of 49 empirical studies of father-child sexual communication (Wright, 2009a) concluded that fathers are more likely to engage in sexual communication with sons than daughters, and that Black and Latino fathers engage in more sexual communication than do Whites. Social class was also found to be positively correlated with sexual communication, although less educated fathers may be more likely to discuss some topics (e.g., how to prevent pregnancy) compared to more educated fathers. In terms of influence, father-child communication about sexuality is associated both with children's knowledge about sexuality, and children's beliefs that they can communicate with partners about sexuality (Wright).

A promising development in recent years has been growing attention to family sexual socialization practices that do not involve direct verbal communication, and the degree to which sexual values and indirect communication practices are rooted in deeper ethnic or cultural values. This work has come largely from studies of Latino families (e.g., Lefkowitz et al., 2000), but recent work on Asian American families also points to important cultural differences in communication patterns that are relevant for understanding family sexual socialization (in all families). The body of research on parent-adolescent discussions

about sexuality is based largely on studies of European-American families, for whom direct verbal communication is a dominant cultural feature. However, scholars have pointed out that in collectivist or interdependent (as compared to individualist) cultures, the meanings derived from communication are often based in the physical context, external cues, and social relationships of the communicators (Gudykunst, 1998). This "high context" communication may be non-verbal and rely on indirect messages to communicate meaning. Thus, in a recent study of Asian American women's experiences of family sexual socialization, most women emphatically reported that their parents did not speak to them about sexuality, yet perceived clear, consistent messages about their parents' values and expectations for their sexual behavior through nonverbal and indirect cues (Kim, 2009). These Asian American women clearly perceived the sexual socialization goals of their parents through gossip, restricted social activities, and closely monitored behavior. When direct communication did occur, its purpose was not perceived to be for education, but for probing and monitoring daughters' behavior (Kim).

Such high context communication is rooted in several cultural factors, including the hierarchical nature of social relationships, particularly family relationships, and cultural beliefs about gender and sexuality. For example, in many Asian cultures, a strongly held taboo against recreational sexual activity, particularly for unmarried women, is coupled with a concern for "saving face" or remaining in good social standing. As a result there are strong motives for communicating expectations for daughter's sexual conduct, even in the context of pressure to avoid direct discussion (Kim, 2009). Not surprisingly then, in spite of the fact that Asian American women report clear sexual socialization messages from their parents (Kim), a recent study showed that mothers' reports of mother-child sexual communication were an important predictor of noncoital sexual activity for European American but not Asian American adolescents (Lam, Russell, & Leong, 2008).

Gender and Racial Expectations, Stereotypes, and Double Standards

As previously noted, prior research suggests that children and adolescents may be more likely to engage in communication about sexual issues with their mothers than their fathers (Byers, Sears, & Weaver, 2008). Meanwhile, parents—especially mothers—seem more likely to talk with their daughters about sexual topics than their sons (Byers et al.; Raffaelli, Bogenschneider, & Flood, 1998). Together, these processes perpetuate a gendered sexual socialization begun in childhood that sets the stage for the sexual double standard: adolescent girls are raised to be the gatekeepers of sex and sexuality, while adolescent boys, in their comparative lack of explicit family sexual socialization, learn expectations for their sexual agency through pervasive messages of hegemonic masculinity, both at home and in the larger society (Crawford & Popp, 2003). Indeed, parents may have different dating rules for their daughters than their sons, thereby allowing boys more sexual freedom than girls (Lefkowitz & Stoppa, 2006). For some Latino parents, for example, persistent concerns about girls' innocence or purity are often based on concerns for the reputation of the family (Raffaelli & Ontai, 2001). These cultural beliefs may lead some Latino families to engage in more direct messages about sexual expectations for Latina girls (Raffaelli & Green, 2003) or to restrict daughters' behavior, particularly regarding socializing with boys (Raffaelli & Ontai, 2001).

In general, girls of most racial and ethnic backgrounds receive societal messages that they should make themselves attractive to men but be passive and/or in control of their own sexual desire (Reid & Bing, 2000), while boys are socialized to actively respond to their (expected) heterosexual sexual desires by "getting girls" (Pascoe, 2007, p. 23). This sexual double-standard may be one reason why young women are more likely to report feelings of guilt after first sexual intercourse, while young men are more likely to report feelings of pleasure (Sprecher, Barbee, & Schwartz, 1995). College women who recalled that their parents endorsed the messages that men are sex-driven and women are the gatekeepers of sex reported their first coital experience as "less

loving" than those who did not recall their parents endorsing such sentiments (Smiler, Ward, Caruthers, & Merriwether, 2005). Conversely, college women who reported receiving parental messages pertaining to sexual freedom, including the benefits of sexual exploration, described their first coital experience as more positive and empowering (Smiler et al.). The sexual double-standard, meanwhile, also has been implicated as a primary contributing factor in the perpetuation of sexual harassment and dating violence among adolescents (Tolman, Spencer, Rosen-Reynoso, & Porche, 2003).

When considering gendered sexual socialization, it is necessary to analyze the intersections of gender sexual stereotypes with those based on race and/or ethnicity. The majority of scholarship in this regard has focused on girls of various racial/ethnic backgrounds, as opposed to boys, perhaps because girls are thought to be especially influenced by (sometimes conflicting) societal messages and influences (Tolman & Diamond, 2001). Stereotypes, or cultural stories, of the sexual natures of girls are imbued with racist and classist notions of "good" vs. "bad" girls (Reid & Bing, 2000). Tolman (1996) described the myths that exist in society about White girls—especially White middle to upper class girls—being "good" or "ideal" girls in regard to sexual virtue, while poor girls and girls of color (i.e., "urban girls") are viewed as naturally promiscuous and dangerous. Parents may play an important role in helping girls to resist these stereotypes; for example, African American mothers have been found to provide their daughters with alternative notions of femininity and female sexuality (Taylor, Gilligan, & Sullivan, 1995). Interestingly, however, as Tolman and Diamond (2001) note, research in the area of "risky" adolescent sexual behavior has reflected dominant sexual narratives: studies have focused disproportionately on girls, especially girls from poor families and girls of color. Conversely, the majority of studies on sexual socialization in adolescence have been undertaken with (presumably) heterosexual parents and their heterosexual children; thus, we turn now to a brief discussion of sexual orientation identity as a factor to be considered in the sexual socialization of youth.

Sexual Orientation Identity and Family Sexual Socialization

Individuals in our society are generally presumed to be heterosexual unless they “come out” otherwise (Oswald et al., 2005). Thus, most families tend to both implicitly and explicitly share their expectations that youth will experience heterosexual attractions, take on heterosexual identities, and pursue heterosexual relationships (Martin, 2009). In response to these assumptions, a new area of inquiry has developed in the area of family sexual socialization: studies of sexual identity. These studies focus on the sexual socialization in families where parents are sexual minorities (LGBTQ), in families where children are LGBTQ, or in a few studies, families where both parents and children are LGBTQ.

Although parental sexual identity is generally not a focus of inquiry in studies of adolescent sexuality (Lefkowitz & Stoppa, 2006), studies of the sexual orientation identity of youth with lesbian and gay parents have often been undertaken in the interest of determining whether these children are more likely to identify as non-heterosexual than children of heterosexual parents. As previously noted, existing research (much of which relies on non-random sampling methods) suggests that lesbian and gay parents are no more likely than heterosexual parents to raise lesbian- and gay-identified children.⁷ Most youth and adults with lesbian and gay parents identify as heterosexual, and do not appear to be different from youth/adults with heterosexual parents in regard to experiences of same-sex attraction (Bailey et al., 1995; Gottman, 1990; Tasker & Golombok, 1997; Wainright et al., 2004). Tasker and Golombok’s (1997) longitudinal study, however, revealed complex findings regarding the sexuality of adults with lesbian parents. Although the young adults with lesbian mothers were similar to the young adults with heterosexual mothers, the young adults from lesbian families were more

likely to have considered the possibility of having a same-sex relationship and to have actually been involved in a same-sex relationship. Thus, having non-heterosexual parents may, to some extent, “queer” children’s notions of sexuality and gender in that these children are aware of possibilities for themselves beyond heterosexuality.

Children of lesbian and gay parents—at the very least, those of whom come to identify as LGBTQ themselves—may benefit from an early understanding of non-heterosexual relationships. For example, some participants in Kovalanka and Goldberg’s (2009) study of “second generation” youth (i.e., LGBTQ youth with LGBTQ parents) reported that, although they did not feel that there was a causal relationship between their parents’ sexual identities and their own, they believed that having non-heterosexual parents had given them broader conceptualizations of potential sexual/gender identity options. In addition, some felt they discovered their non-heterosexual and non-gender-conforming identities earlier than they might have if they had been raised by heterosexual parents. These data suggest that some LGBTQ youth with LGBTQ parents may recognize their sexual/gender identities sooner as a function of their unique familial context, which may in turn contribute to a less arduous and lengthy identity formation process than is often reported in the LGBTQ youth literature (Morrow, 2004; Savin-Williams, 1996).

Although it may be more obvious and salient for lesbian and gay parents to consciously and positively address variations in sexual identities and behaviors (Mitchell, 1998), it could be beneficial for all parents to provide their children with such information. Indeed, it is common for LGBTQ youth with heterosexual parents to fear rejection upon coming out to their parents (Savin-Williams, 1996) and to experience feelings of isolation (Williams, Connolly, Pepler, & Craig, 2005). In fact, a recent study documents the dramatic role of parents’ attitudes and behaviors regarding their adolescent children’s LGBTQ status (Ryan, Huebner, Diaz, & Sanches, 2009); LGBTQ young adults’ reports of parental rejection during adolescence were strongly linked to mental and behavioral health risk several years

⁷Until large, population-based studies that intentionally include children of both heterosexual and same-sex parents are available, it will be impossible to draw definitive conclusions about whether lesbian/gay parents are more likely than heterosexual parents to have lesbian/gay children.

later. Although these studies do not tap direct family sexual socialization or communication, parental rejection of a child's LGBTQ status or identity is a clear socializing message about sexual and family values.

Sexual Socialization in Adulthood

Sexual development carries on throughout our entire lives (DeLamater & Friedrich, 2002). Likewise, sexual socialization also continues across the life span such that individuals continue to influence and be influenced by others. Life course, social learning, and symbolic interactionist theories tell us that what we learned about sexuality as youth carries over into our adult lives. We also receive messages about sexuality regarding each adult life stage we enter. Families continue to play a role in sexual socialization to varying degrees, for example, by implicitly and explicitly sharing their expectations regarding marriage and parenthood. We also influence others' expectations of us as adult sexual beings in different life stages by how we live our lives and whether we uphold or resist those expectations. The sexual socialization that takes place in adulthood varies across time and place and is influenced by such social location factors as race, gender, sexual orientation identity, social class, and relationship status. Unfortunately, less is known about the sexual socialization of adults—especially in the context of families. Most research has assumed that sexuality is something that is satisfactorily and permanently acquired by the time we enter adulthood. In this section, we consider some important aspects of sexual socialization in adulthood.

The Heterosexual Marriage Ideal

More people remain single for longer and more people never marry than ever before in U.S. history; thus, sex outside of marriage is becoming more common and more accepted. Despite these demographic and attitudinal changes, heterosexual marriage remains “the social context in which

sexual expression is thought to be most legitimate” (DeLamater & Friedrich, 2002, p. 12). For most people in the U.S., the notion of sexuality is intimately associated with notions of romantic love and marriage (Hendrick & Hendrick, 2004). Further, couple relationships are still deemed central to our society, such that the vast majority of Americans do enter into marriage at some point in their lives. With many lesbian and gay rights groups advocating for the right to marry, it seems that those who are in heterosexual relationships are not the only ones feeling the “pull to the altar” (and/or to city hall).

Heterosexual marriage, however, is still widely viewed as the ideal couple arrangement and context in which to have children; it is considered something to strive for and to hold in high regard. Laws and policies perpetuate and solidify this view of heterosexual civil marriage by attaching to it a multitude of rights, benefits, and protections, which are reserved for those who enter into this contractual relationship.⁸ Families also often perpetuate the heterosexual marriage ideal, first by making seemingly innocuous comments to children, such as “When you grow up and get (heterosexually) married, ...” (Martin, 2009), and then later by more directly asking young adult family members if they “Have any (heterosexual) marriage prospects yet?” If/when a young adult family member does enter into heterosexual marriage, a common next question posed by those inside (and outside) the family is: “When do you think you’ll start a family?” This question implies at least three things: (a) the couple is expected to want children, (b) the couple’s family (and, indeed, society) expects them to have children, and (c) the couple is not a genuine family until they have children. In addition to heterosexual

⁸Despite the fact that six states and the District of Columbia now allow same-sex couples to enter into legally-recognized civil marriages, the 1996 Federal Defense of Marriage Act defined marriage as between one man and one woman for federal purposes; thus, even same-sex couples who get married in one of these six states or DC are not privy to the majority of the over 1,100 federal rights, benefits, and protections that accompany marriage for heterosexual couples.

couples who have chosen not to have children or are questioning whether to have children, those couples who want to have children but who have trouble getting pregnant may feel extra pressure from family members and others who ask questions and offer advice about how often the couple has sex, when they have sex, and/or how they have sex. Thus, sexual relations, usually presumed to be a private affair, become a matter of public scrutiny (Christopher & Kisler, 2004). Once a woman becomes a mother, however, she may be viewed as devoid of sexuality. Reid and Bing (2000) note the irony of maternity: motherhood is held by many to be the pinnacle of women's sexuality, yet in motherhood women are assumed to become asexual.

Recognition of the assumption, expectation, and idealization of heterosexuality is not novel—Adrienne Rich (1980) wrote about *compulsive heterosexuality* decades ago. Herdt and Koff (2001), however, built upon Rich's ideas and referred to the perpetuation of the marriage ideal as the "Heterosexual Family Myth." The Heterosexual Family Myth tells us two things: *only* by entering into a heterosexual marriage—and then having children—will people be truly happy, and *simply* by entering into a heterosexual marriage—and then having children—will people be truly happy. According to Herdt and Koff:

The incessant message tells how by falling in love with someone of the opposite sex and desiring to have children with the beloved (the greatest expression of love) a person achieves normal development and happiness. Something is abnormal or wrong with a boy or girl who does not get married, stay married, and have children, according to the formula of this sacred myth (p. 18).

Thus, this myth also presumes a "natural" order to these events—entering into heterosexual marriage and then having children—such that any deviation (i.e., remaining single throughout adulthood, identifying as lesbian or gay, cohabiting long-term with a same- or different-sex partner, getting divorced, remaining child-free throughout adulthood, having children out of wedlock, having children from a previous marriage) is considered less than ideal, incomplete, "abnormal," and/or "wrong."

Herdt and Koff (2001) used the Heterosexual Family Myth to help explain why heterosexual parents of lesbian and gay individuals often respond to the news of their son or daughter's sexual orientation identity with sadness and despair. Many of these parents spoke about their feelings of loss—loss of their dreams for their children to grow up and get married and become parents, as well as loss of the dream for themselves of becoming grandparents. Indeed, these parents were mourning their notions of familial happiness for their children and for themselves. Most people are at least aware of the existence of lesbian and gay parents; thus, this type of parental reaction seems to signify the idealized status that having a biological child in the context of a heterosexual marriage holds in our society.

Although the Heterosexual Family Myth is alive and well and still wields influence in many families, Herdt and Koff (2001) noted that the overall power and pervasiveness of the myth is weakening. The stigma of living an "alternative lifestyle"—identifying as lesbian or gay, delaying marriage, never marrying, cohabiting, being a single parent, divorcing, and living in blended families—is lessening as cultural attitudes and values change and as these "lifestyles" become more commonplace. As more and more young lesbian women and gay men (and their families) see parenthood as a possibility for themselves (Rabun & Oswald, 2009), and more and more families realize that marriage and having children are not the keys or the sole avenues to happiness, the havoc that the Heterosexual Family Myth wreaks on family members will continue to diminish. We turn now to a general discussion of sexual attitudes and behaviors of adults in the U.S.—with the primary focus on young adults and those in middle adulthood.

Sexuality in Young and Middle Adulthood

Adult sexuality research has grown in the past couple of decades. For example, researchers have begun to document "hooking up," as opposed to traditional one-on-one dating, as an avenue

through which many young adults (particularly on college campuses) pursue sexual activity (Bogle, 2008). Further, a large body of work has focused on adults' sexual attitudes and behaviors, drawing in part from representative national-level data (e.g., Laumann, Gagnon, Michael, & Michaels, 1994). The vast majority of respondents to these surveys are individuals who identify as heterosexual and/or who are primarily in heterosexual relationships; only 4 % of the female respondents and 6 % of the male respondents to the groundbreaking National Health and Social Life Survey (NHSLs) reported some degree of attraction to the same sex (Laumann et al.). Although limited information exists in this regard, comprehensive reviews of the sexual relationships of lesbians and gay men can be found elsewhere (e.g., Peplau, Fingerhut, & Beals, 2004).

Willetts, Sprecher, and Beck (2004) summarized findings from the NHSLs and the General Social Survey, both of which are nationally representative data sets that include responses from adults living in the U.S., as well as some smaller scale studies. Some of the major findings they reported include that the majority of adults in the U.S. are involved in sexual relationships with partners who are similar to them in terms of race/ethnicity, education level, age, and religion. Meanwhile, in terms of number of sexual partners, most women and men report having had one sexual partner in the past year, with the next most common response being zero. Sexual activity between partners tends to decrease with age and duration of the relationship, regardless of whether the couple is married, cohabiting, different-sex, or same-sex. Additionally, individuals in cohabiting relationships report engaging in sexual activity most frequently, followed by married, and then single, individuals. Although vaginal intercourse is the most commonly reported sexual activity among adults, Willetts and colleagues note that many couples reported varying their sexual activity, for example, by giving and/or receiving oral sex, taking showers or baths together, and/or going to a hotel to spend time alone with each other.

Many interesting attitudinal findings emerged from the NHSLs data set in regard to race/ethnicity, gender, and class. Mahay et al. (2001)

analyzed the NHSLs data to examine gender and racial/ethnic similarities and differences in sexual attitudes regarding premarital sex, homosexual sexual activity, the extent to which religion shapes sexual behavior, whether respondents would have sex only if they were in love, and whether any sexual activity between adults is ok with consent. The authors noted the widespread agreement among African Americans, Mexican Americans, Other Hispanics, and Whites in regard to these topics; the majority of women and men in all cultural groups did not believe that premarital heterosexual sex was wrong, believed that homosexual sexual activity was wrong,⁹ and agreed that any sexual activity between consenting adults was acceptable. Notable differences between cultural groups include that Mexican Americans and African American women appeared to have more traditional attitudes toward sexuality than Whites and African American men. For example, Mexican Americans were significantly more likely than Whites to regard premarital sex as wrong and to report that religion shapes their sexual behavior; further, Mexican American women were much more likely than White women to report that homosexual sexual activity was wrong. African American women were more likely than White women to report that religion shapes their sexual behavior, while African American men were less likely than men in other cultural groups to report that they would have sex only if they were in love. Of course, these findings should be interpreted with the understanding that there is wide variation *within* racial/ethnic groups themselves (Fine, Demo, & Allen, 2000).

Gender and socioeconomic class also played important roles in the interpretation of the NHSLs data on sexual attitudes. According to Mahay et al. (2001), gender was a more salient factor than race/ethnicity in shaping people's sexual attitudes. Women were more likely than men in

⁹Attitudes toward homosexuality seem to have changed significantly in recent years; according to a 2007 Pew poll (<http://pewglobal.org/reports/pdf/258.pdf>), 49 % of Americans said that homosexuality should be accepted, while 41 % said that it should be rejected.

all racial/ethnic groups to report that premarital sex is wrong, that religion shapes their sexual behavior, and that they would not have sex unless they were in love. These more traditional views may reflect the societal double standard that restricts women's sexuality more than men's. Some sexual attitudes, such as beliefs about homosexuality, appeared to be shaped most significantly by socioeconomic class, as indicated by level of education. For example, individuals who had at least attended some college were more likely than those with less education to report more accepting attitudes toward homosexuality, and less likely to agree that any sexual activity between consenting adults was acceptable.

Despite the wealth of information gained from these large-scale studies, scholars have noted that much is still unknown about adult sexuality. For example, although it is interesting and important to recognize differences in regard to sexual attitudes and behaviors based on race/ethnicity, gender, and class, it may be more important to learn about how and why these factors are important. These differences must also be examined in light of sexual stereotypes that exist in society about groups of people; for example, Tolman and Diamond (2001) point out that White, middle-class women have historically been seen as pure and without sexual desire, whereas African American, poor, and immigrant women were often viewed as the opposite: "naturally" more promiscuous and in need of greater social controls. Collins (2000, 2005) discusses historical and current sexuality images of African American women that are tied to myths about Black women's sexuality and have implications for their societal oppression.

It is also important to note that little is known from existing sexuality studies about adults' sexual feelings and experiences, as researchers "have adopted an impoverished approach to adult sexuality that tabulates acts, instead of eliciting their meanings and contexts" (Tolman & Diamond, 2001, p. 50). Plummer (2007) concurs, but also discusses a "vanishing sexuality" in both mainstream sexuality research as well as scholarship that focuses on meanings/constructions of sexuality. He asserts that little attention is given to people's sexual bodies and bodily desires, as

"there is little humping and pumping, sweatiness or sexiness in much sociological work" (p. 24). In an effort to better understand the complexities of sexual desire, Diamond (2008) looks at both biological bases of desire as well as how socialization influences people's experiences and interpretations of their own sexual desires. For example, whereas men are expected to have strong sexual desire and women are not, perhaps "women are, in effect, trained to discount their own bodily experiences of sexual desire because they lack the cultural basis to acknowledge and meaningfully interpret such feelings and experiences" (Tolman & Diamond, 2001, pp. 38–39). Thus, although there is neurological evidence that men may be more sensitive to sexual stimuli than are women (Laan & Janssen, 2007), it is also the case that women may be socialized to mistrust their physiological experiences of sexual arousal. Thus, there are important arguments for why constructions of sexuality should not, and cannot, be completely uncoupled from research on the biology and physiology of sexual response and experiences of sexuality. Lastly, information about the sexual experiences, feelings, and relationships of individuals and couples in *later* adulthood is also sorely lacking; the NHLS, for example, only includes data on adults ages 18–59. Thus, we now turn to an understudied group in regard to sexuality: older adults.

Sexuality in Later Life

Similar to social constructions of children's sexuality, older family members are rarely the focus of sexuality-related discussions, research, or teachings. As a result, most adults are uninformed and/or misinformed about issues of aging and sexuality (Burgess, 2004); some—especially young adults—are uncomfortable with the thought of older adults having sexual feelings and/or acting upon those feelings (Allen, 2009). Research has revealed, however, that many individuals over the age of 60 are still sexually active (e.g., Marsiglio & Donnelly, 1991; Matthias, Lubben, Atchison, & Schweitzer, 1997). Although the physical aging process can introduce challenges for sexually active older adults (Kingsberg,

2002), Burgess (2004) noted in her review of the literature that many older adults describe their later years as “the best time of their lives sexually” (p. 446), perhaps due to the absence of stressors such as raising children and worrying about getting pregnant. With the relatively healthy aging of the baby boomers who grew up during the sexual revolution of the 1960s and experienced unprecedented advancements in civil, feminist, and lesbian/gay rights, older adults will be likely to pursue late-life romantic relationships (Carr, 2004) and to practice an increasingly wide range of sexual behaviors (Burgess, 2004). Thus, as sexual attitudes of older adults change, the opportunity exists to, perhaps, more easily educate both older and younger cohorts about aging- and sexuality-related issues. Indeed, after showing the film, *Still Doing It: The Intimate Lives of Women Over 65*, to her undergraduate human sexuality class, Allen (2009) asks her students, among other questions, “What can younger people learn from older women about sexuality and intimacy?” (p. 356). The students’ responses reveal that the answer to the question is: a lot.

Burgess (2004) provides a comprehensive review of the literature on sexuality in midlife and later life, including what is known about the sexual lives of LGB older adults. Not surprisingly, Burgess reported that older adults who are married or cohabiting participate more frequently in sexual activities than single older adults—and those sexual activities include a wide range of sexual behaviors. For example, one study (Bretschneider & McCoy, 1988) cited in Burgess’ review found that the majority of respondents, who were 80 years old and older, reportedly often engaged in mutual caressing. Important factors related to sexuality in later life include gender, as women live longer than men; race/ethnicity, as certain cultural groups have lower rates of marriage than others (e.g., African Americans are less likely to marry than Whites); and class, as poor people experience health problems at younger ages, which inevitably affects their sexual lives (Burgess).

Younger family members may react negatively to an older adult family member’s interest in sexual behavior, especially if the older family member is a widow or widower (Carr, 2004). Moore and Stratton (2001) discuss disapproving reactions

on the part of adult children when their widowed parents start to date; for example, some of these younger family members may attempt to monitor their parents’ sexual behavior. This scenario was illustrated in a recent episode of *Grey’s Anatomy* (Rhimes, Bans, & Verica, 2009), in which an elderly man came to the hospital to have a penile implant. The man, who was a widower living in a nursing home, had gotten to know a woman with whom he wanted to “make love” but could not, due to his inability to maintain an erection. When the man’s son and daughter realize their father’s intention to spend his life savings on this surgery, they tell him that if he goes through with the surgery they will move him out of the nursing home and into one of their houses to share a room with one of the grandchildren. One of the doctors eventually steps in to convince the man’s children that they should not stand in the way of his happiness, but not before it is clear that the presumed notion is that older adults (like young children) are “nonsexual”—or that they should be (Kingsberg, 2002). Interactions between older and younger generations within families will inevitably have an influence on the sexual cultures within these families.

In summary, although attitudes about sexuality in later life are changing to include the possibilities of positive sexuality and thus family socialization for affirmative sexual expression in later life, tensions remain. It is still the case that for many adults in later life, there are persistent assumptions that sexual desire and behavior are or will become irrelevant. As they age and negotiate new life stages that may include dependence on younger generations in their families, many older adults are faced with the prospect of losing or having to give up their sexual agency, or challenge deeply held beliefs about their sexual lives.

Conclusion

In framing sexuality in families, we have considered several theoretical perspectives that we view as crucial for a critical analysis of the development and experiences of sexualities in the context of family relationships. We have reviewed contemporary understandings of how sexuality is learned

in family life through sexual socialization, both as this relates to the family sexual socialization of children and adolescents, where most attention has focused, but also as it relates to sexualities in later life. In our review our goal has been to emphasize the important social statuses and characteristics that, due to social inequalities, shape sexuality and its development over the life course: gender, age, race and culture, social class, relationship status, and sexual orientation identities.

For us, the review highlights that, despite the breadth of knowledge from these areas of scholarship, only recently has there begun to be a body of scholarship that seriously considers normative, healthy sexuality. Very recently, some scholars have focused on healthy sexuality development during adolescence (Russell, 2005), and on the role that families play in that positive development (Savin-Williams & Diamond, 2004); even less has been written about healthy sexual expression in adulthood. Given the emphasis on risk that has characterized the scholarship on sexuality, it is not surprising that studies have found, for example, that parents rarely discuss sexual desire or pleasure with their adolescent children (Lefkowitz & Stoppa, 2006). The aim of sexual socialization is often the prevention of sexual activity and its possible negative outcomes (i.e., teenage pregnancy, sexually transmitted disease, sexual coercion), rather than promotion of exploration of healthy, positive sexualities. This prevention-focused perspective, which may be predicated on religious and/or moralistic views of sexuality as “dangerous” or “sinful,” not only restricts our knowledge of adolescent sexuality but also stigmatizes normative behavior, thus promoting shame and silence on the part of adolescents (Savin-Williams & Diamond, 2004) as well as the elderly.

As we look to the future, there are promising areas of study that will contribute to understandings of sexuality and families. What positive messages can be offered, and how can families encourage positive sexuality development? How do families participate in the perpetuation of sexual stereotypes based on social statuses and inequalities? How could families play a role in addressing and deconstructing these stereotypes?

And how does childhood and adolescent sexual socialization set the stage for sexuality-related attitudes, values, and behaviors for the rest of life? We have solid understandings of sexuality at many isolated stages of the life span; prospective, longitudinal studies could deepen understandings of sexuality in family life by tracing these influences as families grow and develop. Thus, in addition to building from the strong research base in child and adolescent sexual socialization, there remains much to be learned about sexuality and family life over the life course.

In addition to these questions, recent advances in technology and methodologies for studying sexuality offer promising possibilities for the generation of new questions or even fields of study that may expand our understanding of sexuality in family life in the coming decade. For example, new technologies have become venues both for sexuality-related experiences (e.g., the internet and social media), as well as for the study of sexualities. This is an area for which scientific understanding is outpaced by social change, yet there are remarkable possibilities for studying sexuality in family life, as well as for reaching out to educate families through these technologies and new media. Similarly, we are learning much more about physiological sexual stimulation and response, and the role it plays in personal sexual motivation and desire. We are also just beginning to understand the complex interactions that may exist between physiology, desire, sociocultural expectations and scripts, and the personal meanings that guide sexuality (e.g., Diamond, 2008). Studies at the intersections of these fields will undoubtedly identify new questions regarding sexuality and its development in the context of family life.

Thus, sexuality and family life are rich areas for future research; perhaps such work could eschew the problem-focus that has characterized research on childhood and adolescence, and consider normative sexual development and expression in adulthood and later life. Hopefully such work might lead not only to greater understanding, but to the potential for improved and fulfilling sexual expression and health.

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Sally A. Lloyd

In the past five decades, family violence has come to be recognized by scholars and practitioners alike as a major social issue that has far-reaching implications for individuals, families, and communities. This recognition is multifaceted, and encompasses efforts to document prevalence, understand risk and protective factors, develop explanatory theoretical models, and evaluate the effectiveness of intervention and prevention efforts (Daro & Dodge, 2009; Tolan, Gorman-Smith, & Henry, 2006).

One indication of the high level of interest in this field is the profound proliferation of research on family violence. The field was catalyzed in the 1960s and 1970s with several pivotal events (publication of Helfer & Kempe's *The Battered Child* in 1968, the domestic violence shelter movement of the 1970s, Straus, Gelles, and Steinmetz's first national family violence study in 1979). Over the next 30 years, research proceeded along an exponential trajectory, resulting in thousands of academic publications in the decade of the 2000s alone, development of extensive literatures on each type of family violence, and creation of more than 15 new journals devoted to publishing work on interpersonal/familial violence and aggression.

Unfortunately, there are problems with such a burgeoning literature. Tolan et al. (2006) note several key issues: there has been a predominant interest in conceptualizing, measuring, and defining each arena of violence; most work is focused on a limited set of risks or outcomes within a single type of family violence; and complex models that account for multiple types of violence are not widely available. While the field is quite multidisciplinary, to a large extent the literatures within the disciplines of family studies, psychology, sociology, social work, and criminology do not engage in an extensive interdisciplinary conversation (Edleson, Daro, & Pinderhughes, 2004; Jordan, 2009). The result is a "disparate set of studies, each with its own scientific and policy discussions" (Tolan et al., 2006, p. 558). Still, the overlaps and congruencies across the types of violence, as well as their risk/protective factors, family dynamics, and effective interventions, are recognized within the field (Edleson et al., 2004; Margolin & Gordis, 2000).

Undertaking a review of the family violence literature for this *Handbook* was a daunting task that required many decisions about what to include, and how to best present major findings. This chapter was constructed as follows. First, meta-analyses with effect sizes were emphasized in reviewing the literature, in order to assess the strength of particular findings. Second, priority was given to the many excellent studies published since the last edition of the *Handbook of Marriage and the Family*, with the focus being on three topics addressed in separate sections on

S.A. Lloyd, PhD (✉)
Educational Leadership and Women's Studies,
Miami University, 304C McGuffey Hall,
Oxford, OH 45056, USA
e-mail: lloydsa@muohio.edu

child maltreatment, adult maltreatment, and the intergenerational transmission of violence. Third, commonalities and complexities across these three sections were analyzed, including violence across the life course, family processes of coercion and control, and understanding the ways in which gender, race, class, and sexual orientation intersect with violence in the family.

Child Maltreatment

The Incidence of Child Maltreatment

The definition of child maltreatment is still under debate, largely because it reflects the juxtaposition of a social judgment of harm/risk with the assessment of the medical/psychological status of the child (Kolko, 2002). As more complex analyses of corporal punishment, child maltreatment, and substantiated child abuse have been conducted, scholars have increasingly noted that there are, at times, very blurred lines between abusive and non-abusive behavior, especially in the realms of physical and emotional abuse (Cicchetti & Toth, 2005).

The Federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act defines child abuse and neglect as “any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation; or an act or failure to act which presents an imminent risk of serious harm” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010, p. xi). Data from the National Incidence Study, which includes cases reported to Child Protective Services and community professionals, provide incidence rates per 1,000 children as follows: child physical abuse 5.7; child sexual abuse 3.2; child emotional abuse 3.0; and, neglect 13.1 (Sedlak & Broadhurst, 1996).

National and regional surveys of the prevalence of maltreatment yield higher estimates. For example, Finkelhor, Ormrod, and Turner’s (2009) national survey of households reported annual rates of child maltreatment (physical, emotional, neglect) ranging from 6% of 2–5 year olds to 14% of 10–13 year olds. Rates of sexual victim-

ization were reported to range from 2% of infants and toddlers to 24% of 14–17-year-old girls and 12% of 14–17-year-old boys.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (USHHS) compiles annual state data from the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS). During 2008 (figures released in 2010), approximately six million children were reported to child protective services for the investigation of child maltreatment (24% were substantiated). A majority of these cases were neglect (71%), followed by physical abuse (16%), sexual abuse (9%), and psychological maltreatment (7%). USHHS (2010) estimates that approximately 1,740 children (the majority under age 4) died from neglect and/or abuse during 2008.

Using NCANDS data, Jones and Finkelhor (2009) note that the rates of substantiated child abuse have been declining since the 1990s: sexual abuse decreased 49%, child physical abuse decreased 43%, and neglect decreased 6%. Finkelhor and Jones (2006) carefully examined the evidence as to whether these declines are real, or reflect changes in policy, reporting methods, or services. They concluded that the data “probably reflect at least in part a real decline in sexual abuse” (p. 688) “and in physical abuse” (p. 689). These declines are attributed to changes in the economy (particularly, the decrease in child poverty), increases in law enforcement, prosecution and child protective services, public awareness of the problem of child maltreatment, changing social norms, and improved treatment of family dysfunction and mental health. The lack of change in child neglect is more difficult to explain; a lack of public awareness and policy attention may be a factor (Finkelhor & Jones), as well as the difficulty of both defining and ameliorating neglect. However, the declines in the rates of substantiated child maltreatment in the NCANDS are in opposition to the increases seen in child maltreatment as reported by community professionals in the NIS. This could be a result in part of the different years studied (the latest NCANDS data are from 2007, whereas the latest NIS3 data are from 1993), as well as differences in study methodologies. The completion of the fourth National

Incidence Study (which is underway at present) may clear up some of these differences.

Physical Child Abuse

Despite decades of scholarship, defining and operationalizing the various forms of family violence remain challenging. Although the physical abuse of children represents relatively clear acts of commission by a parent/caregiver, it is difficult to identify (Bonner, Logue, Kaufman, & Niec, 2001). The National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect defines physical child abuse as “excessive discipline, beatings, or some other form of overt physical violence that results in injuries to a child” (Bonner et al., 2001, p. 991).

Individual factors. Traditionally, child abuse research has concentrated on the characteristics of the abusing parent (Stith et al., 2009). Parent demographic characteristics, such as gender, have been found to be inconsistent risk markers. For example, while early studies concluded that women were more likely to perpetrate physical child abuse, more recent meta-analyses demonstrate that there is either no association (Black, Heyman, & Slep, 2001a) or that the effect sizes for parent gender are small¹ (Stith et al., 2009). Similarly, while it was once thought that single parenthood was a significant risk factor for child physical abuse, recent work demonstrates either no or weak relationships (Black, Heyman, & Slep, 2001a; Stith et al., 2009; Tolan et al., 2006). Child physical abuse is more likely among younger, less educated, unemployed, and low-income parents, although again the effect sizes are usually small (Black, Heyman, & Slep, 2001a; Sedlak, 1997; Stith et al., 2009). Rates of substantiated physical abuse and neglect are higher in neighborhoods that have high levels of poverty, childcare burden,

vacant housing, alcohol availability, and residential instability (Coulton, Crampton, Irwin, Spilsbury, & Korbin, 2007; Freisthler, Merritt, & LaScala, 2006). Still, the general pattern established by early research, that the physical abuse of children cuts across every income and educational level, remains accurate (Barnett, Miller-Perrin, & Perrin, 2005).

Empirical research on the physical abuse of children has concentrated on the mental health and psychological characteristics of the abusing parent. Physically abusing parents display heightened levels of psychopathology, dependency, depression, and anxiety disorders, lower impulse control, and a history of antisocial behavior (Bornstein, 2005; Kolko, 2002; Stith et al., 2009). The risk of mothers’ maltreatment of their children is also raised by the presence of parenting stress and domestic violence (Slep & O’Leary, 2001; Taylor, Guterman, Lee, & Rathouz, 2009). Other characteristics of the abusing parent include heightened levels of substance abuse, criminal behavior, problems with anger control, deficits in problem-solving skills, low self-esteem, and low frustration tolerance (Barnett et al., 2005; Black, Heyman, & Slep, 2001a; Tolan et al., 2006). Effect sizes for these findings vary widely, with medium effect sizes seen most consistently for depression, psychopathy, anxiety, and self-esteem (Stith et al., 2009).

Risk factors for child victimization have been examined, although researchers are very careful to point out the near impossibility of determining cause and effect. Boys and girls comprise nearly equal numbers of substantiated cases of physical abuse. Evidence on child age is mixed, but among substantiated cases, the risk of abuse is highest among younger children. Nearly one-third of cases occur among children ages 0–3 and another one-fourth of cases occur among children ages 4–7 (U.S. HHS, 2010). However, when data from the National Incidence Study are examined, the risk of abuse is greater for older children (Sedlak, 1997; Sedlak & Broadhurst, 1996). Still, an overall pattern is that effect sizes for most child characteristics, including child age, gender, prenatal/neonatal medical problems, and disability, are largely nonsignificant (Stith et al., 2009).

¹I use the demarcations found in Stith et al. (2009) to describe effect sizes when the r statistic is used (small $r=0.10-0.20$, medium $r=0.20-0.30$, large $r>0.31$); using the r to d conversion formula found in Rosenthal and DiMatteo (2001), the corresponding values of d would be 0.20, 0.41 and 0.63.

Family interaction. Catalyzed by Patterson's (1982) work on cycles of coercion in parent–child relationships, scholars have conducted detailed examinations of parent–child and family interaction, as well as parenting styles and parent perceptions of child behaviors. These studies view child abuse and neglect as “part of ongoing interactions that constitute the parent–child relationship,” and draw on social-interactional views of family systems, and attachment theory (Wilson, Rack, Shi, & Norris, 2008, p. 897). Because these studies are cross-sectional, they show only associations with abuse and are not predictive. Nonetheless, they illuminate the other family interactions that may accompany physical abuse of children.

Stith et al.'s (2009) meta-analysis examined family variables across both observational and survey studies that compared physically maltreating parents and non-maltreating controls. They found large effect sizes for heightened parent anger/hyperreactivity and family conflict, and lowered family cohesion. Additionally, they found moderate effect sizes for parent–child interaction (high negativity, low attachment), and parent seeing the child as a problem. Wilson et al. (2008) conducted a meta-analysis of observational studies, and found consistent differences (with medium effect sizes) between physically maltreating and non-maltreating controls in levels of involvement and positivity toward their children. These effect sizes were higher when the observation was longer and done in the home. Similarly, Black, Heyman, and Slep (2001a) found higher rates of verbal aggression and harsh discipline, and lower rates of positive strategies, among mothers who physically abuse their children. Black et al. further note that the few studies of father–child interaction show results similar to those of abusing mothers.

The effects of physical child abuse. Physical abuse has far-reaching effects on children. Cognitively, both language and academic development are delayed; these may be a result of the lack of a stimulating context or a result of high levels of parent–child conflict (Bonner et al., 2001; Wekerle & Wolfe, 2003). In the socioemotional realm, there is consistent evidence for the

presence of insecure attachment and affectionless control (Baer & Martinez, 2006; Rikhye et al., 2008). Physically abused children, when compared to children who have not been subjected to this kind of abuse, exhibit higher levels of peer aggression, difficulty maintaining self-control, and greater frequency of externalizing behaviors (including conduct disorders, aggression, delinquency, and hyperactivity). Other common outcomes of physical abuse by parents are internalizing behaviors (depressive symptoms, somatic complaints), self-isolation, and anger responses to the negative emotions of others (Bonner et al., 2001; Kolko, 2002; Wekerle & Wolfe, 2003). Stith et al. (2009) note that the effect sizes across a wide range of studies (with diverse samples of children) show strong relationships between child physical abuse and lowered social competence, and heightened externalizing behaviors and internalizing behaviors.

Adults who experienced physical abuse as a child show long-term consequences, including higher levels of dependency as young adults (Bornstein, 2005), lifetime PTSD (Widom, 1999), antisocial personality, criminal behavior, alcohol issues (women), anxiety, depression, and emotional problems (Barnett et al., 2005; White & Widom, 2008). However, most conceptualizations of this link emphasize that “maltreatment is a general risk factor for psychopathology, rather than a *specific* risk factor for antisocial behavior or other disturbances” (Wekerle & Wolfe, 2003, p. 657).

Adult intimate relationships are also affected. In a prospective study, Colman and Widom (2004) found that after controlling for parents' marital status and socioeconomic status, adult intimate relationships were more likely to be disrupted (higher levels of walking out and divorce) for both males and females, and to be dysfunctional (being dissatisfied and engaging in infidelity) for females (see also Anderson, 2010). And the risk of intimate partner violence (IPV) is raised by a history of childhood maltreatment; while retrospective studies consistently find a heightened risk for both men and women (Barnett et al., 2005), White and Widom's (2003) prospective study finds that this risk is higher for women than for men.

Neglect

One of the ironies of the family violence literature is the near lack of attention given to the most common form of maltreatment, neglect (Stith et al., 2009). This is likely due to the difficulty of developing conceptual and operational definitions of neglect, the challenges of researching neglect in self-report studies, the fact that neglect involves omission rather than commission, as well as the inability to separate the effects of poverty (Connell-Carrick, 2003; Schumacher, Slep, & Heyman, 2001). Neglect is most commonly defined as the failure to provide adequate care to a child; in the NIS, neglect was categorized as physical (including inattention to physical needs, refusal/delay of health care, abandonment, expulsion, inadequate supervision), emotional (inadequate nurturance, chronic/extreme spouse abuse, permitted drug/alcohol abuse, refusal/delay/failure to provide needed psychological care), or educational (permitted chronic truancy, failure to enroll, inattention to special needs) (Sedlak, 2001).

Individual factors. Schumacher et al. (2001) and Stith et al. (2009) provide excellent reviews of the empirical evidence on neglect, with analyses of effect sizes. Both note that the only demographic factors with moderate to strong effect sizes are fertility (including more unplanned conceptions, pregnancies, and births) and family socioeconomic status (with lower incomes and more unemployment among neglecting parents). Results for parent demographic factors such as race, gender, and family structure are either equivocal, or small. It should be noted, though, that single parents and mothers are disproportionately represented among those who come to the attention of the authorities (Sedlak & Broadhurst, 1996).

In examining child characteristics, researchers strongly emphasize the impossibility of teasing out risk factors vs. effects. While the meta-analyses conducted by Stith et al. and Schumacher et al. noted that effect sizes for child gender and age were nonsignificant, the Third National Incidence Study indicates that boys are emotionally neglected more often than girls, and that children

in the middle childhood years are maltreated more often than younger or older children (Sedlak & Broadhurst, 1996). Neither the NIS3 nor the meta-analyses of Stith et al. (2009) and Schumacher et al. (2001) discovered consistent differences in race.

Family factors. Stith et al. (2009) found large effect sizes for risk factors related to the parent-child relationship, including lower relationship quality, parental perception of the child as a problem, higher parenting stress, and lower parent problem-solving. Parent characteristics with moderate to strong effect sizes include personal stress, anger/hyperactivity, low self-esteem, psychopathology, depression, poor relationship with own parents, and lowered social support. Schumacher et al. (2001) found similar results, with moderate to strong effect sizes for the relationship between neglect and parental self-esteem, impulsivity, substance abuse, stress, lack of social support, and lowered level of verbal and nonverbal interaction between mother and child. Other reviews corroborate the consistent relationships between a history of maltreatment in the parent's childhood, poor parenting skills, parental mental illness, and alcohol/drug abuse (Bonner et al., 2001; Carter & Myers, 2007; Connell-Carrick, 2003).

Stith et al. (2009) note that some parent factors are more strongly related to neglect than to physical abuse, including parent self-esteem and stress, parent unemployment, and family size. They conceptualize these differences in terms of "factors pertaining perhaps to personal adequacy, competency, or resilience" (p. 25). Studies of parent-child interaction patterns support this conceptualization; neglecting mothers (as compared to non-neglecting mothers) show less positive interaction with their children, less affect, more negative perceptions of their children, disengagement and distraction, and information processing deficits in understanding their children's needs and emotions (Hildyard & Wolfe, 2007; Wekerle & Wolfe, 2003). Wilson et al. (2008) found large effect sizes for lack of involvement and medium effect sizes for lack of positivity. Wilson et al. concluded "neglect is evident not

just in a parent's failure to meet a child's basic needs (e.g., clothing, supervision) but also in a more subtle failure to display attentiveness and responsiveness" (p. 909).

There are several studies that have created typologies of neglecting families. In a cluster analysis of 160 families with substantiated primary neglect, Chambers and Potter (2009) identified three distinct groups of families: (1) substance abusing, (2) economic problems, domestic violence, and mental health problems, and (3) low needs families (i.e., very low income and lack of transportation). Of these three, group two exhibited the highest level of risk to the child, as well as higher levels of previous placement. Similarly, Littell and Schuerman (2002) identified different groups of maltreating families, clustering around drug addiction, housing problems, mental illness of the parent, and parenting difficulties.

The effects of child neglect. Neglected children consistently exhibit lower levels of social competence, and higher levels of both externalizing and internalizing behaviors (Stith et al., 2009). They have the lowest levels of academic and cognitive achievement in every age group (as compared to children who were not abused, and to children who were physically or sexually abused), as well as higher rates of school failure; these differences appear even when welfare status is taken into account (Wekerle & Wolfe, 2003). Socioemotional development is also deeply affected, with neglected children displaying comparatively more insecure attachment, behavior problems, social withdrawal, limited peer interaction, and less emotion understanding (Bonner et al., 2001; Sullivan, Bennett, Carpenter, & Lewis, 2008; Wekerle & Wolfe, 2003). Adults who were neglected as children also display more difficulty with intimate relationships, lifetime PTSD, and depression (Colman & Widom, 2004; Widom, 1999).

Emotional Abuse

One of the relatively new areas of research in child maltreatment is that of emotional or psychological abuse, a topic first investigated in the

late 1980s (Yates & Wekerle, 2009). Despite the fact that emotional abuse is believed to be a frequent form of child maltreatment, it remains difficult to define and assess (Black, Slep, & Heyman, 2001). Indeed, it has become clear that emotional abuse is both a core component of all types of abuse as well as a distinct form of maltreatment (Iwaniec, Larkin, & Higgins, 2006). Part of the difficulty in assessing emotional abuse stems from the challenge of determining the threshold at which parent behaviors such as isolation or denial of affection become abusive (Wright, 2007). Certainly, the consequences of emotional abuse for child and adult functioning can be devastating and disabling (Shaffer, Yates, & Egeland, 2009); intervention is further complicated as the appearance of overt problems may occur much later in development (Yates & Wekerle, 2009).

Emotional abuse is defined as repeated or extreme parental behaviors that "negate a child's developmental and social needs" (Iwaniec et al., 2006, p. 73), by conveying to the child that he/she is "worthless, unwanted, endangered, or of value only in meeting someone else's needs" (Bonner et al., 2001, p. 1011). Brassard and Hardy (1997) classify emotional maltreatment into six categories: spurning, terrorizing, isolating, exploiting/corrupting, denying emotional responsiveness, and unwarranted withholding of medical care, mental health services, or education. Although such refined definitions exist, outside of studies of substantiated cases of emotional abuse and the NIS, most research relies on relatively narrow assessments such as verbal aggressiveness directed at the child (Black et al., 2001).

Individual and family factors. The risk of emotional abuse is higher in low-income families, and for older children; the risk is not related to family structure, family size, race, or child gender (Sedlak, 1997). Black et al. (2001) note that while very low-income families are at higher risk, an effect size for this relationship has not been published. Parental risk factors include neuroticism, aggression and hostility, less caring relationships with one's father, and being yelled at daily as a child; these factors all evidence moderate

effect sizes (Black et al., 2001). Although Iwaniec et al. (2006) conclude that there is not a clear profile of parental risk factors, they theorize that the experience of maltreatment in the family of origin, physical and mental illness, and substance abuse may increase the risk of emotionally abusing one's child.

The effects of emotional abuse. The effects of emotional abuse on the child have been more extensively examined. They include academic underachievement, low aspirations (Iwaniec et al., 2006), social withdrawal, and increased aggression in middle childhood (Shaffer et al., 2009). Other common outcomes include internalizing and externalizing symptoms (Reed, Goldstein, Morris, & Keyes, 2008), depression, shame (Webb, Heisler, Call, Chickering, & Colburn, 2007), eating disorders, anxiety, substance abuse, and psychiatric symptoms as adults (Iwaniec, Larkin, & McSherry, 2007). Recent investigators also have reported that emotional abuse is predictive of PTSD symptoms, and dating violence perpetration (males) and victimization (females) in adolescence (Crawford & Wright, 2007).

Developmental processes have been examined as well. Yates (2007) theorizes that emotional abuse alters the child's neurological stress responses, which can contribute to the heightened levels of stress, anxiety, and depression seen in later developmental stages. Wright, Crawford, and Del Castillo (2009) discovered that childhood emotional neglect and abuse are related to development of schemas of defectiveness and shame, vulnerability to harm, and self-sacrifice; these schemas mediated the relationship of abuse to young adult anxiety and depression (for both emotional abuse and neglect) and to dissociation (for emotional neglect).

Sexual Abuse

Child sexual abuse has been the most extensively studied form of child maltreatment, and research has consistently documented that child sexual abuse has the most pervasive and negative impact

on later mental health and adjustment (Fergusson, Boden, & Horwood, 2008). Since definitions of child sexual abuse differ as a function of purpose (e.g., investigation by Protective Services vs. research endeavors), there is not a single standard definition (Haugaard, 2000). Despite this lack of definitional consensus, child sexual abuse can be defined broadly as "the involvement of dependent, developmentally immature children and adolescents in sexual activities they do not fully comprehend and to which they are unable to give consent" (Bonner et al., 2001, p. 1002). Like all forms of family violence, child sexual abuse presents many methodological and operational challenges, including reliance on specialized and known populations (such as Protective Service clients, and those who seek psychiatric treatment), and overreliance on retrospective designs (Fergusson et al., 2008; Widom, Raphael, & DuMont, 2004). This literature is further complicated by the fact that studies of child sexual abuse often simultaneously examine both intra- and extra-familial perpetrators (Whitaker et al., 2008).

Individual and family factors. Adults who perpetrate sexual abuse of children vary widely in age; however, there is some evidence that juvenile offenders may constitute a sizeable portion of perpetrators (Barnett et al., 2005). The majority of perpetrators are male (90%), and known to the child (70–90%) (Finkelhor, 1994). Perpetrators tend to be less educated and poorer (with moderate to strong effect sizes, Black, Heyman, & Slep, 2001b), though Finkelhor (1994) cautions that these findings are based primarily on data from official reports and are not replicated in nationally representative surveys.

Whitaker et al. (2008) conducted a meta-analysis of risk factors for sexual abuse perpetration. In comparing child sexual abuse perpetrators to non-offenders, they discovered medium to large effect sizes in six categories: family of origin relationships (harsh discipline, poor attachment, poor family functioning, history of abuse), externalizing behaviors (aggression and violence, anger/hostility, non-violent crimes, substance abuse, antisocial personality disorder, paranoia), internalizing behaviors (anxiety, depression, low

esteem), social deficits (low social competence, relationship difficulties, loneliness, and insecure attachment), sexuality (more deviant sexual interests), and attitudes/cognitions (tolerance of adult-child sex, minimization of culpability).

A constellation of family risk factors has been documented. Family structure shows moderate effect sizes, with single parent and stepfamilies at greater risk (Black, Heyman, & Slep, 2001b). There is increased risk for children who experience lack of supervision, parental inadequacy, emotional maltreatment, parental conflict, and a poor parent-child relationship (Finkelhor, 1994); effect sizes are moderate to strong for poor-parent-child relationships, low parent satisfaction, and inadequate supervision (Black, Heyman, & Slep, 2001b). And, there is evidence that the families of sexually abused girls are less cohesive than are the families of non-abused girls (Noll, 2005).

There are also consistent victim risk factors. Approximately 75–80% of victims are female (Sedlak & Broadhurst, 1996; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000a), although it is believed that boys are under-reported in official statistics and national surveys (Barnett et al., 2005). The risk of child sexual abuse increases with age, with steep increases seen for girls in the 14–17-year-old group (Finkelhor et al., 2009); girls are also more likely to be abused by a family member than are boys (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000a). And, in retrospective studies, gays and lesbians report higher levels of childhood psychological, physical, and sexual violence as compared both to their heterosexual siblings and to heterosexual adults (Austin et al., 2008; Balsam, Rothblum, & Beauchaine, 2005; Tjaden, Thoennes, & Allison, 1999). In their meta-analysis, Black, Heyman, and Slep (2001b) found medium effect sizes for age, gender, race, living in a dangerous community, living in a poor community, poor child academic achievement, and externalizing problems (boys only).

The impact of child sexual abuse. Both acute and long-term effects of sexual abuse have been studied extensively. Acute symptoms include somatic complaints, sleep problems, regression, sensitivity to touch, genital complaints, urinary infections, sexualized behavior, trauma symptoms,

and severe emotional and behavioral difficulties (Barnett et al., 2005; Wekerle & Wolfe, 2003). Long-term effects during childhood include traumatic sexualization, difficulty focusing, emotional over- or under-reactivity, and declines in school performance and peer interaction (Wekerle & Wolfe). Adults who have been sexually abused exhibit higher levels of depression, PTSD, anxiety, sexual problems, and drug and alcohol abuse (Bonner et al., 2001; Hunter, 2006). Female survivors of child sexual abuse show both heightened levels of adult romantic relationship dissatisfaction/disruption (Colman & Widom, 2004), and parenting difficulties (including use of harsh punishment, permissiveness, and boundary issues) (DiLillo & Damashek, 2003). In addition, there is recent evidence that child sexual abuse predicts resource loss (social, instrumental, and material) as an adult, which in turn predicts both depressive mood and PTSD (Schumm, Stines, Hobfoll, & Jackson, 2005). Both short and long-term effects may be heightened when: abuse is severe and of longer duration, the perpetrator uses coercion or force, the perpetrator is the father or father figure, the family responds negatively to disclosure of abuse, and the victim blames him/herself for the abuse (Barnett et al., 2005; Hunter, 2006). Still, not all sexually abused children/adults exhibit these effects; up to 40% of victims appear to have few or none of these problems (Bonner et al., 2001; Colman & Widom, 2004).

Children of Violent Marriages

There has been a surge of research in the past decade on the consequences of children's exposure to IPV in their families. While this literature began with an emphasis on children as passive witnesses of their parents' violence, recent work has emphasized children's agency in making sense of the violence, as well as their resilience in navigating through the terror associated with IPV (Holt, Buckley, & Whelan, 2008; Kerig, 2003). Since IPV is estimated to be present in about 30% of two-parent households, child exposure rates are alarmingly high (McDonald, Jouriles, Ramisetty-Mikier, Caetano, & Green, 2006).

There is a high level of comorbidity of IPV with child abuse and neglect. At the most basic level, exposure to the abuse of one's parent may be considered a form of emotional abuse. IPV in the home is also associated with increased risk of physical and sexual abuse of children, as well as child neglect (Holt et al., 2008; Margolin & Gordis, 2000). A high proportion of children reported to Child Protective Services for child maltreatment are also exposed to IPV (estimates range from 29% in a study of neglect, Antle et al., 2007; to 71% of CPS families in crisis, Osofsky, 1999), and the risk of re-report is heightened by the presence of IPV (Casanueva, Martin, & Runyan, 2009). Studies of battered women indicate that between 60 and 75% of their children are also battered (Osofsky, 2003).

Family and parent dynamics are emphasized in the literature on children exposed to IPV because the quality of parenting is clearly affected, as is the ability of parents to meet the needs of their children. Mothers who are severely abused, in particular, show high levels of stress and depression, which may result in emotional unavailability and parenting difficulties (Osofsky, 2003; Slep & O'Leary, 2001). Children respond to parental conflict with high levels of negative affect, negative cognitions, withdrawal, and lower levels of positive coping, though all these findings show small effect sizes (Kitzmann, Gaylord, Holt, & Kenny, 2003). Samuelson and Cashman (2008) demonstrated that mothers' level of PTSD symptoms, rather than the level of violence, was predictive of children's emotional dysregulation. Despite living in fear and terror, however, mothers make many efforts to protect their children and to compensate for the abuse their children witness or experience (Margolin, Gordis, Medina, & Oliver, 2003). Some evidence exists, for example, that mothers may be spurred to leave an abusive partner at the point at which their partners begin to direct violence toward their children (Kirkwood, 1993).

Although the father-child relationship has been investigated less often, there is evidence that fathers who are violent towards their wives use more negative parenting practices, and are more controlling and less consistent in their child

discipline (Holt et al., 2008). Fathers are characterized by lower self-esteem, low trust, high dependency, and an inability to see the impact of maltreatment on their children and wives (Holt et al.). Fathers who perpetrate both IPV and child abuse also show heightened characteristics related to a criminal lifestyle and higher levels of antisocial characteristics (Dixon, Hamilton-Giachritsis, Browne, & Ostapuik, 2007).

Kerig (2003) describes four risk processes of the negative effects of IPV on children. First, the child may be triangulated into the parents' conflicts by witnessing violence, being the topic of the argument, and being inappropriately drawn into the process (e.g., asking the child to mediate). Second, children who witness IPV give more negative appraisals about their parents' conflicts, including feeling more threatened, self-blame, hopelessness, and shame. Third, IPV affects children's emotional security through processes of unregulated distress and insecure representations of family relationships. Fourth, IPV spillover may result in abuse of the child, parenting inconsistency, and emotional unavailability of the mother.

Children who are exposed to IPV evidence many of the same effects as children who are emotionally maltreated. They display difficulties in attachment, a disruption of the need for safety and security, fear of parental loss, heightened levels of behavioral and social problems, difficulty with empathy, lower self-esteem, and problems in forming healthy relationships with peers and intimate partners (Holt et al., 2008; Osofsky, 2003). Other severe outcomes are internalizing symptoms (including depression, helplessness, shame, anxiety, and PTSD), and externalizing symptoms such as aggression and oppositional behavior (Fedorowicz, Brown, Warren, & Kerig, 2000; Kerig, 2003). Adolescents are at increased risk for risk-taking behaviors such as delinquency, school truancy, eating disorders, and alcohol/drug abuse (Margolin & Vickerman, 2007). And adults who were exposed to IPV as children have an increased likelihood of perpetrating or experiencing violence in adulthood (Temcheff et al., 2008).

Kitzmann et al. (2003) conducted a meta-analysis of the effects of exposure to IPV on children. Comparing witnesses with non-witnesses,

effect sizes were moderate for PTSD, academic problems, internalizing behaviors and externalizing behaviors (exclusive of aggression). Smaller effect sizes were found for other psychological and social problems (such as attention problems, and poor peer relationships) and were very small for aggression (average $d=0.14$). Although child witnesses consistently differed from non-witnesses on a host of adjustment variables, they did not differ from physically abused children.

Exposure to multiple forms of maltreatment increases the seriousness of the effects on children (Wolfe, Crooks, Lee, McIntyre-Smith, & Jaffe, 2003). For example, men's severe IPV in particular is often accompanied by aggression toward the child, and, in this constellation of violence, children's internalizing problems and threat appraisals are heightened. When the mother is aggressive toward the child and towards her partner, externalizing problems are heightened for boys (McDonald, Jouriles, Tart, & Minze, 2009).

Holt et al.'s (2008) review article notes that child outcomes also are mediated by age (younger children are more dependent on parents' caregiving, and less able to make sense of what is being witnessed), gender (boys show more externalizing and girls more internalizing symptoms), and severity (duration and nature) of the violence to which the child is exposed. However, the meta-analyses by both Wolfe et al. (2003) and Kitmann et al. (2003) found non-significant effect sizes for the moderators of age and gender.

Adult Maltreatment

Maltreatment that is perpetrated by adult family members against one another, including IPV, dating violence, and abuse of the elderly, is alarmingly prevalent.² Official definitions of adult

maltreatment vary widely. The Uniform Crime Report examines only those actions that meet the definition of a crime, including homicide, aggravated assault, simple assault, and forcible rape. In contrast, the World Health Organization (WHO) uses definitions that emphasize the intentionality of the action, and include aspects of abuse that do not meet the level of a crime, such as deprivation and psychological maltreatment (Kilpatrick, 2004). For example, the WHO report on violence and health defines IPV as "any behavior within an intimate relationship that causes physical, psychological, or sexual harm to those in the relationship" (Heise & Garcia-Moreno, 2002, p. 89).

Estimates of the incidence of intimate partner and dating violence vary widely. Tjaden and Thoennes (2000b) note that the range of estimated lifetime prevalence for adult women's experience of heterosexual IPV in national surveys is between 9 and 30%. Similarly, Hickman, Jaycox, and Aronoff (2004) found the following estimates of adolescent victimization: 8–57% of girls and 6–38% of boys experience physical violence, and 14–43% of girls and 0.3–36% of boys experience sexual victimization. Rates of physical and/or sexual assault in same-sex relationships are 11.4% for lesbians and 15.4% for gay men (Tjaden et al., 1999). And approximately 6% of elders experience maltreatment (Cooper, Selwood, & Livingston, 2008).

Fortunately, there are several nationally representative surveys that have assessed the incidence of partner violence. The National Violence Against Women Survey (NVAWS) found the following lifetime prevalence rates for intimate partner relationships (includes dating, cohabitation, and marriage, same and opposite sex, ages 18 and above): 22.1% of women and 7.4% of men report being physically assaulted, 7.7% of women 0.3% of men report being raped, and 4.8% of women and 0.6% of men report being stalked (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000a). The NVAWS also examined the experience of psychological aggression, and found prevalence rates of 12.1% for women and 17.3% for men (these rates are without physical or sexual aggression present) (Coker et al., 2002). For the year 2007, the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey of ninth to twelfth

²Barnett et al. (2005) note that *intimate partner violence* is the preferred term for describing the physical, sexual, or psychological violence that occurs between adult partners who are/were sexually intimate, and married or cohabiting. *Dating violence*, in contrast, refers to the violence that happens between adolescents or unmarried college students (p. 251). I follow their use of terminology here.

grade students found rates of heterosexual teen dating violence as follows: 11% of males and 8.8% of females reported experiencing physical violence, and 4.5% of males and 11.3% of females reported experiencing forced intercourse (Eaton et al., 2008).

Much like the arena of child maltreatment research, work on adult family maltreatment is beset with a host of methodological issues. A lack of consistent terminology, let alone differing definitions and operationalizations, is common. Methodological issues include the fact that study participants are difficult to recruit, agreement across members of the same couple is inconsistent, the accuracy of retrospective recall may be questionable, and the explication of contextualized and mediated models is limited (Jordan, 2009; Rosenbaum & Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 2006).

Physical Violence in Heterosexual Relationships

Individual factors. There are several consistent demographic risk factors for physical IPV. Younger individuals are more likely to both perpetrate and experience intimate violence (Barnett et al., 2005). Economic factors are consistently associated with partner violence, such as having a lower income, living in a neighborhood with few economic opportunities, living in an urban area, and low levels of formal education (Barnett et al., 2005; Carlson, Worden, van Ryn, & Bachman, 2003). However, effect sizes for economic variables and age are small (Stith, Smith, Penn, Ward, & Tritt, 2004). In contrast, consistent relationships are found between alcohol use and physical partner violence, with complex relationships among the factors of alcohol use, gender, race, income, and physical partner violence (Schafer, Caetano, & Cunradi, 2004). The effect sizes for males' alcohol use are moderate, whereas the effect sizes for women are small (Stith et al., 2004). Finally, while early studies noted that pregnancy was a risk factor, Jasinski (2004) notes that support for this relationship has been inconsistent.

Race and gender are considered to be inconsistent risk factors for IPV. Although some studies

find a heightened risk for minority women, when other factors such as income are controlled, race differences disappear (Carlson et al., 2003). The debate over the relative rates of violence perpetration by men vs. women continues to rage. Both representative and unrepresentative surveys using the Conflict Tactics Scale find gender symmetry (e.g., Straus & Gelles, 1990), whereas measures used by the National Institute of Justice and the Uniform Crime Reports find higher rates of male perpetration and female victimization (see Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000b).

Personality risk factors have been studied extensively. Young women's risk of experiencing physical violence in dating relationships is associated with the extent to which they demonstrate externalizing problems, internalizing problems, prior victimization in a romantic relationship, more romantic and sexual partners, and low academic achievement (Cleveland, Herrera, & Stuewig, 2003; Vezina & Hebert, 2007). Young men's risk of victimization is related to having been hit as a child by an adult, low self-esteem, and physical fights with peers (Foshee, Benefield, Ennett, Bauman, & Suchindran, 2004).

The characteristics of men who perpetrate physical partner violence have been examined in both clinical and community samples. Anger and hostility are higher in men who perpetrate intimate violence, and this relationship holds (with effect sizes in the medium to large range) even when marital discord is taken into account (Norlander & Eckhardt, 2005). Physically aggressive men show higher levels of antisocial/delinquent behaviors, non-conformity, poor social skills, problems with anger management, affect dysregulation and impulsivity (White, McMullin, Swartout, Sechrist, & Gollehon, 2008), and poor empathic accuracy and perspective taking (Clements, Holtzworth-Munroe, Schweinle, & Ickes, 2007; Covell, Huss, & Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 2007). Men who perpetrate physical violence also are likely to engage in verbal abuse and forced sex (effect sizes are large). These men tend to have a past history of partner abuse, hold attitudes condoning violence, hold traditional sex role attitudes, be depressed, display anger/hostility (moderate effect sizes), and display jealousy

(small effect) (Stith et al., 2004). Men who perpetrate at a clinical level (i.e., causing injury, requiring police or social service intervention) display both childhood and adolescent psychopathology, and have extensive personality deviance (Ehrensaft, Moffitt, & Caspi, 2004).

Research on men who perpetrate physical partner violence has emphasized their heterogeneity. Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart (1994) identified three types of violent men: borderline/dysphoric (who also display volatility, hostility, and dependency on the partner), generally violent/antisocial (who display high levels of control of the partner), and family only (those who are violent only with family members; these men are the least violent and do not exhibit psychopathology). The violence of men with borderline personality disorder is reactive and enacted out of emotion (and this group is characterized by preoccupied attachment), whereas men diagnosed with antisocial personality disorder are more proactive/controlling in their use of violence, and display dismissing attachment (Babcock, Jacobson, Gottman, & Yerington, 2000). Prentky (2004) suggests three dimensions that underlie such batterer differences: misogynistic vs. general anger, hostile masculinity, and impulsive/antisocial behavior.

The characteristics of women who use violence in their relationships has been studied less extensively; indeed, in their meta-analysis Stith et al. (2004) were unable to assess effect sizes for individual-level variables due to a dearth of evidence. There is some evidence that women who perpetrate partner violence are generally more aggressive, which may be a result of assortive mating that matches antisocial men and women who had begun to show conduct problems in adolescence (Ehrensaft et al., 2004). Babcock, Miller, and Siard (2003), using a sample of women referred for treatment for violent behavior, identified two types: (1) *partner-only* violent women who used violence out of fear or self-defense (i.e., in reaction to the partners' violence) and (2) *generally violent* women who used more instrumental violence, and reported more traumatic symptoms. Other research indicates that women engage in physical violence in self-defense, and to express

negative emotion, regain control, or gain retribution for emotional hurts or past abuse (Caldwell, Swan, Allen, Sullivan, & Snow, 2009; Lloyd, Emery, & Klatt, 2009).

Family factors. Prior victimization (including violence in the family of origin, community violence, and peer harassment) is a clear risk factor for both perpetration and victimization in dating and adult intimate relationships (Afifi et al., 2009). Having friends who use violence also plays a role; indeed, Arriaga and Foshee (2004) note that having peers who use dating violence predicts dating violence better than family of origin violence.

Other family of origin characteristics related to dating violence include inadequate parental supervision, use of harsh discipline, and lack of closeness to parents during adolescence (Vezina & Hebert, 2007). Parenting in the family of origin that is neglectful, rejecting, coercive, or harsh is related to general antisocial behavior, which in turn is related to partner physical violence. Such parenting models coercive/rejecting behavior, and is related to poor attachment and maladaptive relational schemas, and negative intrapersonal and interpersonal development (Schwartz, Hage, Bush, & Burns, 2006).

Relationship dynamics have been studied for both adolescent and adult IPV. In dating relationships, high levels of conflict and destructive anger expression, and seriousness of the relationship, are related to higher levels of violence directed at young women (Vezina & Hebert, 2007). Both men and women report anger, jealousy, and love as precipitators of their aggression (Gonzalez-Mendez & Hernandez-Cabrera, 2009; Hettrich & O'Leary, 2007), and dynamics of power and control are integrally tied to IPV (Olson, Fine, & Lloyd, 2005). Wolf and Foshee (2003) found that both direct and indirect destructive anger expression was associated with violence perpetration for females, whereas only direct destructive anger expression was associated for males. These anger styles also mediated the relationship between witnessing/experiencing violence in the family of origin and dating violence.

The relationship of marital satisfaction and conflict to IPV has been extensively examined.

Recent research indicates that a consistent relationship exists between both verbal conflict and male domination and partner violence directed at women (Vives-Cases, Gil-Gonzalez, & Carrasco-Portino, 2009). Stith, Green, Smith, and Ward (2008) note that the association between marital dissatisfaction and physical violence is stronger for victims than for perpetrators, and for clinic vs. community samples (overall, effect sizes are medium).

Laboratory observations of couple interaction have yielded strong support for negativity and power as core mechanisms when nondistressed, distressed-nonviolent, and distressed-husband violent couples are compared. Couples with a violent husband exhibited higher levels of negative affect, aggressive cognitions, cycles of attack and defense, as well as lower levels of facilitation and de-escalating behaviors (Clements & Holtzworth-Munroe, 2009; Cordova, Jacobson, Gottman, Rushe, & Cox, 1993). Aggressive husbands used belligerence, contempt, provocative forms of anger, and controlling behavior, and were likely to reject their wives' influence (Coan, Gottman, Babcock, & Jacobson, 1997; Jacobson et al., 1994). And, observed interaction predicted the level of relational violence 4 years later (Hellmuth & McNulty, 2008). Ultimately, couples with a violent husband are characterized by a relational climate that includes a volatile relationship, long-standing anger, and persistent frustrations. This climate is accompanied by interaction patterns that are ineffective and ritualized, in which husbands react with hostility and belligerence toward their wives (Lloyd & Emery, 2000a).

The effects of physical violence. The majority of studies on the impact of IPV examine the effects of violence on women. Research by Holtzworth-Munroe (2005) indicates, for example, that psychological disorders more often are seen as consequences of women's receipt of violence and as causes of men's perpetration. Short-term effects on women include injury (with the risk of injury being much higher for women, Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000b), and fear and self-blame (Lloyd & Emery, 2000b). Mental health effects for women are often found to be a consequence of

both dating and IPV, with the two most common being PTSD and depression (Holtzworth-Munroe, 2005). Women also display heightened anxiety, hopelessness, somatization, suicidal behaviors, and substance abuse (Briere & Jordan, 2004; Vezina & Hebert, 2007). Women evidence a wider range of mental health outcomes, including internalizing disorders, externalizing behavior, and suicidal ideation, whereas men display externalizing disorders (Afifi et al., 2009). And when coercive behaviors are examined as well as physical violence, the experience of coercion emerges as a stronger predictor of mental health outcomes than does violence, with higher adverse effects occurring for women (Prospero, 2009). Finally, the adjustment of women who have experienced physical partner violence is mediated by levels of self-blame (both characterological and behavioral), perceived control, and social support (Beeble, Bybee, Sullivan, & Adams, 2009; O'Neill & Kerig, 2000).

Briere and Jordan (2004), in discussing the dynamics of the effect of physical violence on women, distinguish between direct victimization effects and victim-specific variables. Direct effects include trauma that may cause injuries, acute stress disorder, and PTSD; and disruptions in schemas for safety, intimacy, and trust in others, which may lead to negative mood states. Certainly, the frequency and severity of the physical violence experienced heighten these effects. Victim-specific variables also affect mental health outcomes; outcomes are exacerbated by a history of prior trauma (childhood physical or sexual abuse), a tendency to react to trauma with heightened fear and negative connotations or to dissociate, and comorbid mental disturbance and substance abuse. Ultimately, Briere and Jordan (2004) conclude that women's responses to physical violence can best be characterized in terms of "response complexity," rather than any particular syndrome, given the broad range of post-trauma symptoms and moderating variables.

Evidence on the impact of IPV on men is scarce (Frieze, 2008). Here too, there is considerable debate about the extent of the abuse experienced by men in intimate partnerships. Saunders (2002) concludes that female to male violence

is not behaviorally the same as male to female violence, while Straus (2008) concludes that female assaults on men are a major social problem. Cook (2009) provides a qualitative assessment of the impact of domestic violence against men noting that immediate effects include bewilderment, shame, not hitting back, hiding their experiences of violence, and fear of leaving their children behind. Williams and Frieze (2005), in a nationally representative study, note that male victims of minor violence report little distress, whereas male victims of severe violence do report psychological distress (but at levels that are significantly lower than reported by female victims). Clearly, this is an arena of IPV research that bears further systematic scrutiny.

Sexual Violence in Heterosexual Relationships

Adult sexual violence has been extensively studied, and this arena of study encompasses a wide variety of study methodologies, measurement techniques, and individuals studied (from strangers to partners in a long-term committed relationship). Christopher and Pflieger (2007) note that there are two interrelated forms of sexual violence: *sexual coercion*, which includes manipulation, psychological pressure, lying, and incapacitation, and *sexual assault*, which includes threats or use of force (in line with common definitions of rape and attempted rape). In this section, I concentrate where possible on sexual coercion and assault that occur in the context of a heterosexual relationship, including casual and serious dating, cohabitation, and marriage. It should be noted however that studies do not always differentiate between acquaintances, casual or serious dating relationships in the presentation of their findings.

Individual factors. Certainly, gender is the most consistent risk factor, with women at greater risk of sexual coercion and assault (Struckman-Johnson, Struckman-Johnson, & Anderson, 2003). Indeed, women constitute 86% of rape victims, their rapists are male in 99.6% of cases,

and their rapes are generally more likely to take place in an ongoing relationship (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2006), although women who are divorced or separated are also at heightened risk of sexual assault by the former partner (Martin, Taft, & Resick, 2007). Alcohol use has been a consistent risk marker for both perpetrators and victims of sexual violence, although the majority of evidence here is for proximal alcohol use rather than long-term alcohol abuse (Testa, 2004). And the most consistent risk factor for women is prior sexual victimization as children or young adolescents (Widom, Czaja, & Dutton, 2008).

The factors that place men at risk for heterosexual sexual assault victimization are not well understood. There are distinct gender differences in the relationship between perpetrator and victim; Christopher and Pflieger (2007) note that in the NSVAW, 18% of sexual assaults against men and 62% of sexual assaults perpetrated against women were committed by an intimate partner. Men are more likely to be raped by an acquaintance (including co-workers, friends, teachers, neighbors), and by a male perpetrator (85.2% of cases), with 48% of these sexual assaults occurring before the age of 12 for males (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2006). Tewksbury (2007) notes that gay and bisexual men are overrepresented among male victims, and men's risk of adult sexual victimization is higher among those who were victimized as children.

Men who perpetrate sexual violence have been studied extensively. There is consistent evidence in the dating violence literature that sexually coercive men display hypermasculinity, hostility towards women, hypersexuality and high levels of pornography consumption (Adams-Curtis & Forbes, 2004; Ryan, 2004; Vega & Malamuth, 2007). Acceptance of rape myths (e.g., "the woman's dress or behavior led to her assault") also has been widely documented as a correlate of men's use of sexual coercion (Ryan). Men who perpetrate marital sexual assault are more likely to be unemployed, have witnessed marital violence in their families of origin, view sex from an impersonal perspective, engage in sexually coercive fantasies, use alcohol and drugs, and demonstrate hypermasculine qualities (Martin et al., 2007).

Men who are sexually coercive in dating relationships also have social networks that are supportive of sexual violence, with the research on this topic being focused largely on members of fraternities and sports teams (Adams-Curtis & Forbes, 2004). Murnen and Kohlman (2007) conducted a meta-analysis and found that athletic participation or fraternity membership was associated with hypermasculinity (large effect sizes), rape-supportive myths (medium effect sizes), and self-reported sexual aggression (small effect sizes). A general pattern appears to be that sexually aggressive men are embedded in social networks that contain other sexually aggressive men and victimized women (Christopher & Pflieger, 2007).

Relationship factors. Sexual violence perpetrated against an acquaintance or dating partner is likely to begin with trust and compliance gaining tactics as well as romantic overtures (Woods & Porter, 2008). The most common scenario for sexual violence in dating is a history of prior sexual contact, proximal alcohol use, engagement in sexual stimulation, and male use of coercion and/or ignoring the woman's no (Adams-Curtis & Forbes, 2004). Men tend to use more forceful, power-assertive, and exploitive tactics than do women, and are more likely to cause serious harm (Struckman-Johnson et al., 2003). There may be unequal power and investment in the relationship, with women who are anxiously attached and more highly invested experiencing higher levels of sexual coercion (Christopher & Pflieger, 2007). Indeed, women are more likely to consent to unwanted sex than are men (Impett & Peplau, 2003), and their ability to say no diminishes if the couple has an established sexual relationship (Adams-Curtis & Forbes, 2004). Adolescent girls are at the greatest risk of coercion in a committed relationship; in addition, an age difference between partners results in a dynamic of a younger female being pressured into sex by her older male partner (Christopher & Pflieger, 2007).

Study of the relational dynamics in marriage have concentrated on an examination of marital rape, which is estimated to have occurred in 10–14% of marriages in general, and 50% of marriages where the husband is also physically

violent (Martin et al., 2007). Ironically, although marital rape is the most prevalent type of rape, it has been studied the least (Bennice & Ressick, 2003). Perpetrators of marital rape use coercive tactics such as power assertion, emotional coercion, bullying, humiliation, calling upon the husband's entitlement to sex, and severe physical violence (Bergen & Bukovec, 2006; Martin et al., 2007). Wives resist the sexual assault through verbal means (attempts to placate or convince the husband to stop) and physical means (running away, self-defensive violence) (Martin et al.). Marital rape is more likely to occur in a context of high marital dissatisfaction, status inequities of age and education, and disagreements over the frequency and type of sexual interaction (Martin et al.).

Scholars have begun to examine the co-occurrence of sexual and physical violence in intimate relationships (Anderson, 2010), and indeed, Stith et al. (2004) note large effect sizes for the co-occurrence of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. White et al. (2008) call for the recognition of dual perpetration of sexual and physical aggression as a unique form of heterosexual IPV. Dual perpetrating men report higher levels of witnessing violence, child sexual abuse victimization, physical punishment as a child, conformity to peer norms, acceptance of male violence, loss of control, and adolescent delinquent behaviors, and less empathy.

The effects of sexual violence. The impact of sexual assault is well documented for women. Victims report short-term effects, including fear, sexual aversion, and lack of trust (Barnett et al., 2005); these may be especially acute for victims who were in a committed relationship with the perpetrator (Bennice & Ressick, 2003). Long-term consequences include alcohol/drug abuse, suicide, gynecological problems, and chronic illnesses (Barnett et al., 2005; Martin et al., 2007). Perhaps the most carefully studied effects are post-traumatic stress disorder and heightened trauma symptoms (Elliott, Mok, & Briere, 2004). Women who have experienced marital rape show more symptoms of trauma, depression, dissociation, and stress than women who experience

stranger or acquaintance sexual assault; this is in part related to the risk of repeated sexual assaults and physical battering associated with marital rape (Bennice & Ressick, 2003). The mental health effects for women are exacerbated when the situation is perceived as life-threatening/dangerous, or when the victim uses avoidant coping strategies and self-blame. The magnification of adverse mental health consequences also may result when the victim experiences negative reactions from informal social networks or the judicial system, and when victims have experienced prior sexual traumas (Campbell, Dworkin, & Cabral, 2009).

Less is known about the effects of sexual assault victimization on men. What is best known is that male victims are highly unlikely to report being victimized, or to seek assistance from informal or formal services. Although reactions vary, anger, depression, anxiety, lowered self-esteem, and sexual dysfunction have been documented (Christopher & Pflieger, 2007; Tewksbury, 2007), while long-term effects of rape in particular include high levels of trauma symptomatology (Elliott et al., 2004). Most studies of male victims of rape, however, include strangers, acquaintances, and partners together in the analysis, so the effects of victimization by one's intimate partner are not yet clearly delineated.

One controversy in the sexual assault field centers on the scope and definition of sexual assault and rape. The debate centers on whether or not women who experience sexual coercion/assault name their experiences as rape, and whether it is appropriate to include in incidence statistics those cases where the victim experienced forced intercourse, or forced attempted intercourse, but did not apply the label of rape (Fisher, Daigle, Cullen, & Turner, 2003). This debate has sparked a more careful examination of acknowledged vs. unacknowledged rapes; indeed, Fisher et al. (2003) note that even when the victim's experiences meet the legal definition of rape, only half of the completed rapes and less than 5% of attempted rapes are acknowledged. Unacknowledged rapes are more likely to have been perpetrated by a known perpetrator or romantic partner, and the victim is more likely to

have engaged in prior sexual intercourse with the perpetrator. Acknowledged rapes are more likely to have involved the use or threat of force, injury, or forceful victim resistance. No consistent evidence identifies personality differences and mixed evidence exists about psychological/mental health effects. One exception to these results, however, is that unacknowledged victims may be at higher risk for revictimization (Fisher et al.). A critical conclusion is made by Peterson and Muehlenhard (2007), however, that "rape is about the absence of consent, not the absence of desire" (p. 85). Indeed, Muehlenhard and Peterson's (2005) work on the ambivalence of desire for women is pivotal in advancing our understanding of sexual violence in dating relationships.

Physical and Sexual Violence in Gay and Lesbian Partnerships

There is a growing body of research on the IPV that occurs in gay and lesbian relationships. Gay male relationships are characterized by higher levels of physical and sexual assault as compared to heterosexual relationships (Balsam et al., 2005; Tjaden et al., 1999). The evidence on lesbian (compared to heterosexual) relationships is mixed; Tjaden et al. (1999) found that lesbian relationships were less physically and sexually violent, whereas, Balsam et al. (2005) found higher levels of physical violence in these relationships.

Individual factors. Risk factors for IPV against gay and lesbian partners have not been extensively studied, and there are few studies utilizing large representative samples that might help explicate these risk factors. There is evidence that individual factors specific to GLBT individuals, such as internalized homophobia (with its resultant self-hate and lowered self-esteem), may heighten the risk of experiencing and perpetrating violence in a same-sex partnership (Balsam & Szymanski, 2005; Murray, Mobley, Buford, & Seaman-DeJohn, 2006).

Perpetrators of same-sex physical violence show heightened levels of substance abuse,

depression, and insecurity, and lowered levels of self-esteem, control, and communication skills (Murray et al., 2006). While there is consistent evidence of a link between physical violence in the family of origin and IPV for gay men, the evidence of this link is inconsistent for lesbians (Kulkin, Williams, Borne, de la Bretonne, & Laurendine, 2007).

The risk of experiencing sexual coercion or assault as an adult is two times higher among lesbians and five times higher among gay men (as compared to heterosexuals), with a male being highly likely to be the perpetrator for both groups (Balsam et al., 2005; Tjaden et al., 1999). Gay men are at higher risk of an intimate partner sexual assault if they grew up in a home characterized by sexual violence, and addictive behaviors, or if they experienced a sexual assault as a child by a non-family member (Christopher & Pflieger, 2007; Heidt, Marx, & Gold, 2005).

Relationship and contextual factors. The dynamics of physical violence in gay and lesbian partnerships are believed to be similar to those in heterosexual relationships (Murray et al., 2006), although using a heterosexually based lens as a point of analysis is very limiting (Ristock, 2003). Fortunately, the research on same-sex violence has moved from the concept of “mutual violence” to one differentiating perpetrators from victims. Perpetrators tend to engage in intentional coercive actions, including use of alcohol or drug use to lower inhibitions, fostering guilt and threatening to leave the relationship, and playing upon emotional or economic dependency, whereas victims feel self-blame and emotional distress (McClennen, 2005; Strike, Myers, Calzavara, & Haubrich, 2001). Same-sex intimate partner battering is often a product of underlying efforts to gain power and control, with resultant power imbalance dynamics leading to the escalation of conflict, poor conflict resolution skills, attachment fears, exploitation of the partner’s weaknesses, blaming the victim for provoking the violence, and jealousy (Brown, 2008; Murray et al., 2006; Ristock, 2003). And, in lesbian relationships, higher levels of IPV are associated

with more “fusion” in the relationship and more control by the partner (Causby, Lockhart, White, & Greene, 1995).

The examination of mediated models is an important approach for understanding how relational dynamics come together. Balsam and Szymanski (2005) demonstrated that the relationship between internalized homophobia and same-sex violence was fully mediated by relational distress. Craft, Serovich, McKenry, and Lim (2008) discovered that the relationship between stress and violence perpetration was mediated by an insecure attachment style.

There are unique contexts surrounding same-sex partner violence. Perhaps the most important of these is the impact of living in a context of homophobia. For example, living openly with a same-sex partner increases one’s visibility as gay or lesbian and adds to the stressors already associated with being a sexual minority (Murray et al., 2006). The threat of being “outed” by the partner may be a unique type of psychological abuse that further isolates the victim (Ristock, 2003). Gay/lesbian partners who are battered may be less likely to reveal their abuse, out of fear of shaming the LGB community or exposing the community to additional prejudice and homophobia (Brown, 2008). Additional problems may result from the homophobia experienced in the legal and formal intervention systems, which may mitigate against seeking help from these institutions and lead to increased reliance on friendship networks (McClennen, 2005; Murray et al., 2006).

The presence of sexual violence adds unique dynamics. Contextually, lesbian sexual violence does not fit with prevailing cultural norms emphasizing that women are sexually nonaggressive, and that women do not engage in sex with other women (Girshick, 2002). Stereotypes about gay men, in turn, emphasize their hypersexuality and that they cannot be victims (Brown, 2008). Finally, men who are HIV positive may have heightened vulnerability for experiencing same-sex violence (Murray et al., 2006) and may be constrained to stay with an abusive partner (Craft & Serovich, 2005).

The effects of physical and sexual violence. Short-term effects of same-sex physical violence on the victim include self-blame and conflict avoidance (Murray et al., 2006), while long-term effects include anxiety and traumatic stress disorders (Kulkin et al., 2007). The immediate effects of experiencing lesbian sexual violence include fear, a sense of betrayal, confusion, anger and guilt; long-term effects include heightened levels of depression, PTSD symptoms, and suicidal feelings (Girshick, 2002; Heidt et al., 2005). The effects of experiencing non-consensual sex for gay men include heightened risk for alcohol abuse, diminished self-esteem, mood disorders, depression, and PTSD symptoms (Heidt et al.). Finally, gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals who were sexually victimized both in childhood and adulthood show the highest levels of psychological distress, PTSD symptoms, and depression (Heidt et al.).

Psychological Aggression in Heterosexual Partnerships

Perhaps the field of adult maltreatment that faces the greatest methodological challenges is that of psychological aggression. Definitional issues are the first of these challenges and Follingstad (2007) notes, for example, that “psychological abuse” has become the predominant term for verbal abuse/aggression, psychological maltreatment/aggression, and emotional abuse. Given that abuse implies subjective judgment that a “threshold” of reprehensible behavior has been reached, and the consequent problems of equating mildly aggressive actions with egregious ones, Follingstad calls for a change to the term “psychological aggression.” She defines this as “the *general concepts and range* of behaviors engaged in by intimate adult partners which encompass the range of verbal and mental methods designed to emotionally wound, coerce, control, intimidate, psychologically harm, and express anger” (p. 443). Follingstad (2007) notes key methodological problems: (1) lack of consistent conceptualization and measurement (2) conflation with physical aggression; (3) emphasis

on the reports of recipients, without consideration of the interpersonal context; and (4) absence of sophisticated measures that can capture the complexity of psychological aggression.

In Kelly’s (2004) review of this literature, two dimensions of psychological aggression emerged: dominance/control (including hostility, isolation and activity control, restrictive engulfment, and withdrawal) and emotional/verbal (including criticism, coercion, denigration, and ridicule). However, these conceptualizations are complicated by the fact that the impact of the aggressive act is included in the definition, such that the intent to cause harm, instill fear, and damage self-esteem are seen as necessary components for the label of abuse (Follingstad, 2007).

The relational dynamics of psychological aggression have rarely been studied independently, as it is often conceptualized and studied as a precursor/covariant to physical violence (Outlaw, 2009). Psychological aggression both co-occurs with physical aggression at high rates as well as predicts the severity and future occurrence of physical aggression (O’Leary & Slep, 2003; Outlaw, 2009). For example, O’Leary and Slep (2006) discovered both men and women reported verbal aggression as a common precipitant of mild physical aggression. Winstok and Perkis (2009), in testing a model of escalation, found that verbal aggression was more closely related to control than to physical aggression. Consequently, they concluded that control and physical aggression were actually conceptualizations of the same construct.

Attachment anxiety is related to both the perpetration and receipt of psychological aggression (Riggs & Kaminski, 2010). Weston (2008) notes that insecure attachment mediates the relationship of psychological aggression to relationship quality. For men, the relationship of avoidance of intimacy and psychological aggression is mediated by anger; for women, anxiety over abandonment is related to higher levels of frustration and verbal aggressiveness, which in turn is related to the use of physical violence (Lafontaine & Lussier, 2005).

The impact of psychological aggression is difficult to tease out, given the co-occurrence of

physical violence, the differing definitions of aggression/abuse, and the failure to control for severity and duration. There is evidence from methodologically strong studies that psychological aggression and depressive symptoms are consistently related, although this is hard to untangle when physical aggression is also present (Follingstad, 2009). Coker et al. (2002), in an analysis of NVAWS data, note that individuals experiencing the power/control form of psychological abuse (without physical/sexual violence) show higher levels of depressive symptoms and alcohol/drug use, and poorer health. And, psychological aggression is associated with women's leaving, or wanting to leave, the relationship (Follingstad, 2009).

The evidence for the influence of psychological aggression on PTSD is mixed. A study by Babcock, Roseman, Green, and Ross (2008), for example, found that psychological aggression did not predict PTSD symptoms beyond that predicted by physical assault. In contrast, other research (Basile, Arias, Desai, & Thompson, 2004) has indicated that psychological aggression was related to PTSD symptoms after controlling for sexual and physical violence, injuries, and stalking. Basile et al. (2004) note that a "dosing" effect may be evident, such that the experience of more types of violence was related to greater PTSD symptoms. There are also contradictory results for the relationship between psychological aggression and anxiety and self-esteem (Follingstad, 2009). To date, Follingstad (2007) cautions that path models do not exist that clearly document the levels/forms of psychological aggression that produce particular outcomes.

Elder Abuse

The study of elder abuse began in earnest in the late 1980s. Since then, research efforts have concentrated on understanding the prevalence and types of abuse, as well as risk factors and effects. In a comprehensive review of studies of the incidence of elder abuse, Cooper et al. (2008) conclude that approximately 6% of the elderly population reports experiencing some form of

significant abuse. These rates rise considerably if vulnerable populations are examined, with about one-fourth of vulnerable elders and one-third of their caregivers reporting receiving/perpetrating significant abuse (these estimates include family members, and other caregivers of the elderly). The National Elder Abuse Incidence Study further notes that 90% of known elder abuse perpetrators are family members, with two-thirds of them being spouses and adult children (National Center on Elder Abuse, 1998). Elder abuse takes many forms, and may include physical, sexual and psychological violence, active and passive neglect, abandonment, medical abuse, and financial exploitation (Krienert, Walsh, & Turner, 2009).

Like all areas of family violence research, the field of elder abuse has several methodological limitations. Few studies of the extent and dynamics of elder abuse involve representative samples of elders, consistent definitions and measurements, or can be characterized as prospective investigations (Jasinski & Dietz, 2004). Finally, studies do not always tease out the relationship between victim and perpetrator, making it difficult to untangle family dynamics.

Individual factors. There are several consistent individual-level risk factors for elder abuse. Victims are typically older than 75 (and elders over 80 are abused at two to three times the rate of other elders), living with family members, and socially isolated (Krienert et al., 2009; Lachs & Pillemer, 2004). Individuals with dementia, particularly those who display disruptive behaviors, are at heightened risk (Bonnie & Wallace, 2003), but the evidence on gender as a risk marker is mixed. While some nationally representative surveys find men to have a higher risk (associated with their greater tendency to live with others), data from both the NVAWS and cases reported to authorities show that, among individuals over the age of 55, women are more likely than men to experience IPV (Jasinski & Dietz, 2004; Krienert et al., 2009). Finally, there is mixed evidence on physical impairment and the race of the victim as risk markers (Bonnie & Wallace, 2003).

Consistent risk markers for the perpetration of elder abuse include dependence on the victim,

mental illness, and alcohol abuse (Lachs & Pillemer, 2004). Men are more likely to perpetrate elder abuse in general, as well as more likely to perpetrate physical violence (particularly aggravated assault) against elders, whereas women are more likely to perpetrate elder neglect (Krienert et al., 2009; Penhale, 2003). Like other forms of violence, women are more likely to be abused by a family member (spouse or adult child), whereas men are more likely to be abused by a stranger or acquaintance (Krienert et al.). Violence in the family of origin and caregiving stress are inconsistent risk markers for perpetration (Bonnie & Wallace, 2003; Lachs & Pillemer, 2004). Finally, there may be an association between dementia, and its resultant agitation and delusions, and the perpetration of violence against intimate partners, although the evidence here is preliminary (Reeves, Desmarais, Nicholls, & Douglas, 2007).

Family factors. Initially, elder abuse was conceptualized as being catalyzed by the stress of caring for a dependent elder (Straka & Montminy, 2006). As a result, services and supports were developed for caregivers, to help relieve stress and prevent abusive behavior (Lundy & Grossman, 2005). However, this view of the dependent elder has given way to an understanding that adult children who abuse their parents often have significant mental health problems, and depend emotionally, financially, and for housing, on the elderly parent (Lachs & Pillemer, 2004; Lundy & Grossman, 2005). In addition, custodial grandparents may be at heightened risk of abuse by grandchildren, particularly when the grandchildren have significant mental health or behavioral risk factors (Brownell, Berman, Nelson, & Fofana, 2005).

Elder IPV has tended to “fall between the gaps” of the study of elder abuse and domestic violence (Straka & Montminy, 2006). Given that a sizeable proportion of elder abuse is heterosexual intimate partner abuse (ranging between 30 and 60% in national surveys), scholars have begun to single out this form of elder abuse for particular study (Desmarais & Reeves, 2007; Penhale, 2003). Relational dynamics are believed to be similar to those seen for younger couples, and in long-term relationships, they most likely

reflect dynamics that have been present in the relationship for some time, with the exception of the development of dementia (Desmarais & Reeves). Elder partner violence includes controlling behaviors, refusing to give medicine, physical aggression, and sexual coercion/assault (Zink & Fisher, 2007). Psychological abuse is the most common form of elder partner violence and is integrally tied to issues of power and control (Seff, Beaulaurier, & Newman, 2008). The short- and long-term effects of elder IPV are also believed to be similar to those experienced by younger adult victims. They include self-blame, reduced self-esteem, loss of a sense of self, poor coping skills, depression, despair (Penhale, 2003), decreased functional capacity, and increased hospitalizations, emergency room visits, and risk of death (Zink & Fisher, 2007).

Elder partner violence is characterized by unique features that provide a context for this form of abuse. One of these features is cohort effects, which means that older women and men who hold more traditional gender-role expectations also may be less inclined to consider divorce, and be less likely to seek help for a private “family problem” (Straka & Montminy, 2006). Older women, in particular, may face increased financial constraints that prevent leaving an abusive relationship (Seff et al., 2008).

The Cycle of Family Violence

The intergenerational transmission of violence has long been heralded as a major explanatory factor in understanding family violence. Numerous retrospective studies demonstrate that those who perpetrate child maltreatment, engage in youth violence, and perpetrate or receive adult IPV and sexual aggression report heightened levels of experiencing maltreatment and/or witnessing IPV as a child (Barnett et al., 2005). Indeed, the cycle of violence explanation permeates the research and popular literature alike. The presence of family violence in one’s background clearly raises the risk of subsequent perpetration of violence; for example, child sexual abuse doubles or triples the risk of subsequent revictimization for women

(Classen, Palesh, & Aggarwal, 2005), men who witnessed/experienced violence in their families of origin are twice as likely to be abusive toward their wives (Margolin et al., 2003), and women's risk of experiencing IPV is twice as high if she experienced child abuse (Hattery, 2009).

Recent retrospective studies of the cycle of family violence have emphasized the study of mediators and moderators. For example, O'Hearn and Margolin (2000) found that men's beliefs about the legitimacy of using violence against wives moderated the relationship between family of origin violence and perpetrating IPV. Men who condoned violence evidenced a strong intergenerational transmission of violence, whereas men who did not condone violence evidenced nonsignificant levels of intergenerational transmission. Crawford and Wright (2007) found that, while the experience of child emotional abuse was related to adult perpetration of intimate violence and victimization, this relationship was fully mediated by interpersonal schemas of entitlement, mistrust, and emotional inhibition.

There are also a number of excellent prospective studies of the cycle of violence, and these represent a stronger methodology for understanding the intergenerational transmission of violence perpetration. There are a number of studies that examine how the cycle of violence is related to *youth perpetration of violence, juvenile delinquency, and adult crime*. The experience of physical abuse predicts later involvement in youth violence, and these effects are heightened for those who experienced physical abuse as adolescents (Maas, Herrenkohl, & Sousa, 2008). Young adults who experienced physical abuse during adolescence evidenced a heightened risk of involvement in crime that carried over into adulthood, and this relationship was heightened for those who were low income, living in an urban area, and living in a single or step-parent family (Fagan, 2005). Egeland, Yates, Appleyard, and van Dulmen (2002), in a study of high risk youth, found support for an attachment model to explain the relationship between child maltreatment and youth violence. The relationship of physical abuse and/or emotional neglect to middle childhood externalizing behaviors was mediated by

early childhood alienation (i.e., a form of problematic attachment) from the mother. The impact of child maltreatment on youth antisocial and delinquent behavior, in turn, was mediated by middle childhood externalizing behaviors.

Other prospective mediational models demonstrate that family, school, and peer factors mediate the relationship between child maltreatment and youth violence. For example, Herrenkohl, Huang, Tajima, and Whitney's (2003) prospective study tested a path model of the relationship between mother's abusive discipline and youth violence. The strongest pathway showed that abusive discipline predicted positive attitudes toward using violence, which predicted involvement with antisocial peers, which in turn was a predictor of violent behavior by the adolescent. Abusive discipline also predicted lowered school commitment, which in turn was associated with involvement with antisocial peers. Finally, mother's abusive discipline was related to lowered parental attachment, which in turn was related to youth violence.

The cycle of violence has been studied prospectively with respect to the *perpetration of IPV*. Dankowski et al. (2006) studied affect dysregulation (i.e., high levels of internalizing and externalizing behaviors) among male adolescent juvenile delinquents who had been physically abused as children. They found that family of origin processes (chaos and attachment) were related to higher levels of affect dysregulation, which in turn were related to higher levels of adult perpetration of IPV. Capaldi and Clark (1998) hypothesized a mediated model in their examination of the links between parent antisocial behavior, unskilled parenting, parental dyadic aggression, adolescent antisocial behavior, and subsequent IPV. While parent antisocial behavior was linked to both unskilled parenting and dyadic aggression, poor parenting practices were more strongly related to later partner violence (through its association with adolescent antisocial behavior) than was parent violence toward the child. Capaldi and Clark concluded that previous research has overemphasized parental partner violence and failed to examine the processes of unskilled parenting.

Early experiences of child maltreatment are related to later *perpetration of sexual violence* as well. In a prospective study of boys and young men, physical abuse experienced in childhood was related to adult sexual coercion in an intimate relationship, but was completely mediated by the extent to which adolescent delinquency was evident (Casey, Beadnell, & Lindhorst, 2009). In the same study, the experience of child sexual abuse had a direct effect on adolescent/adult sexually coercive behavior, with this relationship being partially mediated by the extent to which sex was initiated at an early age. The risk of young adult sexual violence perpetration was highest for men who experienced both physical and sexual abuse as children.

Finally, there is a burgeoning literature on *revictimization*. Widom et al.'s (2008) prospective study of revictimization is a particularly strong example; all forms of childhood maltreatment (physical, sexual, neglect) raised the risk of subsequent interpersonal traumas and revictimization (including physical assault and abuse, sexual assault and abuse, stalking/kidnapping, and suicide or homicide of a family friend); however, the risks for crime victimization and general traumas (such as accidents, or combat experience) did not differ between the groups. Individuals who had experienced multiple forms of child maltreatment evidenced the highest levels of physical abuse and sexual abuse revictimization. There were race differences, with Whites who were maltreated as children evidencing higher levels of adult traumas. Widom et al. note that males and females alike experienced revictimization, concluding that the idea regarding the cycle leading men to be perpetrators and women to be victims is overly simplistic.

Much of the revictimization literature concentrates on women's experiences of child sexual abuse, noting that sexual abuse as a child is a consistent risk factor for experiencing sexual assault, rape, and IPV later in life (Barnes, Noll, Putnam, & Trickett, 2009; Daigneault, Hebert, & McDuff, 2009). The risk of revictimization is related to characteristics of the sexual abuse experienced as a child, including cumulative trauma (e.g., the experience of both sexual and physical abuse),

experiencing sexual assault during adolescence, more invasive child sexual abuse, intrafamilial abuse, and longer duration of childhood sexual abuse. Family of origin characteristics related to increased risk of revictimization include drug/alcohol problems, high parental conflict and violence, mental health problems, and less cohesion and expressiveness (Classen et al., 2005). The risk of sexual revictimization is mediated by adolescent risk taking behaviors and risky sexual behavior (Fargo, 2009), avoidant coping and increased trauma symptoms (Fortier et al., 2009), and substance use (Messman-Moore, Ward, & Brown, 2009). The effects of sexual revictimization include heightened distress, depression, alcohol/drug abuse, PTSD, dissociative disorders, shame and self-blame, interpersonal problems, and avoidant coping (Classen et al., 2005; Koenen & Widom, 2009).

Although the cycle of violence has so often been heralded as a primary explanation for violence in the family, very early on, Kaufman and Zigler (1987) and Widom (1989) noted that too often intergenerational transmission was overstated. Widom critiqued the research literature to date, noting the limitations of retrospective designs, studies of known populations (especially those without control groups), and inconsistent definitions; she concluded that the cycle of violence explanation has been overly simplistic and overestimated. Unfortunately, many of her criticisms are still relevant, although strong prospective studies and mediational models are more prevalent now. Kauffman and Zigler noted that while the presence of family violence in one's background raises the risk of subsequent violence perpetration, fully 65–75% of those who witness/experience violence as a child do not repeat the cycle. Similarly, in the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, 55% of the men who reported being sexually coercive in an intimate partnership had no prior victimization history (Casey et al., 2009).

Indeed, Egeland, Jacobvitz, and Sroufe (1988) asked perhaps the most important question in this area of study: What breaks the cycle of abuse? They discovered that mothers who did not repeat the cycle had strong intimate partnerships as

adults, had received therapy at some point in their lives, and had received emotional support from a non-abusing adult as a child. Recent studies that utilize resilience models, and that examine risk and protective factors, provide a much more complex understanding of intergenerational transmission (these studies are discussed later in the section on the life course).

The Commonalities and Complexities of Family Violence

Tolan et al. (2006) call for an integration of findings across the many forms of abuse and violence into what they call a “family violence perspective.” They note the complexity of the problem, multiplicity of influences, the need to contextualize violence (and to understand why it is so alarmingly prevalent in the place we seek love and care), and commonalities across intervention efforts. One of the most enduring models for understanding the complexity of family violence has been Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994) that has been used extensively to ground the interplay of risk and protective factors for almost all forms of family violence (e.g., Stith et al., 2009; Tolan et al., 2006). These ecological models typically include four embedded levels of influence that are critical to our understanding of the etiology and amelioration of family violence: individual (ontogenic), family (microsystem), community (exosystem), and cultural values (macrosystem).

As this review attests, looking across multiple forms of violence (child abuse and neglect, IPV, and elder abuse) reveals many consistencies in this ecology. *Common individual risk factors* for the perpetration of violence include an exposure to violence in the family of origin, externalizing behaviors (aggression, anger, hostility, poor impulse control, substance use, antisocial personality), and internalizing behaviors (anxiety, depression, low self-esteem). *Common family interaction characteristics* include low cohesiveness (anxious attachment, low levels of involvement), cycles of coercive behaviors (negativity,

aversive behaviors, reactivity, anger), and poor relationship quality (high conflict and relational stress, low satisfaction, low problem-solving). *Common community characteristics* include poverty, economic stress, and a lack of social/neighborhood support. And finally, *common cultural values* are reflected in consistent findings on the presence of attitudes condoning the use of physical violence, sexual aggression, and hostility against women. Additionally, systemic oppressions (including racism, sexism, classism, and homophobia), and norms about family privacy, intersect with criminal justice/social service interventions, ideas about the etiology of violence, and individual responses and constructions of meaning.

Still, despite being applied consistently to the study of violence, the ecological model often does not advance beyond an organizing framework for a large number of findings; plus, the preponderance of work is done on the ontogenic level, and cross cutting examinations of violence in the home are rare. Admittedly, the ecological model is difficult to empirically test given the limitations of current measurement and statistics. Rather than testing the entire model per se, it is still possible to utilize it as a deeper framework for conceptualizing the dynamics of family violence. Specifically, the potential of the ecological model remains untapped in its emphasis on transactional processes and the interplay of risk/protective factors. Cicchetti and Lynch (1993) proposed an ecological-transactional model that places the four levels of ecology within a framework of understanding two key transactional elements: (1) the ways that individuals, families, and environments all interact to mutually influence one another, and (2) the balance of vulnerabilities/challenges and protective factors/buffers. Certainly, one of the limitations of the ecological model as utilized by many researchers is the placement of a risk/protective factor into a single level of the model, without highlighting the ways in which many factors cause ripples, stresses, and adaptations for the individual, family, community, and culture alike. Going beyond these single level applications may lead us to a different conceptualization of family

violence altogether. In the remainder of this chapter, I discuss four areas of both conundrum and complexity, that if viewed across multiple ecological layers, may hold promise for new understandings of family violence: the life course of violence, cycles of coercion and control, gender as context and process, and race, class, and culture.

The Life Course of Violence

As noted early in this review, research on the various forms and dynamics of family violence occurs in relative “silos” with somewhat limited interconnection. However, there are calls for a broader contextualization of the field. In particular, Anderson (2010) and Williams (2003) call for a life course perspective on family violence. Williams identifies key questions that are only just beginning to be explored by family violence scholars such as: (1) What is the impact of violence over the life span and how are these effects mediated and moderated as one transitions through child and adult developmental periods? (2) How do experiences of multiple types of violence affect the child/adult? and, (3) How does early victimization relate to revictimization, and affect both trauma and recovery? Inherent in this perspective on the life course is a view that “family violence might be better viewed as a process not an event” (p. 443).

A life course perspective holds promise in two key areas. First, a life course perspective would generate new questions about the effects of family violence. The long-term effects of violence on the victim are clearly documented, and include internalizing behaviors (substance abuse, depression, suicidality, anxiety disorders, and trauma symptoms), externalizing behaviors (including increased aggression, delinquency, and conduct disorders), and difficulty in relationships (both intimate partner and parent–child). However, prospective studies that control for other stressful life events during adulthood find, for example, that childhood maltreatment has little direct effect on adult mental health (Horwitz, Widom, McLaughlin, & White, 2001). Additionally, there is increasing evidence that there is high comorbidity between

what are often theorized and studied as “separate” types of family violence (for example, child abuse and wife abuse; physical and sexual abuse in intimate partnerships), and that poly-victimization leads to greater trauma (Anderson, 2010). Indeed, the web of influences is so complex that teasing out specific effects is nearly impossible. For example, violence against a child influences adolescent and adult development, which in turn also influences how individuals form intimate and support relationships, both of which influence the adult’s ability to cope with the long-term effects of trauma (Horwitz et al., 2001). These relationships are further mediated or moderated by the resilience and mental health of the child and adult. These include the length and severity of the abuse, the level of family disruption vs. adaptability, the presence of supportive family/friends/communities, and exposure to multiple forms of violence both inside and outside the home (Briere & Jordan, 2004; Hedtke et al., 2008; Tolan et al., 2006).

Second, a life course perspective would change the types of questions asked around the intergenerational transmission of violence. Although witnessing or experiencing violence as a child or adolescent has been found to be a consistent risk marker for the perpetration of juvenile delinquency, child abuse, and IPV, this line of research all too often does not go beyond documenting the basic association to ask the questions of how and under what circumstances. Yet, a picture of key mediators is emerging; as noted in the earlier review of the cycle literature, the transmission of violence (and revictimization) is mediated by parent–child attachment, high levels of parent conflict and mental health problems, involvement with antisocial peers, and low school commitment. When juxtaposed with the seminal findings of Egeland et al. (1988), the importance of social and familial contexts is clear.

Zielinski’s (2009) recent work on the economic impact of child maltreatment demonstrates the many possibilities inherent in a deeper examination of the life course of family violence. Using a prospective design, and a nationally representative sample, Zielinski documents the impact of experiencing child maltreatment on adult economic productivity, noting heightened levels of unemployment, poverty, and Medicaid usage

(after controlling for childhood socioeconomic status). He hypothesizes that education, psychopathology (including involvement in crime and deviancy), and physical health may be the key mediators here; and notes “the relationship between maltreatment and socioeconomic well-being ... may represent an important mechanism in the intergenerational cycle of violence” (p. 674). Zielinski’s findings spur us to consider what else is “transmitted” with maltreatment, and how the experience of family violence may be accompanied by a cascade of stressors and maladaptive patterns that have as much to do with the cycle as does the violence per se.

Finally, Anderson (2010) presents an intriguing challenge to the field. She calls for greater study of family violence as an independent variable, for example, examining how violence shapes processes of intimate relationship development, maintenance, and dissolution, and how violence influences teen pregnancy, employment instability, and lower earnings.

Family Processes of Coercion and Control

One of the cornerstone aspects of the study of family violence that may have been left by the wayside in recent years (given the plethora of work on individual risk factors and consequences) is the emphasis on family processes themselves. Early on, Straus et al. (1979) emphasized that the family was the site of so much violence because of its inherent characteristics: high levels of time spent together, a system characterized by both hierarchy and power, and high stakes that may lead to stress and conflict. Understanding the family context means understanding how families share both positive and negative histories, how victims may desire to end violence but not the relationship, and how surviving and thriving are deeply affected when one’s family is not a safe haven (Williams, 2003).

Research on family processes that accompany violence acknowledges that violence is not an isolated behavior, but instead is embedded in family patterns of coercion and control (Patterson, 1982; Wilson et al., 2008). As noted earlier in

this chapter, these studies clearly document the presence of cycles of aversive interaction between parent and child as well as between intimate partners, cycles that are characterized by perpetrator hyperreactivity, destructive anger, and belligerence; high levels of negativity and aversive behaviors; and low levels of attachment, positivity, and facilitation. Other process dynamics include blaming the victim for provoking the violence, power imbalances, and conflict escalation. And certainly, work on emotional maltreatment of children, and psychological aggression between intimate partners, brings a renewed emphasis on the ways in which family members seek to intimidate, coerce, and control one another.

Three very distinct sets of studies illustrate the ways in which scholars are re-emphasizing the role of coercion and control in family violence. First, building on the seminal work of Patterson (1982), subsequent studies of parent–child and husband–wife interaction document the role of coercive cycles of interaction in creating a hostile climate in the home (Lloyd & Emery, 2000a). Work by Borrego, Timmer, Urquiza, and Follette (2004), which examined sequences of mother and child behaviors, is a good example here. They found that physically abusive mothers responded to noncompliance on the part of the child with negative behaviors and commands, whereas non-maltreating mothers responded with another command only. While there were no differences in praising the child’s compliance, abusing mothers were less likely to engage in positive behaviors both before and after child compliance.

Second, studies of sexual aggression between intimate partners have long emphasized the role of coercive tactics in gaining compliance with a demand for sex, and/or as a precursor to the use of force. Coercion here includes psychological pressure, persistence, bullying, use of alcohol/drugs to gain sexual access, power assertion, and calling upon men’s entitlement to sex (Christopher, 2001; Martin et al., 2007). The presence of coercion has been documented across a wide variety of studies, including samples of dating, married, and gay/lesbian couples (Christopher & Pflieger, 2007; Marshall & Holtzworth-Munroe, 2002; Strike et al., 2001).

Third, scholars who study IPV have recently renewed their emphasis on coercion and control as underlying mechanisms in cases of severe violence. For example, Stark (2007) provides an in-depth examination of the role of coercive control perpetrated by batterers against their wives and girlfriends; this control is deeply linked to constructions of masculinity and male dominance, and serves to regulate how women express themselves both inside and outside the home. Johnson (2008) describes three distinct patterns of violence that reflect the underlying dimension of control (intimate terrorism, violent resistance, and mutual control) and one type that is not control-based (situational couple violence). Anderson (2008), in examining the effects of violence (e.g., depressive symptoms, injuries, leaving the relationship), counters that the breadth of the violence experienced (vs. Johnson's types) is the most predictive of outcomes. Anderson (2008), Johnson (2008), and Stark (2007) all conclude that research should continue to emphasize the larger pattern of coercive control in intimate relationships (whether or not physical violence is present). As Anderson notes, this would "represent a substantial shift in our approach to IPV, which has historically emphasized the experience of physical violence as the key characteristic of IPV victimization" (p. 1167).

Ultimately, research that examines coercion and control returns us to an emphasis on the purpose that violence serves in a family relationship, and the processes whereby family members gain power over one another. Clearly, physical and sexual violence are accompanied by other highly coercive behaviors, and coercion (even by itself) is highly deleterious for healthy child and adult development.

Gender as Context and Process

Perhaps one of the most enduring debates in the field is that of the role that gender plays in violence in the home. Gender is typically treated in the family violence literature in one of three ways. First, in the most simplistic approach, *gender differences* are examined, delineating differences in

perpetration, victimization, and outcomes. However, recent work using mediated and multivariate models demonstrates that gender per se may not matter as much as does the overall history of trauma in predicting long-term effects of abuse (Pimlott-Kubiak & Cortina, 2003), and that gender is a weak/inconsistent risk marker for perpetration (Stith et al., 2009).

Second, gender is examined in terms of *traditional roles of men and women*, often in an unquestioning way. This is probably the most apparent in the study of child abuse and neglect, where mothers are almost exclusively studied, and yet, the dynamics of motherhood that might lead to a higher risk of perpetration are rarely acknowledged (Hamby, 2005; Stith et al., 2009). Indeed, Worcester (2002) states that child abuse is the "area I find the most mother blaming," as society as well as protective services "assign responsibility to mothers, regardless of who assaults the children or the context in which the abuse occurs" (p. 1407). The allegation of charges against mothers who have experienced domestic violence of "failure to protect," in the face of evidence that these mothers work hard to protect their children, speaks volumes here (Holt et al., 2008). These constructions of motherhood are complicated by methodologies that utilize mothers as "stand-ins" for parents; the study of child neglect is a case in point here. Research in this arena has been developed with a consistent underlying assumption that the mother is the primary caregiver, and that to the extent that neglect is a breakdown in care, it is also a breakdown in mothering. Fathers, when they are studied at all, are examined primarily in terms of their relationship with the mother, or in terms of their presence/absence; all too often, the risks/benefits that fathers pose are absent from the analysis (Daniel & Taylor, 2006).

Such traditional roles permeate the literature on IPV as well. Ironically, the domestic violence literature developed with a strong emphasis on its patriarchal underpinnings (cf. Dobash & Dobash, 1979). However, in the early development of the field, women's active agency in resisting violence, as well as their instrumental use of IPV, were often invisible (Lloyd et al., 2009; Olson & Lloyd, 2005). In contrast, as the de-gendering of

IPV has occurred, the field has shifted away from any acknowledgment of the role of structural aspects of gender (Anderson, 2009).

Third, *gender is examined in the absence of context*. For example, the literature on child abuse and neglect lacks thorough analysis of how parenting dynamics and practices intersect with both gender and single parent status. While it may be mentioned in passing that mothers typically spend more time in child care than do fathers, that single parents are more likely to be mothers, and that there is a significant association between single parenting and economic stress, research studies typically do not tease out these multiple interrelationships (Gelles & Cornell, 1990). Nor do they acknowledge that among two-parent families, children are 56 times more likely to be living with a stay at home mother than with a stay at home father (Hamby, 2005).

This absence of contextualizing gender also appears in the arguments about gender symmetry/asymmetry. Both Hamby (2005) and Frieze (2008) critique researchers on both sides of the debate for their insularity and resistance to other views, and argue that when the framework of the discussion is broadened, a different view emerges. That is, in the context of intimate relationships, men commit the majority of physical assaults, homicides, rapes, child sexual abuse, and physical abuse of elders, and women are the majority of victims for all these forms of family violence (see also Reed, Raj, Miller, and Silverman's (2010) excellent analysis).

This review makes apparent that gender remains a core construct that must be examined in new ways. Rather than de-gendering violence, we must examine *gender as a social construction* (and not merely a social address). Here, gender is a process of social interactions, that is, individuals enact their gender in their everyday social practices (White, 2009). Gender serves as a social structure that situates men and women differentially (Anderson, 2010); thus, violence occurs in this context of inequality, and violence reproduces inequality (Anderson, 2009). Such a view also acknowledges that gender constructions are inextricably interwoven with family processes, and heteronormativity (Oswald, Kunalanka,

Blume, & Berkowitz, 2009), and that aggression is often constructed as a key component of masculinity (Frieze, 2008). To deeply understand the dynamics of family violence, we must ask theoretically rich questions about the motivations, processes, and dynamics of violence as they intersect with constructions of gender. And, we must acknowledge the structural aspects of gender, that is, the ways that labor, power, earnings, and the assignment of caregiving are structured around gender differences (Anderson, 2009). As Frieze so eloquently puts it, "gender concerns are central to developing a more nuanced understanding of partner violence" (2008, p. 670).

A careful treatment also means that we must increasingly examine the socio-political contexts of women's use of violence, and we must take women's use of violence seriously. Such analysis begins to raise questions of why a battered women resorts to violence, under what circumstances women are the sole perpetrators of violence, both against children and intimate partners (Worcester, 2002), why women's/girls' violence (particularly girls/women of color) has been increasingly criminalized, and how the de-gendering of violence allows the inequitable structural positions of women and men to be ignored (Brown, Chesney-Lind, & Stein, 2007). And it will lead to a deeper understanding of whether the same theories can adequately explain both men's and women's use of violence against their loved ones (Holtzworth-Munroe, 2005).

Finally, an in-depth examination of gender also calls for a challenge to the idea that family and domestic violence affects all women equally. Clearly, gender, race, class, immigrant status, and sexuality intersect, such that low-income women, women of color, homeless women, women on welfare, and lesbians experience intimate violence in different ways (Anderson, 2010; Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005).

Race, Class, and Culture

Complex relationships exist between race, class, culture, and violence in the home. The examination of race in particular is beset by conceptual

and methodological issues. While we have come a long way from notions of cultural deviance and inferiority (Malley-Morrison & Hines, 2007), race is still treated as a social address. European-American is allowed to stand in for “all people.” It is common for samples to not include sufficient numbers for analysis of racial/ethnic groups. Other problems include the practice of ignoring group variation, overgeneralizing, and failure to include culturally-situated measures and analyses (Kasturirangan, Krishnan, & Riger, 2004). When race is considered, on the other hand, all too often it is given “particularly influential explanatory power. Specific cases are not conceptualized as reflecting individual power and, instead, entire groups are stereotyped” (Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005, p. 46).

Recently scholars have called for culturally competent views of family violence dynamics within racial/ethnic families. These views emphasize that definitions, experiences, and responses to violence are uniquely and intersectionally affected by culture, and that family violence is but one of the oppressions that racial/ethnic families experience (Abney, 2002; Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005). They also call for the direct examination of traditions and shared values, rather than inferring them from one’s classification as a minority (Kasturirangan et al., 2004). Racial/ethnic family members experience, understand, and respond to violence in ways that are embedded within the expectations of their communities, cultural norms, historical influences, and systemic oppression (Phiri-Alleman & Alleman, 2008). This work also emphasizes the ways in which the intersectionality of racism and sexism complicates the experiences of women of color (West, 2004).

The intersection of race and class is crucial, given the overrepresentation of families of color among the poor, and the association of family violence with economic stress (Hattery, 2009). For example, there is a higher risk of exposure to both sexual and physical violence for African-American women (Hattery); however, socioeconomic status fully moderates such differences (Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005). And, when neighborhood characteristics, such as concentrated economic disadvantage, are taken into account,

individual-level measures (such as income and race) no longer predict differences in violence (Anderson, 2010).

An intersectional, culturally situated analysis of family violence asks a whole different set of questions about the interplay of race, gender, and class. Changes in social policy that have resulted in increasing arrest rates of women and girls of color for violence perpetration are questioned (Brown et al., 2007). Strengths of African-American women, families, and communities are emphasized, and reveal the ways that self-sufficiency, positive racial identity, community belief in taking care of others, and strong ties to religious faith may serve as protective factors and supports (Phiri-Alleman & Alleman, 2008; Watlington & Murphy, 2006). Simultaneously, these very factors may be constraints to an extent that the social construction of “the strong Black woman” may make her less likely to ask for help. Such a cultural definition may place increased emphasis on African-American women’s roles as protectors of the family at all costs (Swan & Snow, 2006).

Studies of the unique family dynamics and cultural situatedness that intersects with the experience of family violence for racial/ethnic families are increasingly available. For example, Asian family culture emphasizes a collectivist orientation, allegiance to family, filial piety, respect for elders, emphasis on harmony and privacy, and the valuing of female ability to endure suffering; here, shame and guilt take on different culturally specific meanings (Lee & Hadeed, 2009; Phiri-Alleman & Alleman, 2008). Studies of Latino/a families highlight the importance of understanding contextual factors such as acculturation, immigrant and migrant status, and socioeconomic status (Hazen & Soriano, 2007; Klevens, 2007); couples in the middle of the acculturation process (between the old and the new cultures) may be at highest risk for domestic violence, particularly when there is disagreement on appropriate gender roles (Swan & Snow, 2006), and immigration status may serve as a barrier to seeking help (Hazen & Soriano, 2007). Studies of Native American families highlight the ways that family violence intersects with long

traditions that revere elders and children, as well as foster egalitarian relationships between husbands and wives; simultaneously, a history of relocation, colonization, oppression, poverty, and loss creates enormous stresses (Weaver, 2009).

This work also highlights the ways racial/ethnic families experience unique barriers that affect their abilities to seek assistance and legal redress. For example, immigrant women and children may be particularly affected by social isolation, and heightened financial and emotional dependency (Lee & Hadeed, 2009). Racial/ethnic families may turn first to informal supports for assistance, and their willingness to seek help is affected by negative racial stereotypes, a desire to keep family problems “inside the family,” and the history of racism in the criminal justice system (Bent-Goodley, 2007; Taft, Bryant-Davis, Woodward, Tillman, & Torres, 2009). Institutions and intervention programs may lack cultural sensitivity and be based in European-American models of mental and physical health. Language barriers may be present, and the challenges of racism, poverty, and immigration status may be ignored (Bent-Goodley, 2007; Rodríguez, Valentine, Son, & Muhammad, 2009). A culturally competent analysis of family violence must ultimately seek to analyze the ways that “racial and ethnic discrimination, anti-immigration sentiment, and social class bias are forces that may affect the daily lives” of minority families (Kasturirangan et al., 2004, p. 324).

Conclusion

Five decades of research on family violence has yielded a field of study that is both fascinating and fractious. Clearly, evidence continues to build that has helped us understand the causes, dynamics, and consequences of many different forms of violence perpetrated in our intimate relationships. There is much to look forward to in the future of research in this field, including more longitudinal work, models that attend to the role of mediating and moderating effects, the inclusion of culturally sensitive analyses, and the examination of the cumulative, life course interplay of violence

and trauma. In addition, this research base will continue to fuel improvements in both intervention and prevention programs.

Still, family violence remains a complex, and indeed paradoxical problem, given that the family is simultaneously the site of love and aggression, nurturance and coercion, protection and control. It is untangling this conundrum that keeps researchers so captivated by this field of study.

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Sanford L. Braver and Michael E. Lamb

Introduction

Marital dissolution or divorce is one of the most dramatic events that can befall a family: Hardly anyone who has undergone a divorce regards it as “just another” transition or event. For many, in fact, their divorces or their parents’ divorces are life-defining events, around which all other experiences are organized: “before the divorce” vs. “after the divorce.”

Divorce is also relatively ubiquitous in the Western hemisphere. As shown in the next section, divorce today is so commonplace that even those who are not directly affected by divorce invariably know families and individuals who are so affected. That this reality is a relatively recent phenomenon, largely confined to the last 5 decades, is not always appreciated.

This chapter will largely focus on divorcing families in the United States that include *children*. There is a separate and largely nonoverlapping literature on childless dissolutions not summarized here (for space reasons); that literature shows that the effects tend to be milder and

of shorter duration (Masheter, 1991; Metts & Cupach, 1995) than those described here. In the sections that follow, first, we present the *statistical* picture, putting today’s situation in *historical context*. Next, we explore the *antecedents or predictors* of divorce, distinguishing between “macro” level (factors that move the culture as a whole toward greater or lower rates of divorce) and “micro” level (factors that move specific couples to divorce) influences. Macro-level factors are of greatest interest to sociologists, demographers, economists, historians, policy specialists, and legal scholars whereas micro-level factors are of primary interest to psychologists, family scholars, and therapists. Because this Handbook addresses an interdisciplinary audience, it is appropriate (though unusual) that we consider both sets of antecedents. Consistent with another goal of this Handbook, we briefly review *theories* regarding the ways in which these factors influence divorce. Then we turn to the *consequences of divorce* for mothers and fathers, distinguishing between the legal, behavioral, emotional, social, health, and financial consequences. Then we review the effects of divorce on the children involved, noting how the parents’ responses often modulate the impact on children. Because divorce is so fully intertwined with the legal system, we next discuss the legal issues and processes involved when parents divorce. Our final sections cover, respectively, issues, processes and policies under current debate; methodological issues arising in the study of divorcing parents and a concluding section.

S.L. Braver, PhD (✉)
Department of Psychology, Arizona State University,
Tempe, AZ 85287-1104, USA
e-mail: sanford.braver@asu.edu

M.E. Lamb, PhD
Department of Psychology, University of Cambridge,
Free School Lane, Cambridge CB2 3RQ, UK
email: mel137@cam.ac.uk

Divorce in Historical Perspective

At the founding of America, divorce was extremely rare: only nine divorces occurred in the entire 72-year history of the Plymouth colony (Riley, 1991). It was not until after the Revolutionary War that courts, as opposed to legislatures, took jurisdiction over divorce. Once that occurred, more reliable record-keeping began. There are several indices frequently used to track divorce prevalence: (1) the absolute number of divorces granted; (2) the “crude rate” (i.e., the number of divorces per 1,000 people); (3) the divorce-to-marriage rate (i.e., number of divorces divided by the number of marriage licenses granted); (4) and the “refined rate” (i.e., the number of divorces per 1,000 married women over 15). The latter is the index most demographers prefer, because it is the closest to the index (5, i.e., the “risk rate”) that would be *most* informative (i.e., what percentage of married couples eventually get divorced). However, short of tracking each individual couple, the latter isn’t readily calculable and can only be estimated by making assumptions. The risk rate for women born between 1948 and 1950 is estimated at 42 % (Bumpass, Martin, & Sweet, 1991; Schoen & Standish, 2001; Teachman, Tedrow, & Hall, 2006).

Figure 21.1 shows the refined divorce rate (index 4) from 1870 to 2000. Fewer than 2 marriages per 1,000 married women ended in divorce in 1870; the figure rose to 18 per 1,000 married women in 2000, with several obvious secular trends over the period. There was an upward “blip” following WWI, as well as a huge but very temporary spike during WWII; both are usually explained as responses to the hardships placed on marriage by the vicissitudes of war. But the pattern from the late 1960s to the late 1970s is the one of greatest interest to contemporary family scholars; during that decade, the divorce rate doubled (Michael, 1988). Since then, the rate has drifted rather steadily but gradually downward. Possible explanations of recent patterns need to account for both of these tendencies.

Antecedents, Causes, or Predictors of Divorce

Macro Level Antecedents

Scholars have explored four groups of factors to account for the divorce rate trends starting around 1968: demographic, legal, economic, and attitudinal/cultural.

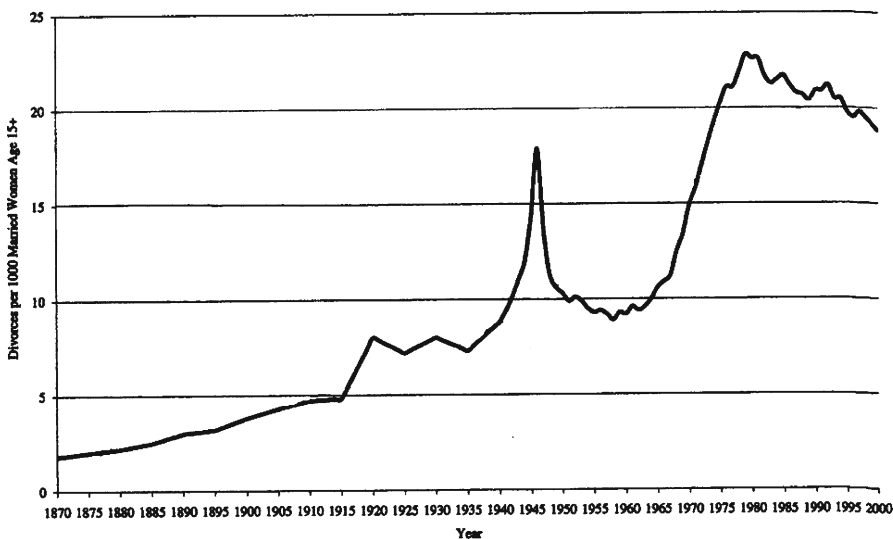


Fig. 21.1 Divorces per 1,000 married women aged 15 and older by year, 1870–2000 (adapted from Jacobson, 1959; Preston & McDonald, 1979)

Demographic factors. Several demographic trends are related to divorce rates. For example, the older the age at marriage, the less likely the couple is to divorce (Thornton & Young-DeMarco, 2001). Because couples have recently waited longer to marry, this may account for the leveling of the divorce rate in recent years; indeed, Heaton (2002), found that this factor can account fully for the divorce trends of the 1975–1995 period. However, it fails to account for the dramatic earlier increases. Similarly, educational attainment is associated (negatively) with divorce (Bumpass et al., 1991; Heaton, 2002). The tendency for average levels of education to increase steadily over time corresponds to the reduction in divorce rates since 1980, but does not explain the increase during the 1970s, when education levels increased as well.

Legal factors. One of the most obvious factors that coincided with the staggering increase in the divorce rate was the liberalization of divorce laws. Prior to 1969, couples seeking divorce had to prove that one spouse had violated the marriage contract. In that year, the no-fault/unilateral divorce movement began in California and was emulated across the nation in the next decade. Thereafter, one and only one spouse had merely to proclaim the marriage “irretrievably broken” for the divorce to be granted (Amato & Irving, 2006). Note that this timing coincided almost perfectly with the increase in the divorce rate, leading some (e.g., Allen, 1992; Nakonezny, Shull, & Rodgers, 1995; Parkman, 2000) to conclude that liberalization of the divorce code was the primary reason for the increase in divorce. Although this claim makes some intuitive sense (of course, divorce rates increase when divorces are easier to obtain), it ultimately must be rejected for two reasons. First, it does not account for the more recent downturn in divorce (the laws remain the same now as they were in the 1970s; Wolfers, 2006); second, more careful analysis, including state-by-state calculations (Ellman & Lohr, 1998; Peters, 1992) suggest that changes in divorce laws tended to follow, rather than lead, increases in the divorce rate. Thus, during the critical decade something else appears to have caused both the increase in divorce and the passage of legislation facilitating divorce.

Economic factors. One such likely candidate variable is female labor force participation. The percentage of women with school age children working outside the home increased dramatically, from 28 % in 1950 to 68 % in 1986 (Hochschild & Machung, 1989). In 1970, for the first time in history, a majority of women were employed (Bergmann, 1986). Having independent incomes allowed women who were unhappy in their marriages to contemplate divorce. Schoen, Astone, Rothert, Standish, and Kim (2002) found that wives’ incomes were indeed linked to divorce—but only for marriages that were unhappy. Nonetheless, female labor force participation fails to account fully for changing divorce rates, because it increased gently, year by year, before and after the critical decade, whereas divorce rates increased exponentially only after 1968 (Michael, 1988). Further, the percentage of women working outside the home has continued to increase from the 1980s until today, while the divorce rate has declined over that period.

Cultural/attitudinal factors. The final category of variables often implicated by scholars involves cultural and attitudinal factors. There is little doubt that the public generally became more accepting of divorce during the late 1960s and 1970s (Thornton, 1989). Commenting on such features of the “me first” generation (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985), Amato and Irving (2006) observed that “American culture has become increasingly individualistic, and people have become inordinately preoccupied with the pursuit of personal happiness. Because people no longer wish to be hampered with obligations to others, commitment to traditional institutions that require these obligations, such as marriage, has eroded” (p. 51). These normative changes, perhaps better than the other categories of variables reviewed above, appear to account for both the dramatic rise and the mild decline in divorce over the last 50 years.

However, two questions need further explication: (1) what factors precipitated these changes in values; and (2) to what extent were the changes pervasive and universal vs. specific to certain demographic groups or regions? Addressing such issues definitively is difficult, of course, because

quantifying precise features of cultural changes over time is a daunting task.

The first author (working with Jenessa Shapiro) hit upon a promising device to elucidate these issues. Reasoning that popular magazines both reflected and galvanized distinctive cultural views, Braver and Shapiro speculated that subscription rates to certain of these magazines across times and locales could provide an empirical window onto these trends. They thus obtained state-by-state, year-by-year subscription data for the following four magazines: *Lady's Home Journal* (read almost entirely by women with fairly traditional values and interests); *Playboy* (glorifying male hedonism); *Cosmopolitan* (representing lifestyle advice for "fun, fearless females" seeking empowerment, self-improvement, and sexual fulfillment); and *Ms.* (representing the feminist ideology closely associated with the Women's Movement). Arraying these subscription rates in a multi-level model against the year-by-year, state-by-state (crude) divorce rates, Braver and Shapiro found (in results not previously published) that changes in divorce rates at the state level were well matched by the state's trends in subscriptions to *Ms. Magazine*, and were opposite (though not significantly) to its trends in subscriptions to *Lady's Home Journal*. Importantly, they found virtually no association between the state's divorce rate and its subscriptions to *Playboy* or *Cosmopolitan*. Taken together, these data provocatively suggest that some, but not all, value changes are associated with changes in divorce rates. Changing levels of interest in the aspects of self-fulfillment and self-empowerment captured in feminist ideology and its antithesis seemed important, whereas changes in the emphasis on either male-specialized or female-specific self-fulfillment and hedonism were unrelated to divorce trends. Strengthening this interpretation, since around 1970, about 2 in 3 divorces have been sought by wives (Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987; Braver, Whitley, & Ng, 1993; Pettit & Bloom, 1984), whereas previously, "most divorces were the man's idea" (DeWitt, 1992, p. 54). In addition, findings show that the more that an individual woman agrees with the precepts of the Woman's Movement, the more likely she is to divorce (Finlay, Starnes, & Alvarez, 1985).

Micro-level Antecedents

Whatever the divorce rate at a particular time, some couples divorce and others do not. There has been extensive research on the micro-level factors that predict divorce (Rodrigues, Hall, & Fincham, 2006; White, 1990). In addition to those demographic variables mentioned earlier (age at marriage and education levels), race is associated with the risk of divorce: African-American and interracial couples are more likely to divorce than Anglo-American couples (Bramlett & Mosher, 2002; Heaton, 2002). Having lived together before marriage is another risk factor (Bumpass et al., 1991; Heaton, 2002) as is having divorced parents (Amato, 1996; Wolfinger, 1999, 2000). This "intergenerational transmission of divorce" seems best explained by the relatively weak commitment to marriage on the part of offspring with divorced parents (Amato & DeBoer, 2001). Belonging to certain religions is associated with reduced risk as well (Bramlett & Mosher, 2002), especially when individuals are highly religious, in whatever faith (Bramlett & Mosher, 2002; Mahoney et al., 2001). Generally, income reduces the risk of divorce (Kurdek, 1993), but as wives earn more, and account for a greater proportion of family income, the risk of divorce increases (Rogers, 2004). A qualification to this pattern are results in a study by Sayer and Bianchi (2000) that wives' financial independence predicted divorce only if they were unsatisfied in their marriages. Again, we note that the lack of income that once restrained unhappily married women from divorce has become weakened by their collective economic advances. Personality factors, especially neuroticism, are also associated with an elevated risk for divorce (Karney & Bradbury, 1995; Kelly & Conley, 1987). A study by Kiernan (1986) reported, for example, that neuroticism measured in adolescence predicted women's divorce by age 32.

Notwithstanding these demographic factors, the most important micro-level predictors clearly involve features of the marital relationships themselves. Before describing the empirical findings, however, we note several relevant theories.

Social exchange theory. The social exchange theory of divorce proposes that couples are constantly

(perhaps subconsciously) evaluating their marriages (and other relationships). They evaluate relationships in terms of reward-cost ratios to either make a “profit” or at least reduce their perceived losses. If their perceived costs become too high and continual losses are experienced, then divorce becomes more likely. Spouses are also more likely to choose divorce when the barriers to divorcing are lower (i.e., resulting in reduced costs) and the alternatives to staying married seems more attractive (i.e., the alternative relationships or circumstances—even being single—are either more rewarding or less costly than the current marital relationship) (Levinger, 1979). Nobel Prize winner Gary Becker (1993) has formulated an entirely economic or rational choice theory of marriage positing that men and women “attempt to maximize their utility by comparing benefits and costs.... they divorce if that is expected to increase their welfare” (Becker, pp. 395–396).

Vulnerability—stress—adaptation. From this perspective, three factors are highlighted which combine to impact likelihood of divorce: (1) Enduring vulnerabilities—the attributes such as personality and personal background that each spouse brings to the marriage; (2) stressful events with which the partners must cope; and (3) adaptation processes—experiences during the marriage describing the efforts to deal with stress (Karney & Bradbury, 1995). For example, if the couple has disparate views about spending (enduring vulnerabilities), their differences might not cause marital difficulties, until and unless they experience financial setbacks (stressful events). In that event, if they have good conflict resolution skills (adaptation processes), the strength of the marriage might not be affected; But vulnerabilities *plus* stressful events *plus* poor adaptation processes are hypothesized to decrease marital quality, which in turn increases marital instability.

Cascade theory. Gottman and colleagues have engaged in extensive research observing, videotaping, and coding couples discussing their disagreements; from this, they have developed a comprehensive theory of the “trajectory to divorce” (Gottman, 1993). According to this

trajectory, couples who eventually divorce are hypothesized to have been unhappily married for some time, and only then to seriously consider dissolution, and only then to actually separate and then divorce. The happiness of the marriage is thought to be predicted by each of their behaviors during their interactions or negotiations. If both spouses exhibit a higher quantity of positive (e.g., agreement, validation) than of negative (e.g., disagreement, dismissal, belittling) behaviors, the couple is deemed to be “regulated.” In “nonregulated” couples, one or both partners emit more negative than positive acts. Nonregulated couples are hypothesized to experience early divorce (first 7 years). In contrast, it is the lack of positive *affect* (enjoyment of being together, satisfaction) that should predict later (years 7 through 14) divorce (Gottman & Levenson, 2000).

Findings. There *is* substantial empirical support for all the above theories. It has also been found, perhaps surprisingly, that marital dissatisfaction is a necessary, but not a sufficient, explanation for divorce. Some couples remain deeply dissatisfied, or disengaged, but do not divorce. For example, Davila and Bradbury (2001) found that spouses who were concerned about abandonment and their worthiness of love stayed married even when distressed. Further, although there is a correlation between the two spouse’s marital happiness, only couples in which husbands are unhappier than wives have increased risks of divorce (Gager & Sanchez, 2003). The attributions spouses (especially distressed wives, Bradbury & Fincham, 1992; Gottman, Coan, Carrere, & Swanson, 1998) make about their own and their partners’ behavior are also informative (Bradbury & Fincham, 1990).

Whereas some researchers have simply asked people why they are unhappy in their marriages or why they sought divorce, other researchers consider the partners’ “accounts” less valid because of retrospective biases, self-serving attributions, face-saving attempts, and cognitive dissonance. Nonetheless, some interesting findings regarding accounts have surfaced. For one thing, the reasons given are generally more benign than might have been thought. “Gradual growing

apart, losing a sense of closeness”; “serious differences in lifestyle”; “not feeling loved or appreciated” were ranked 1–3 by wives in Braver and O’Connell’s (1998) study (cf. Booth & White, 1980; Gigy & Kelly, 1992; Kitson & Sussman, 1982). None of these divorces would have been allowed if fault had to be established; in fact, the only classic “fault ground” to make the top ten was “husband’s extramarital affair.” For another, the reasons men and women give are very different, leading to the idea that “his” and “her” divorce are quite distinct. In fact, husbands are often quite unclear about why their divorce happened, but wives rarely are (Amato & Previti, 2003; Kitson, 1992).

Consequences of Divorce for Parents

Legal Consequences of Divorce for Parents

Divorce typically has radically different legal consequences for mothers and fathers. In 68–88 % of cases, mothers get physical custody of the children, fathers do so in only 8–14 % of cases, and joint physical custody is specified in 2–6 % (Argys et al., 2007; Braver & O’Connell, 1998; DeLusé, 1999; Emery, 1994; Fox & Kelly, 1995; Logan, Walker, Horvath, & Leukefeld, 2003; Maccoby & Mnookin, 1992; Nord & Zill, 1996; Saluter & Lugaila, 1998; Seltzer, 1990). The amounts of time the children spend with non-primary parents (often called visitation, access, contact, or parenting time) has increased recently. Prior to the 1980s, most decrees specified that children should spend every other weekend with those parents, amounting to about 14 % of the children’s time (Kelly, 2007). Two studies of randomly selected case files in Arizona conducted 10 years apart (Braver & O’Connell, 1998; DeLusé, 1999) found non-trivial increases in the parenting time ordered. Venohr and Griffith (2003) found that, by 2001–2002, almost half of the decrees specified 24–32 % of the days per year and another fifth specified 33–50 % of the parenting time for the non-primary parents. Fewer than one in five specified as little as the

traditional 14 %. By 2008, 45 % of the decrees specified 15–35 %, 7 % specified 35–49 % of the child’s time with the father, and 22 % essentially divided parenting time equally (Venohr & Kaunelis, 2008). In Washington State, 46 % of fathers obtained at least 35 % parenting time in 2007–2008 (George, 2008) and in Wisconsin, 24 % had equal parenting time decreed in 2003 (Brown & Cancian, 2007).

Legal custody (who has the legal authority to make decisions regarding medical or educational issues) is more variable from state to state; rates of joint legal custody range from 21 % (Seltzer, 1990, national data) to 76 % (Maccoby & Mnookin, 1992, California data) to 93 % (Douglas, 2003, New Hampshire) and have also changed much more than levels of physical custody over time. Interestingly, both sets of changes appear spontaneous, i.e., not based on corresponding revisions of formal policy. During one longitudinal study conducted by the first author (Braver, Shapiro, & Goodman, 2005), joint legal custody doubled (from about 1/3 to 2/3) over the 3 year course of the study, although there were no discernable changes in any formal or official standards. Rather the informal “culture” among the relevant professionals (judges, attorneys, custody evaluators, mediators, etc.) changed, possibly in response to evidence (e.g., Gunnoe & Braver, 2001; Maccoby & Mnookin, 1992) that it generally had beneficial effects.

This change in the informal culture of professionals paralleled changes in public opinion. In 2006, 86 % of the voters responded affirmatively to the following advisory (i.e., non-binding) ballot question in Massachusetts: “There should be a presumption in child custody cases in favor of joint physical and legal custody, so that the court will order that the children have equal access to both parents as much as possible, except where there is clear and convincing evidence that one parent is unfit, or that joint custody is not possible due to the fault of one of the parents.” Braver, Fabricius, and Ellman (2008) gave the identically worded statement to a representative sample of adult citizens in Tucson, AZ, inviting respondents to indicate how much they agreed with the statement on a 7-point Likert scale. Ninety percent

responded on the “agree” side; 57 % responded 7 (=“strongly agree”) and another 30 % responded 6 (=agree). There were no significant differences by gender, age, education, income, whether the respondents themselves were currently married, had ever divorced, had children, had paid or received child support, or by their political ideology.

To explore the depth of commitment to the preference, Votruba (2008) asked a different representative sample of Tucson, AZ, citizens about a hypothetical custody case. Participants were told that the mother and father divided pre-divorce child care “about like average families in which both parents work full-time (both M-F, 9-to-5).” The parents were further described as reasonably good parents who deeply loved their children, with a family life that was quite average, and children who were normally adjusted. Respondents were asked how they would award parenting time if they were judges. About 75 % chose the option, “Live equal amounts of time with each parent.” Almost all the remainder chose “Live with mother, see father a lot.” This was in marked contrast with how they thought parenting time would actually be allocated in “today’s courts and legal environment”—fewer than 25 % thought the equal time arrangement would prevail. *All* of the others thought that mothers would be awarded most of the parenting time.

This difference between what most people think proper and what they expect courts to assign appears to fuel disapproval of courts. When Braver et al. (2008) asked respondents to “describe the ‘slant’ of the ... legal system, as a whole, toward divorcing parents,” 81 % reported that it favors mothers, and only 16 % saw the system as unbiased. This result corresponds well with what divorcing fathers themselves answered in a separate investigation (Braver & O’Connell, 1998): 3/4 thought that it favored mothers and not a single father thought that the system favored fathers. Mothers tended to agree that the system was slanted in their favor: while 2/3 thought it was balanced, three times as many mothers thought it favored mothers as thought it favored fathers. Moreover, only 36 % of experienced divorce attorneys believe that the system is not slanted, 59 % believe that it favors mothers, and

only 5 % believe that it favors fathers (Braver, Cookston, & Cohen, 2002).

Psychological and Emotional Consequences of Divorce for Parents

Because divorce has been rated the number one life stressor (Dohrenwend & Dohrenwend, 1974; Holmes & Rahe, 1967), it is not surprising that divorced parents are more likely to suffer psychological and emotional problems than married parents, although most parents are not permanently damaged by divorce. Divorced parents have higher risks of depression, anxiety, and unhappiness, physical illnesses, suicide, motor vehicle accidents, alcoholism, homicide, and overall mortality (e.g., Aseltine & Kessler, 1993; Bloom, Asher, & White, 1978; Davies, Avison, & McAlpine, 1997; Gove & Shin, 1989; Gove, Style, & Hughes, 1990; Hemstrom, 1996; Joung et al., 1997; Kitson, 1992; Kposowa, Breault, & Singh, 1995; Lorenz et al., 1997; Simon & Marcussen, 1999). Involvement in new relationships (e.g., Wang & Amato, 2000) and remarriage (e.g., Demo & Acock, 1996) reduce the risk of such consequences as do religious or personal beliefs and values accepting of divorce (Booth & Amato, 1991; Simon & Marcussen, 1999).

Theories. Several theorists have attempted to explain how divorce affects psychological well-being. Amato (2000) proposed a Divorce-Stress-Adjustment Model, in which the path between divorce and adjustment was mediated by stressors such as sole parenting responsibility, loss of emotional support, continuing conflict with ex-spouses, economic decline, and other stressful divorce-related events. The path to adjustment is also moderated by protective factors such as individual, interpersonal, and structural resources, the definition and meaning of divorce to the individuals, and demographic characteristics, such as gender, age, race, ethnicity, and culture. An alternative model posits the reverse—that divorce is driven by preexisting, stable personality characteristics. Individuals who are poorly adjusted (i.e., those with more severe negative emotional,

behavioral, and health outcomes, and difficulty functioning in new roles), often those who divorce and never remarry, may select into divorce and out of remarriage (e.g., they may be more restless or mentally unstable prior to their first marriage) (Davies et al., 1997; Kelly & Conley, 1987; Kitson, 1992; Kurdeck, 1990; Mastekaasa, 1994).

Which gender does better emotionally after divorce? Despite media portrayals to the contrary (e.g., *First Wives Club*), women tend to show greater emotional adjustment and recovery than do men following divorce (Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987; Braver & O'Connell, 1998; Chiraboga & Cutler, 1977; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980) for several reasons. First, women tend to be better than men at seeking, building, and using *social support networks* that buffer the stresses that accompany divorce (Chiraboga, Coho, Stein, & Roberts, 1979; Hughes, 1988; Keith, 1986; Kitson, 1992; McKenry & Price, 1995; Umberson, Chen, House, Hopkins, & Slaten, 1996), and children themselves can be sources of support for custodial parents (Blankenhorn, 1995; McKenry & Price, 1995). Also, mothers must "hold it together" for the sake of the children, whereas noncustodial fathers often do not have this sobering responsibility.

Second, as mentioned earlier, women usually initiate divorce (Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987; Braver, Whitley, & Ng, 1993; Pettit & Bloom, 1984). Spouses who initiate divorce tend to experience more stress *before* the actual decision to divorce, but *relief* afterwards. In contrast, spouses who do not initiate divorce experience the most stress once the divorce process commences. Third, men are more likely than women to use ineffective or harmful methods of coping with the stress of divorce, more often turning to substances and alcohol to help them cope (Baum, 2003; Umberson & Williams, 1993).

Fourth, role change may be one of the most important factors contributing to the distress and unsuccessful adjustment of fathers (Umberson & Williams, 1993) and the successful adjustment of mothers (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). Women are more likely to view divorce as a "second chance"—mothers report improved work opportunities, social lives, happiness, and self-confidence (Demo &

Acock, 1996). Along with divorce, women often gain higher status within-family roles (e.g., head of household, breadwinner, etc.) while men often acquire low-status responsibilities (e.g., gain domestic roles) and are confused or frustrated by their new roles as noncustodial parents (Braver & O'Connell, 1998; Umberson & Williams, 1993).

Finally, divorce settlement satisfaction also affects custodial and noncustodial parents' emotional well-being differentially (Sheets & Braver, 1996). Fathers frequently feel as though they have experienced gender discrimination at the hands of the legal system, often for the first time in their lives (Braver & O'Connell, 1998). In contrast, women tend to report higher levels of satisfaction with most divorce settlements, including custody, finances, visitation, and property (Sheets & Braver, 1996).

Economic Consequences of Divorce for Parents

Most parents experience substantial financial setbacks when they divorce. The costs of the divorce itself may be very expensive, depending on the state in which it occurs, the complexity of the case, the degree of contentiousness and disagreement, and the use of litigating attorneys as opposed to alternate modes of dispute resolution. When there are few disagreements and the parties do not hire lawyers (in many states, *pro se*—without lawyers—divorces are the norm) the costs can be as low as a few hundred dollars. On the other hand, some divorces cost well over \$100,000 in legal and associated costs. By one popular estimate, the average divorce costs about \$20,000 per couple (McDonald, 2009).

Second, and more enduringly, there will be added ongoing costs associated with running a second household. Most of the literature suggests that this hardship falls disproportionately on mothers (Bartfeld, 2000; Bianchi, 1992; Bianchi, Subaiya, & Kahn, 1999; Burkhauser, Duncan, Hauser, & Bernsten, 1990, 1991; Corcoran, 1979; David & Flory, 1989; Duncan & Hoffman, 1985; Espenshade, 1979; Garfinkel, McLanahan, & Hanson, 1998; Hoffman & Duncan, 1985; Holden & Smock,

1991; Peterson, 1996; Sayer, 2006; Smock, Manning, & Gupta, 1999; Sorenson, 1992; Teachman & Paasch, 1994; Weiss, 1984). Weitzman's (1985) findings that women (and children) suffered a 73 % decline in their standards of living after divorce, while fathers enjoyed a 42 % increase, were the most widely cited, but were later recanted because they were erroneous (Peterson, 1996; Weitzman, 1996).

In contrast, Braver et al. (2005; see also Braver, 1999; Braver & O'Connell, 1998) have contended that, if proper accounting is made, the postdivorce circumstances of fathers and mothers are largely equal *in the short term*, while in the long run, the majority of divorced mothers fare better than their ex-husbands. To understand the debate requires understanding the operational definition of "standard of living." Most researchers focus on the *income-to-needs ratio*, in which the household's *annual income* is divided by the Federal Poverty Threshold (FPT) for comparable households. Because child support is very frequently paid by one divorced parent and received by the other (and less frequently, alimony is also paid), both are virtually always subtracted from the payer's annual income and added to the recipient's before division by the FPT. But Braver and his colleagues (2005) argued that at least two crucial, yet obvious factors have been typically omitted when such calculations are made.

First, all such calculations are based on gross income, yet, only *after tax* income can be used to support families. It turns out that custodial parents are taxed far more advantageously than noncustodial parents. Through such tax devices as the Head of Household filing status, the Earned Income Credit, and the Child Tax Credit, the IRS in effect subsidizes the standard of living in the custodial but not noncustodial households. Second, most of the above researchers have assumed that, other than child support, 100 % of the children's expenses are borne by custodial parents, while noncustodial parents were assumed to pay *nothing*: no child meals, no child transportation costs, \$0 to entertain the children, nothing to provide room for the children in their homes, and no share of medical insurance or medical expenses, etc. In other words, most analyses do

not take into account any kind of visitation expenses, nor any direct payments by noncustodial parents for the children, although these are often appreciable (Fabricius & Braver, 2003). Braver and Stockburger (2004) and Rogers and Bieniewicz (2004) specify a set of reasonable and robust assumptions, concerning the cost of children relative to adults, and the proportion of child's expenses that travel with the child, and economies of scale, that can be used to correct estimates for those expenses borne by noncustodial parents instead of the custodial parents. Using such assumptions, Braver and O'Connell (1998) and Braver (1999) found that the average standards of living shortly after divorce for mothers and fathers were equivalent.

And what of the longer term? Few researchers have studied anything beyond about 18 months after the divorce, but two very common events become significant as time progresses. First, the salaries of many custodial mothers increase: Duncan and Hoffman (1985) found that, by 5 years after divorce, women who remained single increased their standard of living by 34 %. Men's salaries do not increase similarly because most already earn close to their maximum capacity at the time of divorce. Second, most divorced parents remarry as time progresses. According to Bumpass, Sweet, and Castro-Martin (1990), about two-thirds of divorced mothers and about three-quarters of divorced fathers remarry. When they do, the economics change again. When mothers remarry, they gain more income than expenses, whereas fathers do the reverse (Fabricius, Braver, & Deneau, 2003). Thus, remarriage tends to make mothers' standards of living higher than fathers'. If the parents' standards of living were about equal shortly after the divorce, these two factors combine to make the long-term financial effects of divorce, on average, more favorable to mothers than to fathers.

Consequences of Divorce for Parenting

The first year or two following divorce are typically chaotic and highly stressful for both parents and this may adversely affect parent-child relationships

(Hetherington, 2003). Divorce often leads to decline in the use of positive parenting strategies (responsiveness) and increases in reliance on negative parenting strategies (e.g. harshness; Harold & Conger, 1997) by both custodial mothers and noncustodial fathers (Kline-Pruett, Williams, Insabella, & Little, 2003; Sturge-Apple, Gondoli, Bonds, & Salem, 2003), although the long-term effects on their behavior may be different.

Custodial parents. Many divorced custodial mothers engage in coercive exchanges with their sons that are characterized by punitive discipline, irritability, an escalation of conflict, and aggressiveness (Hetherington, 1993) while struggling to monitor and supervise the activities of their youngsters (Hetherington & Stanley-Hagen, 2002). Interestingly, fathers who gain custody may have more difficulty than custodial mothers supervising and monitoring their adolescents' behavior (Maccoby, Buchanan, Mnookin, & Dornbusch, 1993). Children of divorce often have more autonomy and decision-making power than children in non-divorced families (Hetherington & Clingempeel, 1992). Custodial parents' use of praise, warmth, and other positive parenting strategies are often disrupted by divorce, leading a substantial number of children to emotionally disengage from their families (Hetherington, 1993).

Noncustodial parents. Parents who enter noncustodial status face very different parenting challenges (Maccoby & Mnookin, 1992) because the amount of contact and involvement with their children will substantially decline for many. The contact the average noncustodial fathers tend to have with their children is increasing. Older research (e.g., Amato, 1986; Fulton, 1979; Furstenberg & Nord, 1985; Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1982; Hetherington & Hagan, 1986) had shown very low levels of contact, with many fathers disengaging completely. However, later research (Braver, Wolchik, Sandler, & Sheets, 1993b; Braver, Wolchik, Sandler, Fogas, & Zvetina, 1991; Bray & Berger, 1990; Maccoby, Depner, & Mnookin, 1988; Seltzer, 1991) reported higher levels of contact and evidence provided by Cooksey and Craig (1998) indicated that this pattern change was a cohort difference (i.e., current

generations of divorced fathers visit more). Several researchers (Fabricius & Hall, 2000; Parkinson, Cashmore, & Single, 2005; Smith & Gallop, 2001) also have reported that both children and fathers wish for more contact, but this is often precluded by the divorce decree, which accords more closely to mothers' preferences for relatively little visitation for fathers. Interestingly, some children are able to maintain close relationships with nonresident fathers even who they have very little contact (Maccoby et al., 1993).

Many noncustodial fathers have difficulty adapting to their new roles because there are no scripts defining noncustodial relationships (Wallerstein & Corbin, 1986; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). Braver and O'Connell (1998) argued that a number of fathers feel "parentally disenfranchised," believing they have only a limited amount of control over child-rearing issues and have roles that are not valued by their children's mothers or by the legal system. Noncustodial parents also must cope with changes in the *quality* of their relationships with their children (Amato & Gilbreth, 1999). Many become very permissive and assume the role of companion rather than disciplinarian or teacher (Hetherington, 1993).

Several theorists have attempted to synthesize information about the factors that predict the amount of contact into *theories* of father-child relationships.

Interactionist-feminist theory. Arendell (1992a, 1992b, 1994, 1995) adapted an interactionist-feminist perspective when interpreting results from her qualitative study of 75 recently divorced nonresident fathers. In this perspective, father absence is a masculinist strategy to control situations through conflict and tension. While most fathers complained of "injustice, discrimination, resistance, and frustration and discontent" and expressed rage at the legal system and at their ex-wives, this was due to their use of a "masculinist discourse of divorce," which employed the "rhetoric of rights."

Family systems theory. The family systems perspective (Arditti & Kelly, 1994) explains father-child relationships by noting that they occur in the context of the mother-father relationship. They note that even when the formal husband/

wife relationship ceases to exist, the continuing relationship between parents, vis-a-vis their children, usually necessitates some level of mutual involvement, requiring divorced parents to engage in frequent interactions. The theory posits that fathers who had closer and less conflictual relationships with their ex-wives had better relationships with their children. Those who feel that custody and visitation arrangements are unjust and unsatisfactory are expected to have had poorer relationships with both their children and their ex-wives (Madden-Derdich & Leonard, 2000, 2002).

Role-identity theory. Role-identity theory (Ihinger-Tallman, Pasley, & Buehler, 1993; Minton & Pasley, 1996; Stone & McKenry, 1998) is a “mid-range” theory in which the father’s parenting role identity is expected to predict paternal involvement and child well-being. Father’s role identity included the dimensions of satisfaction with the father role, perceived competence in that role, his investment in the role and its salience. This role identity can be moderated by such factors as the co-parental relationship, mother’s views of the father’s parenting, father’s emotional well-being, the encouragement father receives from others to engage in parenting, and the father’s dissatisfaction with the legal system and the custody and visitation arrangements.

Role-enactment theory. Leite and McKenry (2002) reformulated the above theory into role-enactment theory. In this theory, a new predictor is father’s role satisfaction, which is assumed to be reduced by the fact that aspects of the father role remain salient to many nonresidential fathers despite the ambiguity and barriers they encounter. A second added predictor is “institutional role clarity,” the degree to which arrangements that define expected levels of contact between nonresidential fathers and children were clearly specified in the legal documents. The greater the role satisfaction and the clearer the institutional role, the greater the contact.

Resource theory. Foa and Foa’s resource theory (1980) served as the basis for Rettig, Leichtentritt, and Stanton’s (1999) model emphasizing that, through the normal give-and-take of everyday relationships, people exchange resources. How these

resource exchanges flow between partners determines interpersonal behaviors and satisfaction. When viewing noncustodial fathers through this lens, the father’s own perceived economic and social psychological well-being, his communication with the mother during co-parenting, and their degree of conflict were predicted to affect paternal involvement with children.

Social exchange theory. Social exchange theory (Braver, Wolchik, Sandler, & Sheets, 1993a) closely resembles resource theory. It postulates that fathers *decide* how much to invest in father–child relationships by implicitly comparing the rewards associated with those relationships with their costs; the more positive the reward-to-cost trade-off, the more fathers will invest in relationships. For example, fathers who enjoyed visits more had greater benefits, while those who fought less with wives had reduced costs; either would increase the trade-off, and therefore the level of contact. The model was strongly supported in longitudinal analyses by Braver, Wolchik, Sandler, Sheets, Fogas, et al. (1993b).

Consequences of Divorce for Inter-parental Relationships

When childless couples divorce, they typically have either no or relatively neutral relationships with their ex-spouses years later. In contrast, because couples with children “divorce each other but not their children,” they continue to have relatively involved relationships throughout most of their lives. Thus, most divorcing couples with children suffer high degrees of conflict with ex-partners which persist for 3 years or more after their divorces are finalized (Ahrns & Wallisch, 1986; Masheter, 1991). As time continues, about a quarter achieve working “co-parental” relationships (Adamsons & Pasley, 2006; Ahrns, 1981; Whiteside, 1998), half have almost no contact with the other and engage in “parallel parenting” (Ahrns, 1994; Maccoby & Mnookin, 1992) while the final quarter continue to display great hostility (Ahrns, 1994).

As suggested above, the parents’ conflict with one another is likely to affect the relationships

that parents have with their children. For example, many divorcing parents who are conflicted put children in the middle of the differences by denigrating one another or by sending messages to the other parents through the children (Arbuthnot & Gordon, 1997; Buchanan & Heiges, 2001). Such experiences may lead children to feel that they need to take sides in the conflict.

Consequences of Divorce for Children

Developmental Course of Child–Parent Relationships

Parent–child relationships are generally believed to play a crucial role in shaping children’s development and adjustment. Consistent with this belief, considerable efforts have been made to examine the developmental course of these relationships on the welfare and adjustment of children. The research has been extensive, with focus on social skills, psychological health and symptomatology, school behavior and performance, as well as educational attainment, relationship success, delinquency, and life time earnings. Some aspects of these relationships that are influential are those that have more positive effects on children’s development than others as well as the effects of parent–child separations and relationship disruptions on children’s subsequent adjustment. In particular, Kelly and Lamb (2000, 2003; Lamb & Kelly, 2009), among others, have documented how an understanding of normative developmental phases informs both our understanding of how parental separation and divorce may affect children’s development and adjustment as well as how the design of postdivorce living arrangements most likely will benefit children.

As described by Bowlby (1969), and largely confirmed by subsequent research (for detailed review, see Thompson, 2006), infant–parent attachments pass through several developmental phases, during the first of which infants learn to discriminate among adult caregivers and gradually develop emotional attachments to them. Between 7 and 24 months, attachments become increasingly apparent, as infants preferentially seek to be near and interact with specific regular caregivers

by whom they are more easily soothed than by strangers. Contrary to Bowlby’s initial speculation and widespread “common sense,” there is considerable evidence that most infants in two-parent families form attachments to both parents at about the same age, around 6–7 months (see Lamb, 2002a, for a review), even though fathers typically spend less time with their infants than mothers (Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2004). This indicates that, although a threshold level of interaction is crucial for attachments to form, time spent interacting is not the only critical dimension.

The amounts of time that infants spend with their two parents do not appear to determine whether or not the attachment relationships with either are insecure or secure. However, the relative prominence of the two parents in caring for and interacting with their children does appear to affect the relative importance of the two relationships with respect to their impact on later development (Lamb & Lewis, 2011). Nonetheless, both relationships remain psychologically important even when there are disparities between the two parents’ levels of participation in child care.

Parents are not equivalently sensitive, of course, and individual differences in responsiveness affect the quality or security of the individual attachment relationships that form. Specifically, insecure attachments are more likely to develop when parents are less sensitive, and it is quite common for infants to be securely attached to one person and insecurely attached to another (Ahnert, Pinquart, & Lamb, 2006), presumably because one parent has been sensitive while the other has been insensitive. The quality of both mother- and father–child relationships remains the most reliable predictor of individual differences in psychological, social, and cognitive adjustment in infancy, as well as in later childhood (Lamb & Lewis, 2011; Thompson, 2006).

Importantly, infants and toddlers need regular interaction with their “attachment figures” in order to foster, maintain, and strengthen their relationships (Lamb, 2002a; Thompson, 2006). This means that young children need to interact with both parents in a variety of contexts (feeding, playing, diapering, soothing, reading, putting to bed, etc.) to ensure that the relationships are

consolidated and strengthened. In the absence of such opportunities for regular interaction across a broad range of contexts, infant–parent relationships may weaken rather than grow stronger. When toddlers are separated for as little as a few days from all of their attachment figures (for example, both parents) simultaneously, intense distress and disturbances may persist for as long as 6 months after reunion (Bowlby, 1973; Heinicke, 1956; Heinicke & Westheimer, 1966; Robertson & Robertson, 1971). Reactions are muted, but not eliminated, when children are cared for by other attachment figures or sensitive substitute caregivers during the separation (Robertson & Robertson). Extended separations from parents with whom children have formed meaningful attachments are thus undesirable because they unduly stress developing attachment relationships (Bowlby, 1973). The loss or attenuation of important attachment relationships may cause depression and anxiety, particularly in the first 2 years of life, when children lack the cognitive and communication skills that would enable them to cope with loss. The absence of regular contact slowly erodes relationships, such that, over time, parents who do not interact regularly with their infants effectively become strangers.

Relationships with parents continue to play a crucial role in shaping children’s social, emotional, personal, and cognitive development into middle childhood and adolescence (Lamb & Lewis, 2005, 2011). Indeed, the quality of the mother- and father–child relationships remain the most reliable correlates of individual differences in psychological, social, and cognitive adjustment in infancy, as well as in later childhood (Lamb & Lewis, 2011; Thompson, 2006). Children are better off with insecure attachments than without attachment relationships because these enduring ties play essential formative roles in later social and emotional functioning.

Disruptions in Parent–Child Relationships

There is also a substantial literature documenting the adverse effects of disrupted parent–child

relationships on children’s development and adjustment, with a linear relationship between age of separation and later attachment quality in adolescence. The weakest attachments to parents are reported by those whose parents separated in the first 5 years of their lives (Woodward, Ferguson, & Belsky, 2000). Similarly, in a retrospective study of adolescents whose parents had divorced, Schwartz and Finley (2005) found that the age at time of divorce was associated with ratings of both paternal involvement and nurturance, indicating that the earlier the separation, the greater the impact on the quality of children’s relationships with their fathers.

Particularly over the last 2 decades, many large-scale datasets have been plumbed in efforts to understand the effects of parental separation or divorce on the children involved. The results of this research are remarkably consistent: Researchers have clearly demonstrated that, on average, children benefit from being raised in two-parent families rather than separated, divorced, or never married single-parent households (Amato, 2000; Aquilino, 1996; Carlson, 2006; Clarke-Stewart & Brentano, 2006; Clarke-Stewart, Vandell, McCartney, Owen, & Booth, 2000; Hetherington, 1999; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002; McLanahan, 1999; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994; McLanahan & Teitler, 1999; Simons & Associates, 1996; Simons, Lin, Gordon, Conger, & Lorenz, 1999), although there is considerable variability within groups, and the differences between groups are relatively small. Indeed, although children growing up in fatherless families are, on average, disadvantaged relative to peers growing up in two-parent families with respect to psychosocial adjustment, behavior and achievement at school, educational attainment, employment trajectories, income generation, antisocial, and criminal behavior, as well as intimate relationships, the majority of children with divorced parents enjoy average or better-than-average social and emotional adjustment as young adults (Booth & Amato, 2001; Clarke-Stewart & Brentano, 2006; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002; Kelly & Emery, 2003). Approximately 20–25 % (some studies suggest 30–35 %) of children in post-separation and divorced families give evidence of adjustment problems, compared

to 12 % (some studies suggest as much as 15 %) in married families. Thus, the majority of children from separated families evince no psychopathology or behavioral symptoms, although they are likely to experience psychic pain for at least some time (Emery, 1998; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002; Laumann-Billings & Emery, 2000).

Factors That Predict Child Adjustment to Divorce

Such dramatic individual differences in outcomes force us to identify more precisely both the ways in which divorce/single parenthood may affect children's lives and the factors that might account for individual differences in children's adjustment following their parents' separation. Three inter-related factors (economic stress, conflict between parents, and changes in the children's relationships with their parents) appear to be important but we focus here especially on both conflict and children's relationships with their parents.

As mentioned above, *conflict between the parents* commonly precedes, emerges or increases during the separation and divorce processes, and often continues for some time beyond them. Inter-parental conflict is an important predictor of children's psychosocial maladjustment just as marital harmony, its conceptual inverse, appears to be a reliable correlate of positive adjustment (Cummings, Merrilees, & George, 2010; Johnston, 1994; Kelly, 2000). The negative impacts of high levels of marital conflict on the quality of parenting of both mothers and fathers have been well documented. In general, parental conflict is associated with more rejecting, less warm, and less nurturing parenting by mothers, and with fathers' withdrawal from parenting and increased engagement in intrusive interactions with their children (Cummings & Davies, 1994; Grych, 2005). Anger-based marital conflict is associated with filial aggression and externalizing behavior problems, perhaps because such parents and children have similar difficulty regulating negative affect (Katz & Gottman, 1993). These and other data support the observation that some of the "effects of divorce" are better viewed

as the effects of pre-separation marital conflict and violence (Kelly, 2000).

Unfortunately, the adversarial legal system tends to promote conflict between already vulnerable parents because of its win-lose orientation and the way it fosters hostile behaviors and demands. Although the adversarial process purports to focus on children's "best interests," parents' psychologically-driven legal strategies more often represent their own needs and perceived entitlements, and the effect is to diminish the possibility of future civility, productive communication, and cooperation (Kelly, 2003).

The quality, quantity, and type of parent-child relationships also powerfully affect the post-separation/divorce adjustment of school-aged children and adolescents. As mentioned earlier, deterioration in the quality of parenting after separation has long been recognized (Belsky, Youngblade, Rovine, & Volling, 1991; Clarke-Stewart & Brentano, 2006; Hetherington, 1999; Sturge-Apple, Davies, & Cummings, 2006; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). Many parents are preoccupied, stressed, emotionally labile, angry, and depressed following separation, and their "diminished parenting" includes less positive and affectionate involvement as well as more coercive and harsh forms of discipline. Additional intrapsychic factors affecting the quality of parenting include the parents' psychological adjustment, violence, and levels of conflict. External factors such as absorption in dating, new partners, cohabitation, remarriage, poverty, and financial instability are also associated with reductions in the quality of parenting (Amato, 2000; Hetherington, 1999; Kelly, 2000; Pruett, Williams, Insabella, & Little, 2003; Simons et al., 1999; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980).

Because single mothers need to work more extensively outside the home than do married or partnered mothers, parents spend less time with children in single-parent families and the levels of supervision and guidance are lower and less reliable than in two-parent families (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002; McLanahan, 1999). Reductions in the level and quality of parental stimulation and attention may affect achievement, compliance, and social skills while diminished supervision

makes antisocial behavior and misbehavior more likely (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002).

Many researchers have identified specific aspects of parenting that can moderate the impact of separation and divorce on children's social, emotional, and academic adjustment, thereby protecting children against some of the harmful impacts of high conflict. Effective parenting by separated mothers is characterized by warmth, authoritative discipline (setting limits, noncoercive discipline and control, enforcement of rules, appropriate expectations), academic skill encouragement, and monitoring of the children's activities (Amato & Fowler, 2002; Buchanan, Maccoby, & Dornbusch, 1996; Hetherington, 1999; Martinez & Forgatch, 2002; Simons et al., 1999). As described in more detail below, more positive adjustment following divorce is also associated with such effective paternal behaviors as active involvement (help with homework and projects, emotional support and warmth, mutual discussion of the children's problems, and involvement in school (Amato & Fowler, 2002; Amato & Gilbreth, 1999; Hetherington, 1999)).

Divorce commonly disrupts one of the child's most important and enduring relationships, that with his or her father. As Amato (e.g., Amato & Gilbreth, 1999) has shown with particular clarity, however, the bivariate associations between father absence and children's adjustment are much weaker than one might expect. Indeed, Amato and Gilbreth's (1999) meta-analysis revealed no significant association between the frequency of father-child contact and child outcomes, largely because of the great diversity in the types of "father-present" relationships. We might predict that contacts with abusive, incompetent, or disinterested fathers are likely to have much different effects than relationships with devoted, committed, and sensitive fathers. As expected, Amato and Gilbreth (1999) found that children's well-being was significantly enhanced when their relationships with nonresident fathers were positive, when the nonresident fathers engaged in "active parenting," and when the contact was frequent. Dunn, Cheng, O'Connor, and Bridges (2004), Simons and Associates (1996), Hetherington, Bridges, and Insabella (1998), and

Clarke-Stewart and Hayward (1996) likewise reported that children benefited when their non-resident fathers were actively involved in routine everyday activities, and this conclusion was clearly supported in recent analyses by Carlson (2006) of data from the National Longitudinal Study of Youth. Carlson showed that father involvement was associated with better adolescent adjustment and that paternal involvement partially mediated the effects of family structure (notably divorce or single parenthood) on adolescents' behavioral outcomes. Similarly, higher levels of paternal involvement in their children's schools was associated with better grades, better adjustment, fewer suspensions, and lower dropout rates than were lower levels of involvement (Nord, Brimhall, & West, 1997). Overall, active engagement in a variety of specific activities and ongoing school-related discussions between fathers and their adolescents significantly lowered the probability of school failure.

Another meta-analysis indicated that, on multiple ratings of emotional and behavioral adjustment and academic achievement by mothers, fathers, teachers, and clinicians, children in joint physical custody were better adjusted than children in sole custody arrangements (Bauserman, 2002). In fact, children in shared custody were as well adjusted as children whose parents remained married. Although joint physical custody parents reported less past and current conflict than did sole physical custody parents, conflict did not explain the superiority of the children in joint custody arrangements. Again, the clear implication is that active paternal involvement, not simply the number or length of meetings between fathers and children, predicts child adjustment. This suggests that postdivorce arrangements should specifically seek to maximize positive and meaningful paternal involvement rather than simply allow minimal levels of visitation. As in non-divorced families, in other words, the quality of continued relationships with the parents—both parents—is crucial (Kelly & Lamb, 2000, 2003). Stated differently and succinctly, the better (richer, deeper, and more secure) the parent-child relationships, the better the children's adjustment, whether or not the parents live together (Lamb, 2002a, 2002b).

A recent longitudinal study of representative samples of adolescents living in low income neighborhoods in Boston, San Antonio, and Chicago nicely illustrated the associations over time between nonresident paternal involvement and adolescent delinquency, after statistically controlling for the effects of influences such as demographic factors and the quality of mother-child relationships (Coley & Medeiros, 2007). As expected, nonresident paternal involvement was associated with less delinquency overall; importantly, higher paternal involvement was associated with declines in delinquency over time, particularly among adolescents who were more involved with delinquent activities. In addition, as delinquency increased, paternal involvement increased too, suggesting that fathers were responding to changes in their children's problem behavior. Similarly, in another longitudinal study of adolescents, Menning (2006) showed that adolescents whose nonresident fathers were more involved were less likely to start smoking.

Given the demonstrated importance of fathers' active participation and effective parenting, the influence of maternal attitudes on the extent of paternal involvement in the marriage and following separation and divorce is important (Cowdery & Knudson-Martin, 2005; Pleck, 1997). Mothers can be influential "gatekeepers" of paternal involvement through attitudes and behaviors that limit or facilitate fathers' opportunities to develop close relationships with their children. Mothers' traditional attitudes toward women's roles, identities linked primarily to caregiving, and perceptions that mothers are more competent at child care than fathers are associated with more active inhibitory gate-keeping, particularly following separation. These attitudes and perceptions by mothers predict lower levels of father involvement (Allen & Hawkins, 1999; Fagan & Barnett, 2003).

Implications for Divorce Policy

Although a number of factors help account for individual differences in the effects of divorce on children, therefore, the ability to maintain meaningful relationships with both parents does appear

to be of central importance. Writing on behalf of 18 experts on the effects of divorce, Lamb, Sternberg, and Thompson (1997, p. 400) observed more than a decade ago that: "To maintain high-quality relationships with their children, parents need to have sufficiently extensive and regular interactions with them, but the amount of time involved is usually less important than the quality of the interaction that it fosters. Time distribution arrangements that ensure the involvement of both parents in important aspects of their children's everyday lives and routines...are likely to keep nonresidential parents playing psychologically important and central roles in the lives of their children."

In order for parents to have a positive impact on their children's development, therefore, it is important that parents be integral parts of their children's lives. This remains especially important as children get older and greater portions of their time are occupied outside the family by virtue of friendships, extracurricular activities, sports, and the like. At all ages, it is important for parents to know teachers and friends, what's happening at school or preschool, how relationships with peers are going, what other activities are important or meaningful to the children, etc., and to be aware of daily ups-and-downs in their children's lives. It is hard to do this without regular and extensive first hand involvement in a variety of contexts.

As Kelly and Lamb (2000; Lamb, 2002b; Lamb & Kelly, 2001, 2009) reiterated, the ideal situation is one in which children with separated parents have opportunities to interact with both parents frequently in a variety of functional contexts (feeding, play, discipline, basic care, limit-setting, putting to bed, etc.). The evening and overnight periods (like extended days with naptimes) with nonresidential parents are especially important psychologically for infants, toddlers, and young children. They provide opportunities for crucial social interactions and nurturing activities (including bathing, soothing hurts and anxieties, bedtime rituals, comforting in the middle of the night, and the reassurance and security of snuggling in the morning) that 1-3 h long visits cannot provide. According to attachment theory

(Lamb, 2002a), these everyday activities promote and maintain trust and confidence in the parents, while deepening and strengthening child–parent attachments, and thus need to be encouraged when decisions about access and contact are made.

One implication of these findings is that even young children should spend overnight periods with both parents when both have been involved in their care prior to separation, even though neo-analysts have long counseled against this (Kelly & Lamb, 2000; Lamb & Kelly, 2001). As Warshak (2000) has pointed out, the prohibition of overnight “visitation” has been justified by prejudices and beliefs rather than by any empirical evidence. When both parents have established significant attachments and both have been actively involved in the child’s care, overnight “visits” help consolidate attachments and child adjustment, not undermine them. Consistent with this reasoning, the results of research by Pruett and her colleagues showed that regular overnight visits were associated with better adjustment on the part of toddlers and young children (Pruett et al., 2003). Parents who have been actively involved before divorce but are then denied overnight access to their children are thereby excluded from an important array of activities, and the strength or depth of their relationships suffer as a result.

To minimize the deleterious impact of extended separations from either parent, attachment theory tells us there should be more frequent transitions than would perhaps be desirable with older children (Kelly & Lamb, 2000). To be responsive to young children’s psychological needs, in other words, the parenting schedules adopted for children under age 2 or 3 should involve more transitions, rather than fewer, to ensure the continuity of both relationships and to promote the children’s security and comfort. Although no empirical research exists testing specific parenting plans following separation, it is likely, for example, that infants and toddlers would remain most comfortable and secure with schedules allowing the children to see their nonresident fathers at least three times a week, including at least one overnight extended stay (assuming that the fathers are competent, experienced parents), so that there is no separation of greater than 2–3 days. From the

third year of life, the ability to tolerate longer separations begins to increase, so that most toddlers can manage two consecutive overnights with each parent without stress.

Recently, Fabricius and Luecken (2007) found that the quality of relationships between university students and their divorced fathers were better the more time they had lived with them, no matter how much parental conflict there has been, although the amount of exposure to parental conflict generally had negative effects. Interparental conflict should thus be avoided wherever possible, but its presence should not be used to justify restrictions on children’s access to either of their parents.

Legal Processes Associated with Parental Divorce

When parents divorce, they must make formal—and legally-binding—arrangements about various matters, including child support, payment of the children’s medical expenses and insurance, and, most importantly, custody and parenting time. Only 2–10 % of divorcing couples in the USA have their custody provisions decided by a judge (Braver & O’Connell, 1998; Logan et al., 2003; Maccoby & Mnookin, 1992); the remainder reach agreements themselves that court officials then “rubber stamp.” Many steps are often involved in reaching such agreements.

Parents typically have one or more court appearances or “settlement conferences” before final resolution. Often judges exhort parents to settle their differences and, when they are making too little progress, may order them to special classes, and appoint mediators or custody evaluators. Often, but not always, lawyers are involved. In about 30 % of divorces, neither parent is represented; in another 30 % only one (most commonly the mother) is; and in the remainder both are (Braver & O’Connell, 1998; Logan et al., 2003; Maccoby & Mnookin, 1992).

Many parents attend “Parent Education” classes (Blaisure & Geasler, 1996) which have recently become very popular (Arbuthnot, 2002; Blaisure & Geasler, 2000), although there is little

evidence that they have the intended effects: facilitating negotiations, preventing couples from litigating, and improving the quality of their agreements (Braver, Salem, Pearson, & DeLusé, 1996; Douglas, 2006; Goodman, Bonds, Sandler, & Braver, 2004; Pollet & Lombreglia, 2008; Sigal, Sandler, Wolchik, & Braver, 2011).

About one quarter of parents enter into mediation, which involves neutral professionals helping couples resolve disputes about custody, parenting time, and sometimes financial issues (Braver & O'Connell, 1998; Emery, 1994; Kelly, 2004). In some states, mediation is not confidential, and if the parents do not forge agreements, the mediators make influential recommendation to the courts (Douglas, 2006). Australia is pioneering "child inclusive" divorce mediation in which the children meet separately with specially trained intermediaries (McIntosh, Wells, Smyth, & Long, 2008).

About 5–10 % of the time, experts (usually psychologists) are jointly hired by the parents to perform custody evaluations and make non-binding recommendations either to the parents or directly to the court. However, there have been several recent critiques of the legal and ethical propriety as well as the value of custody evaluations (Bow & Quinnell, 2002, 2004; Martin, 2005; Tippins & Wittman, 2005; Emery, Otto & O'Donohue, 2006).

After one or more of these interventions, the final arrangements may diverge substantially from the parents' initial intentions. In Braver and O'Connell's (1998) study, for example, 70 % of the mothers initially wanted sole legal custody, and the remainder wanted joint custody, whereas 75 % of the fathers wanted joint custody, and the remainder were equally split between wanting sole maternal and sole paternal custody. Similarly, Maccoby and Mnookin (1992) reported that 82 % of the mothers wanted sole maternal physical custody, while equivalent thirds of the fathers wanted joint, sole paternal, or sole maternal custody arrangements. Two-thirds of the University students surveyed by Fabricius and Hall (2000) reported that their mothers had wanted to be primary residential parents, and almost two-thirds reported that their fathers had wanted equal or nearly equal living arrangements or to be their primary residential parents. In all three studies,

however, the parents ultimately were twice as likely to reach agreements reflecting the mothers' rather than the fathers' preferences.

Why do mothers' preferences tend to prevail? Some have speculated that fathers' stated preferences are only bargaining positions later negotiated away in exchange for concessions on child support (Neely, 1984; Singer & Reynolds, 1988; Weitzman, 1985), but all three of the empirical investigations that have specifically investigated this claim have failed to find support (Braver & O'Connell, 1998; Maccoby & Mnookin, 1992; Venohr & Griffith, 2003).

Instead, it is likely that fathers' low level of persistence follows the guidance they receive from judges, attorneys, custody evaluators, parent educators, and mediators (Braver & O'Connell, 1998; Maccoby & Mnookin, 1992; Mnookin, 1984; Mnookin & Kornhauser, 1979). But this is not inevitable: DeLusé (1999) found that fathers who attended Parent Education classes negotiated significantly more parenting time, presumably because instructors had explained the courts' desire to keep both parents involved.

Lawyers may play a particularly important role. At an Arizona State Bar convention, Braver et al. (2002) distributed a custody scenario to Family Law attorneys who were randomly assigned to "represent" either the mother or the father. Although the facts in the scenario were neutral, the attorneys were more likely to tell mothers that they would probably prevail in seeking physical custody and the majority of parenting time. Note that even if courts were indeed completely gender-neutral, lawyers' views can discourage worthy fathers from pursuing their desired arrangements, creating a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Current Debates About Divorce

Because its effects on both parents and children are so dramatic, and because divorce is so common, many aspects of current policy and practice are the focus of intense debate.

No-fault/unilateral divorce. Beginning in the late 1960s, as explained above, no-fault divorce became

the standard throughout the United States. Very importantly, divorces also became unilateral, because reluctant parties could do nothing to prevent, delay, or avoid divorce. As noted earlier, the surge in the divorce rates coincided with the passage of these laws, leading some advocates to press for a return to fault-based divorces (Brinig & Buckley, 1998). Making divorce harder to obtain would perforce reduce the rate of divorce, but efforts to repeal no-fault divorce laws are unlikely to prevail in the current cultural climate (DiFonzo, 1997). There is, however, public support for better public education about marriage, to prevent couples from later seeking divorce. At least one Catholic diocese increased the length of marriage preparation classes for churchgoers from 6 to 9 months in 2010, and many courts now require parties considering separation to attend cautionary classes.

Custody standards. There has been a considerable debate about the legal standards that guide decisions about custody. Since 1970, the prevailing standard has been the “Best Interests of the Child” standard (BIC). The BIC is generally considered an improvement over past standards because it accords primacy to children’s needs, and is egalitarian, flexible, and simple (Chambers, 1984; Warshak, 2007) but it has been criticized for being vague and for allowing judges to rely on idiosyncratic biases (Chambers, 1984; Finley & Schwartz, 2007). Because rulings are unpredictable, some argue that it fosters custody disputes (O’Connell, 2007). The major alternative proposals are the Primary Caretaker standard (Chambers, 1984; Maccoby, 1999), specifying that parents who provided the most childcare during marriage should be primary custodians; the Approximation Rule (American Law Institute, 2002; Lamb, 2007; Warshak, 2007), dictating that “the court should allocate custodial responsibility so that the proportion of custodial time the child spends with each parent approximates the proportion of time each parent spent performing caretaking functions for the child prior to the parents’ separation” (American Law Institute, 2002, p. 1); and the Joint (or Shared) Custody standard, specifying that children should reside about equally with both parents. Of these, the latter standard seems to be gaining the most ground

(Fabricius, Braver, Diaz, & Velez, 2010; Parkinson, 2010), if not with feminist groups or the Bar. Critics also argue that this standard (like all the others) is insensitive to the possible effects of domestic violence, which (they argue) are more likely to continue when the parents are required to have frequent contacts, if only to transfer the children.

Processes for obtaining divorce. In addition to these substantive issues, considerable controversy surrounds the *processes* involved in reaching decisions. In particular, divorce settlements are guided by the courts, which promote an adversarial model of dispute resolution. Critics argue that this is inappropriate for divorce and custody disputes because the resulting conflict can harm children (Weinstein, 1997). They urge that alternative systems of dispute resolution should instead be the norm (Firestone & Weinstein, 2004).

Should children have an independent voice when disputes involve their welfare (Parkinson & Cashmore, 2009)? Should children be expected or allowed to testify (“choose between his parents”), and if so, to whom and when (in open court, to the judge in chambers, to a trained and sensitive mental health professional)? Should they have their own legal counsel or *guardians ad litem* to advocate for them, and/or ensure not only that children’s interests, broadly defined, but also the specific needs of individual children and families, are emphasized (Fabricius, 2003; Warshak, 2003)? These knotty questions are the focus of considerable controversy but little research.

Two issues involving professional practice standards are also controversial. As noted earlier, there is debate about whether custody evaluators base their recommendations on sound scientific grounds (Bow & Quinnell, 2002, 2004; Martin, 2005; Tippins & Wittman, 2005) and a new role of Parenting Coordinator has developed (Sullivan, 2005). Parenting Coordinators are professionals (typically psychologists and counselors) who are appointed by courts to handle ongoing visitation disputes and other parenting issues for postdivorce families. Whether judges can or should cede some of their legal authority to helping

professionals who decide disputes promptly on behalf of the courts while dispensing family therapy is hotly disputed.

Methodological Issues in Studying Marital Dissolution

A number of methodological issues surface in the voluminous research on divorce, its causes and its aftermath. We focus here on two categories of issues: (1) the sources of information; and (2) the research designs.

Data sources and measures. When exploring divorce, researchers have access to some more or less *objective* data, including employment and labor force data, tallies of divorces, child support payments logged by administrative agencies (Braver, Fitzpatrick, & Bay, 1991) and various official court filings (Braver & Bay, 1992; Braver, Whitley, & Ng, 1993). However, most of the information sought by researchers can only be obtained by querying the family members involved, yet it is well known that such self-report data may be erroneous and biased. Unfortunately, researchers too often fail to determine whether there are valid measures of the constructs at issue, to ensure that the measures are standardized across studies (for the sake of comparability), or to document that the measures have adequate psychometric properties.

An example of a measure that *has* shown convincing validity is the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL, Achenbach, 1978, 1991a; Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1979; Achenbach & Rescorla, 2007). Painstakingly developed over many decades, this measure is often thought to be the “gold standard” of children’s behavioral and mental health problems. One-week test-retest reliabilities average 0.89 (Achenbach, 1991b) and its concurrent validity using clinical referred vs. non-referred groups is excellent (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1983). CBCL scores also correlate reasonably well with diagnoses obtained via structured interview by trained clinicians (cf. Bird et al., 1987). The original 118-item measure has been shortened to a widely used 32-item version called the Behavior Problems Index (BPI; Peterson & Zill, 1986) while Moore,

Halle, Vandivere, and Mariner (2002) have successfully created an even shorter 6 item version.

At the other extreme, the amount of contact children have with their nonresidential fathers is often inconsistently—and rather poorly—measured (Smyth, 2002). Comparing six datasets, Argys et al. (2007) concluded that, “What is most striking about the reports of father-child contact ... and perhaps most alarming to researchers, is the magnitude of the differences in the reported prevalence of father-child contact across the different surveys” (p. 383). In particular, *quantitative scales* are often more reliable and valid than ordinal items. For example, Fabricius and Luecken (2007) asked young adults four questions about the typical number of days and nights they spent with their fathers and converted those to the percentage of the child’s parenting time spent with the father. In addition, of course, researchers have argued that the construct of father involvement needs to be better conceptualized before it can be well measured (Fabricius et al., 2010; Pasley & Braver, 2003).

Researchers also need to consider who provided the information. Among others, Marsiglio, Day, and Lamb (2000) have called attention to the discrepancies among respondents’ reports. Generally, there are two sorts of informant bias in this area of research: a “self-serving” bias, with informants describing themselves in more socially desirable terms than warranted (Cialdini, Braver, & Lewis, 1974; Miller & Ross, 1975; Sicol & Ross, 1977); and an “ex-spouse-bashing” bias (Braver et al., 1991; Sonenstein & Calhoun, 1990) characterized by exactly the opposite tendencies when informants are describing their former spouses. It is thus desirable to “triangulate” reports by obtaining matched reports from both mothers and fathers whenever feasible. Pasley and Braver (2003) also suggested that researchers obtain retrospective reports from adult children because they appear to “split the difference” between the two parents’ views.

Research design issues. Divorce processes unfold over long periods of time, but researchers typically take “snapshots” at one point in time. Correlations among variables in such cross-sectional datasets

unfortunately cannot elucidate the causal processes involved. And very few studies have involved longitudinal designs, with the same family members repeatedly observed over longer periods so that causal processes can be explored. Maccoby and Mnookin (1992) and Braver and O'Connell (1998) are rare exceptions who have obtained *prospective* longitudinal studies, in which the families were initially observed *before* the divorce and were then reassessed (Braver & O'Connell, 1998; Maccoby & Mnookin, 1992). Among the causal questions that could be addressed more reliably using such data was whether fathers' greater contact made fathers better child support payers or vice versa. In fact, Braver and colleagues found that a third variable, the experience of parental disenfranchisement, explained both of these behaviors (Braver, Wolchik, Sandler, Sheets, Fogas, et al., 1993).

Another important research design issue limits the generalizability of certain key findings, including, for example, Bauserman's (2002) meta-analytic conclusion that children in joint custody families fare better than those in sole custody. Because virtually all families self-select or are selected into the custody arrangements they experience (custody is not assigned at random), they are likely to differ in several important ways from families with other custody arrangements. Such concomitant differences, as opposed to the arrangement per se, may account for differences in children's outcomes. Accordingly, Emery, Otto, and O'Donohue (2005) questioned whether the same benefits would accrue if joint custody was *imposed* on less-than-willing families. Fabricius et al. (2010) have advocated that such important questions can better be explored using alternative research designs, such as natural experiments and using sophisticated statistical methods to control for preexisting differences and self-selection or predisposing factors (Gunnoe & Braver, 2001).

Conclusions and Implications for Practice

Divorce began to become much more common in the late 1960s, but rates have stabilized in the last 2 decades. The increased reliance on divorce in

the late twentieth century was attributable to a variety of factors, with changes in the role and attitudes of women (within families and in society more generally) being particularly significant, along with changing laws that made divorce easier to attain by obviating the need to prove that either party was at fault. Although divorce proved beneficial to many of those who sought it, marital dissolution has profound influences on all the individuals involved, as several decades of research have documented. Specifically, mothers, fathers, and children are all affected emotionally, psychologically, and economically by divorce, with variations in the ways parents negotiate divorce playing a particularly important role in determining how children are affected psychologically. This realization is sometimes credited with recent declines in the rates of divorce, with at least some parents concluding that divorce should be deferred "for the sake of the children" and a number of programs around the world have been designed to forestall hasty divorces. Such efforts have also been complemented by the design of programs, exemplified by those introduced in Australia in 2008, designed to minimize the adverse effects of divorce by encouraging parents to make decisions with their children's interests in mind. Ongoing evaluations of programs such as these will doubtless affect social policy in other jurisdictions.

One implication of such programs is the implicit recognition that divorce per se is neither good nor bad in all circumstances—the effects are extremely variable. This means that both researchers and policy makers need to undertake much more nuanced and sensitive research than might have been warranted when divorce was viewed as a similar experience for all individuals.

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Brad van Eeden-Moorefield and B. Kay Pasley

Introduction

In family research, the topic of remarriage and stepfamilies has been of interest to scholars since the landmark study by Jessie Bernard in 1956. In fact, the *Journal of Marriage and Family* decade reviews began addressing remarriage and stepfamilies in 1980 when these topics were included as a “nontraditional family form” (Macklin, 1980, citing 29 studies from 1970s) and as a “noninstitution” (Price Bonham & Balswick, 1980, citing an additional 17 studies). By 1990 when Coleman and Ganong reviewed studies of remarriage and stepfamilies from the 1980s, they noted that the literature had grown to “well over 200 published empirical works” (p. 925). They also noted that (a) stepchildren were the focus of much of the research rather than remarriage and marital functioning in stepfamilies and (b) studies typically assumed a problem-oriented or deficit-comparison approach. This approach addressed between group comparisons of those in first-marriage families with those in stepfamilies with limited attention to stepfamily strengths and processes.

B. van Eeden-Moorefield, MSW, PhD (✉)
Department of Family & Child Studies, Montclair State University, One Normal Ave, Montclair, NJ 07043, USA
e-mail: vaneelbm@gmail.com

B.K. Pasley, PhD
Department of Family & Child Studies, Florida State University, 0225H SAN, Tallahassee, FL 32306, USA
e-mail: Kpaslev@fsu.edu

The following decade saw research on remarriage and stepfamilies burgeon, and Coleman, Ganong, and Fine (2000) reviewed over 850 published works for the decade review at the onset of the twenty-first century. Children remained a primary focus of much of the research (over 200 studies). However, there was more attention given to marital and family processes with a growing interest in the broader social context in which such families were embedded. Some attention to how studies and findings had changed over time and diversity in stepfamilies, including cohabiting, and gay and lesbian stepfamilies, also was witnessed. Since 2000, scholars have continued studying remarriage and stepfamilies with over 500 published research articles and some particularly noteworthy edited volumes (e.g., Pryor, 2008a), which were reviewed for inclusion in this chapter. The words “remarriage,” “stepfamily,” and “stepparent” are used to identify published works for review here.

Changes in family formation today require scholars interested in remarriage and stepfamilies to be more inclusive and look beyond simply those unions created following divorce or death of a spouse. Such inclusiveness means that we must also attend to couples who never marry but form committed partnerships which later dissolve. These individuals go onto repartner through marriage or cohabitation. As such, we use repartner and repartnerhip as broader concepts referring to those who remarry, as well as those who form nonlegal second or higher order unions, including those with or without children present.

Accordingly, we support the recommendation of Teachman and Tedrow (2008) and adopt an inclusive definition of stepfamilies that also includes (a) those that form as a result of nonmarital repartnering rather than only from divorce or death of spouse and (b) those that are same-sexed partnerships. Such inclusiveness reflects much of public opinion (Weigel, 2008) and the realities of family life for children and adults today (Dunn, O'Connor, & Levy, 2002). In this chapter we provide a comprehensive synthesis and critique of the extant literature on remarriage and stepfamilies from this inclusive perspective, and we examine the theory and methods used in these studies.

Prevalence and Demography of Remarriage and Stepfamilies

Scholars generally agree that conceptualizing family is a daunting task, and there is a good deal of debate about what constitutes a family (see Chap. 3; Weigel, 2008). This task is further complicated by the increasing separation of family and household as concepts (see Cherlin, 2010). The U.S. Census (2010) defines a household as including all individuals living in one housing unit. Households are further delineated as family and nonfamily; a family household includes residents that are related by biological or legal means, such as birth, marriage, or adoption. Using this definition, a stepfamily includes a married couple living together with at least one stepchild (i.e., a child not biologically connected to one of the spouses). The obvious drawback of this definition is that it excludes stepfamilies in which a stepchild was adopted by a stepparent (these are rare occurring cases) or those with a nonresident stepchild. Additionally, couples who are partnered but not legally married and where one of the partners also has a child from a different partnership or marriage are excluded. Here, we label these repartnered families as nonlegal stepfamilies. Because "child" refers to persons 17 years or younger residing in the household, more exclusions include those stepfamilies whose stepchildren are older and or reside elsewhere.

Such complexity of family formation makes the way in which remarriages and stepfamilies are conceptualized and studied more challenging. However, even when definitions are clearly articulated, accurate estimates of their prevalence remain elusive. Decisions to discontinue the collection of certain information which previously had allowed us to develop more rich demographic profiles (see Bramlett & Mosher, 2002) and the initiation of other data collections which will permit greater accuracy in the future (Kreider & Elliott, 2009) complicate any contemporary estimates.

Estimates of Prevalence

Recent evidence (Kreider, 2005) shows that, in 2001, 30.2 % of all marriages were a remarriage for at least one of the partners; this is down from earlier estimates that 45 % were remarriages—likely a shift related to increased cohabitation rates (Cherlin, 2010; Sweeney, 2010). Further, Kreider (2005) noted that of the 30 % about 17 % were remarriages of only one of the partners, and 13 % were a remarriage for both. Our best estimates suggest that about 65 % of remarriages form stepfamilies with either stepfather-only or stepfather–stepmother families being the most common; stepmother-only families are the least common. Other data using an urban cohort showed that almost 60 % of unmarried couples had at least one child from a prior union, constituting nonlegal stepfamilies (Carlson & Furstenberg, 2006).

Other estimates from the 2004 Survey of Income and Program Participation (Kreider, 2007) show that of the 69.7 % of children living with two parents (3 % are living with unmarried parents) about 7.6 % included a stepparent, and the majority were resident stepfathers. Another 26 % lived with one parent of which 8.3 % lived with a mother and her partner, 1.9 % with a father and his partner, and 0.9 % with a single stepparent. Another estimate from these data shows that about 16.6 % of all children live in households where there is a stepparent, stepsibling, or half-sibling. Of these, 65.9 % have only a half-sibling,

8 % have only stepsiblings, and 2.4 % have both. Lastly, just under 40 % of cohabiting couples have a child living with them, although it is often unknown whether that child is the biological child of only one adult present in the household or of both adults. Given the higher probability of a child experiencing the dissolution of their parent's cohabiting union (Cherlin, 2010), it is likely that many of these families would be considered repartnered nonlegal stepfamilies, thereby increasing the prevalence of stepfamilies in the USA.

Remarriages tend to end slightly more frequently than first marriages, a consistent finding over time (Coleman & Ganong, 1990; Coleman et al., 2000). However, Kreider (2005) reported that it takes about the same amount of time for first marriages and remarriages to dissolve with the current median of about 8 years, up from earlier estimates of 4.5 years. Also, the findings regarding the risk of postdivorce cohabiting unions dissolving are mixed, with some suggesting that it is higher than the likelihood of a remarriage ending in redivorce while others concluding that this is not the case (Cherlin, 2010).

Demographic Characteristics

Studies of individuals who remarry or form stepfamilies show that they are more likely to be White and less likely to be employed than those in first-marriage families (Sweeney, 2002). Others show that most of those who remarry cohabited prior to doing so (Xu, Hudspeth, & Bartokowski, 2006). Nonlegal stepfamilies are more likely to be Black, have lower incomes, and often have children from prior partnerships (Kreider, 2007).

Other evidence focusing on women shows that those who are younger, more educated (especially those with postbaccalaureate degrees), and had three or more children are less likely to remarry (Sweeney, 2002). Of women who do remarry, Wolfinger (2007) found that their remarriages averaged 10 years, the average time between marriage and remarriage was 5 years, most were White and had children from their first

marriage, and 32 % experienced a second divorce. These findings are similar to those reported earlier by Wu and Schimmele (2005) using data from the 1995 General Social Survey. Clearly, for women, it appears that education and presence of children from a first marriage are key factors affecting future remarriage.

Alternatively, for men having more education (even postbaccalaureate degrees), children from a prior marriage, and being more religious is associated with an increased likelihood of remarriage (Brown, Lee, & Bulanda, 2006; Goldscheider & Sassler, 2006). Also, London and Elman (2001) found that compared to Whites, Black men are more likely to marry divorced women in general, especially those with children. However, longer first marriages generally were linked to a lower likelihood of nonmarital repartnering (Wu & Schimmele, 2005).

Children and Union Formation

The presence and influence of children on repartnering in any form in general has received considerable attention. In fact, Teachman and Tedrow (2008) concluded that the most significant shift in the last decade was a significant increase in the number of households with at least one stepchild present; most commonly these were stepfather households. They further contend that this shift means an increase in the likelihood that children will spend at least some time in a stepfamily before reaching early adulthood, especially when those born into a nonmarital union are included.

As noted, children from a prior marriage or union reduce the likelihood for women of remarriage, but increase the likelihood for men (e.g., Brown et al., 2006). However, other findings (Lampard & Peggs, 1999) showed that the likelihood of repartnering via remarriage or cohabitation decreased as the number of children from a first marriage increased for both men and women, so there may be a point at which too many children negatively affect one's willingness to repartner. There is also evidence that women with resident children tend to marry men with children, thereby forming complex stepfamilies

(Goldscheider & Sassler, 2006); however, single men are more willing to marry a divorced woman without children (Goldscheider, Kaufman, & Sassler, 2009), and men with nonresident children are more likely to cohabit rather than to marry or remarry (Stewart, Manning, & Smock, 2003).

Adults and Remarriage or Repartnering

Compared to research examining the influence of family structure and processes on children in stepfamilies, less is known about the relationship dynamics and adult outcomes of those who recouple (Sweeney, 2010; van Eeden-Moorefield & Pasley, 2008). Here, we review the research on relationship transitions and adjustment, relationship quality, relationship stability, and adult outcomes for those who repartner whether through remarriage or cohabitation. The term remarriage is used only for studies that specifically delimited their samples to those entering a second or higher-order (e.g., third, fourth) marriage.

Transitioning to Remarriage and Adjustment

Research on the transition to remarriage has received less attention than other areas in the extant literature (see Coleman & Ganong, 1990; Coleman et al., 2000; Pasley & Moorefield, 2004; Sweeney, 2010). The majority of studies that address transitions also lack attention to stepfamily complexity or the diverse pathways by which repartnerings are formed. Although we know that couples entering a remarriage do so with a belief that it will operate like a first marriage and that this belief is linked to more adjustment difficulties (Bray & Kelly, 1998), we know less about how couples create satisfying and successful repartnerings, including remarriages (Coleman et al., 2000; Sweeney, 2010). A common pathway to remarriage is cohabitation (Montgomery, Anderson, Hetherington, & Clingempeel, 1992), often with multiple partners over time, and doing so delays remarriage (Xu et al., 2006). In fact,

some report that cohabitation is the preferred repartnering structure for men (Stewart et al., 2003). Although less common, a study of widowed individuals, using data from the American Changing Lives Survey, found that men who received more social support following the death of a spouse also reported more interest in dating and remarriage within the first 18 months than did women (Carr, 2004). For women, being younger and less happy was linked to interest in remarriage, whereas more depression, less financial security, and being older reduced such interest.

Once a repartnering is formed, remarried couples report less cohesion compared with those in first marriages, although the difference is not clinically deficient (e.g., Bray, 1998). Other evidence shows that remarried women want and have more shared power than their first-married counterparts (Crosbie Burnett & Giles Sims, 1991; Ganong, Coleman, & Hans, 2006; Pyke & Coltrane, 1996), and this is evident of financial decisions as well (Burgoyne & Morrison, 1997; Pasley, Sandras, & Edmondson, 1994; Vogler, 2005). Specific to stepfamilies, partners who are parents in these families reported having more say in decision making, including financial decisions (Moore, 2008). Interestingly, how increased power affects other marital interactions is less well understood, especially from the husband's point of view.

Regarding other relationship processes, couples who report high levels of adjustment also report lower levels of negative affect (DeLongis, Capreol, Holtzman, O'Brien, & Campbell, 2004). Some research (Halford, Nicholson, & Sanders, 2007) suggests that those in stepfamilies demonstrate less negativity during marital conflict and are more likely to withdraw from conflict than are first marrieds—behaviors that may facilitate consensus building and adjustment (e.g., Bray, Berger, & Boethel, 1994; Ganong & Coleman, 1994). This supports earlier findings (Hobart, 1991) that men concede more during conflict discussions, which also could be perceived as a withdrawal strategy. Other research (Bray & Kelly, 1998) found that remarried couples reported more open expressions of anger, irritation, and criticism during conflict discussions.

Yet, any negative effects of these on adjustment were buffered by other supportive behaviors from a spouse.

Relationship Quality

Early studies of relationship quality found few differences between those in remarriage compared with those in first marriages based on sex, stepparent status, or stepfamily complexity (see Vemer, Coleman, Ganong, & Cooper, 1989); differences that did exist had small effect sizes, meaning that the strength of the relationship between the variables was significant but small and of little practical significance. Others (e.g., Guisinger, Cowan, & Schulberg, 1989) argued that relationship quality in remarriages, particularly relationship satisfaction, was similar to that of first marriages, with declines experienced in the earlier years before stabilizing somewhat. More contemporary research (Kurdek, 1999) suggests that the presence of children in first marriages is related to sharper declines in satisfaction than in remarriages. Other research (Hobart, 1991) found poorer quality among complex stepfamilies and among stepfather but not stepmother families (Kurdek, 1991). Still others (e.g., Brown & Booth, 1996) reported poorer relationship quality among remarrieds compared with first marrieds, so the overall findings by the end of the 1990s were contradictory.

Few studies were published in the last decade that cleared up these contradictions. In fact, few studies examined predictors of relationship quality or how quality differs within groups, despite scholars suggesting that differences likely exist (Coleman et al., 2000; Rogers, 1996). These few studies found that satisfaction in remarriage does not differ between rural and urban couples, although feeling financially constrained or concerned over finances predicted lower satisfaction among the rural remarried couples (Higginbotham & Felix, 2009). Another study (Beaudry, Boisvert, Simard, Parent, & Blais, 2004) found that poorer spousal communication skills, lower income, and having older children were linked to lower marital satisfaction.

Relationship Stability

The stability of remarriages is slightly less than that of first marriages, with about 50–60 % of remarriages ending in divorce (Bumpass, Sweet, & Martin, 1990; Kreider & Fields, 2002). There is also some evidence that dissolution among those in cohabiting unions following divorce is common (Pevalin & Ermisch, 2004; Xu et al., 2006). When children from a prior union are present, the dissolution rates are higher, likely due to the increased potential for conflict surrounding stepchildren and former spouses—topics noted as issues in previous research (Bray, 1998; Coleman et al., 2000). In fact, Booth and Edwards (1992) suggested that stability is lower in remarriages due to being “poor marriage material,” lack of homogamy produced by the smaller marriage market, and lack of role clarity and support. Demographers show that instability is associated with race (Blacks more likely; Hispanics least likely), younger age at remarriage (less than 25), not growing up with two parents, the presence of children from prior unions, and lower income (Bramlett & Mosher, 2002). Unfortunately, few recent studies examined stability in spite of calls to do so (Ganong & Coleman, 2004), and to do so in such a way that reflects the true complexity of these families (Adler-Baeder & Higginbotham, 2004).

We know that relationship processes, quality, and stability are linked. For example, scholars found that marital conflict (a relationship process) influences relationship quality in remarriage (Beaudry et al., 2004; Bodenmann, Pihet, & Kayser, 2006), and that decreases in marital quality are linked with decreases in stability (Stewart, 2005; White & Booth, 1985). A recent study assessed these multiple links over time, using all three waves from the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH; van Eeden-Moorefield & Pasley, 2008). These investigators found that higher marital conflict and lower perceived fairness at Time 1 was related to decreases in marital quality at Time 2 and higher instability, including redi-orce, at Time 3. Further, these relationships were influenced by family complexity. Specifically, fairness predicted marital quality only for couples in stepfamilies and accounted for 42 % of the

variance in stability compared to 29 % for those in remarriages without children. We believe that more research is needed about such processes and their linkages, because little research addresses these connections in general or differentiates them within various types of repartnerships.

Adult Outcomes

Historically, studies examining the effects of remarriage on adults most commonly addressed indicators of well-being (Spanier & Furstenberg, 1982), life satisfaction (Weingarten, 1985), health and substance use (Mitchell, 1983). These studies typically used a deficit approach (i.e., comparing those in remarriages to those in first marriages), and generally found few or no differences (e.g., Coleman et al., 2000; Richards, Hardy, & Wadsworth, 1997). However, some studies (e.g., Neff & Schlutter, 1993) found higher distress among remarrieds, whereas others found improved outcomes (Mitchell, 1983; Spanier & Furstenberg, 1982). The consensus among many early scholars was that (a) a selection effect might explain the mixed findings, and (b) individual characteristics and relationship processes likely are more important than marital status alone (e.g., Booth & Amato, 1991; Coleman et al., 2000).

More recent studies of adult outcomes have used longitudinal data, and their findings remain fairly consistent with previous results. For example, Pevalin and Ermisch (2004) found that poor mental health increases the likelihood of dissolving a first marriage, a cohabiting relationship, or a repartnership (cohabiting union following a divorce or dissolution of a second cohabiting union), and this risk holds for men and women. A recent study by O'Connor, Cheng, Dunn, Golding, and The ALSPAC Study Team (2005) found that women who were separated following a remarriage are more depressed than those who were separated after a first marriage, but their depression dissipated over time.

Overall, this research suggests that adults fare similarly in first marriages and remarriages but what remains to be determined is the nature of any within-group variations. Adoption of a

normative–adaptive approach, comparing types of remarriages, nonlegal repartnerships, and both legal and nonlegal stepfamilies would provide useful information for understanding some of the conditions that affect adults.

Living in a Stepfamily

Commonly used in studies of stepfamilies, family systems theory suggests that all persons within the family are interconnected and reciprocally influential, and these connections have received increased attention by scholars. Because much literature suggests that the nature of the stepparent and stepchild relationship is a strong predictor of the stability and quality of the spousal relationship (e.g., Coleman et al., 2000), studies of stepfamily life often focus on stepparents.

Stepparenting

Compared to parenting a biological child, it is well documented that stepparenting is more difficult (e.g., MacDonald & DeMaris, 1996; Pasley & Moorefield, 2004). This difficulty often results from variations in role expectations and behaviors leading to role confusion, boundary ambiguity, and conflict, especially for new stepparents (Bray & Kelly, 1998; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). There is evidence that role clarity and role agreement are related to positive adjustments in stepfamilies (Coleman et al., 2000). Further, when any member, dyad, or even triad experience adjustment difficulties, these difficulties also negatively influence other individuals within the family (Gosselin & David, 2007), including those external to the immediate household. Thus, understanding step- and coparenting is key to understanding stepfamily life. Unfortunately, we know more about coparenting following divorce than coparenting after at least one of the previous spouses repartners—an area deserving more attention in the future. Where appropriate we have included some of the few studies focusing on coparenting processes in the sections below.

Scholars recommend that successful stepparenting includes adopting parenting behaviors slowly and in ways less forcefully than traditional parenting, particularly around discipline and limit setting (e.g., Bray & Kelly, 1998; Fisher, Leve, O'Leary, & Leve, 2003; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002; Mason, Harrison-Jay, Svare, & Wolfinger, 2002). Other scholars add that stepparents should provide support and warmth to the stepchild (Mason et al.), allowing the stepparenting relationship to develop gradually over time. It is frequently recommended that time is required for this adjustment (e.g., Hetherington & Kelly, 2002; Marsiglio, 2004), so we speculate that when a stepparent slowly adopts a parenting role, the coparenting relationship between former spouses is less strained, thereby reducing potential for stepparent–former spouse conflict.

Research has examined a number of factors affecting stepparenting. For example, sex-matched stepparents and stepchildren (e.g., stepfathers and stepsons; Schmeekle, 2007) and coresidence (Schmeekle, Giarrusso, Feng, & Bengtson, 2006) aid in stepparenting. For stepparents, time is associated with decreases in depressed mood and increases in life satisfaction (Ceballo, Lansford, Abbey, & Stewart, 2004). Ambiguity in the stepparenting role (Gosselin & David, 2007), becoming more disengaged as a stepparent over time (Fisher et al., 2003), but not initially, have the opposite effect. The birth of a common child to a stepfamily is associated with less involvement by the stepparent with the stepchild (Stewart, 2005). Still other research shows that married stepfamilies exhibit higher quality parenting behaviors compared with their cohabiting counterparts (Berger, Carlson, Bzostek, & Osborne, 2008). Experiences with stepparenting also vary by age of child, and we address these findings throughout the following sections. Generally, stepfamily adjustment and stepparenting is more positive when stepchildren are younger and most negative when stepchildren are adolescents.

Lastly, stepfathers and stepmothers share many common experiences, although there are some differences, of which some are associated with residential status, and we address these

below. To date, however, much less is known about the experience of stepmothers than stepfathers (e.g., Sweeney, 2010).

Stepfathering

Stepfathers have sustained scholarly interest over time, and much of the focus in the past decade is on stepfather–stepchild interactions, including quality of their parenting and involvement. Some research (e.g., Hetherington & Kelly, 2002) shows that stepfathers are given greater latitude in parenting (e.g., expectations for less responsibility in daily care and monitoring than stepmothers) and that his early disengagement is associated with more tension in the mother–child relationship (DeLongis & Preece, 2002). Other research suggests that the quality of stepfather involvement does not differ from that of a biological father (Adamsons, O'Brien, & Pasley, 2007), although stepfathers are noted to provide less monitoring (Fisher et al., 2003) and better control of their negative feelings (Bray & Kelly, 1998). There is also some research suggesting that the quality of the remarriage (Adamsons et al., 2007) and the stepfathers' perceptions of stepchild adjustment (Flouri, Buchanan, & Bream, 2002) affect his involvement in expected ways.

Early research showed that stepfather–stepdaughter involvement is more avoidant and can quickly become hostile (Vuchinich, Hetherington, Vuchinich, & Clingempeel, 1991), and this is consistent with more recent findings. For example, studies show that the stepfather–stepchild relationship is moderated by duration of the remarriage (longer marriage=better relationship), and age and sex of the child (easier with stepsons) (e.g., Bray & Kelly, 1998; Falci, 2006; Golish & Caughlin, 2002). Other findings show that compared with father–daughter dyads stepfather–stepdaughter dyads are less close over time (Falci, 2006).

Some studies explored stepfathering from the child's perspective. Their results suggest that when the quality of their relationship is perceived by the child to be lower, there is less involvement overall, and involvement is of poorer quality (e.g., Cooksey & Fondell, 1996; Lansford, Ceballo, Abbey, & Stewart, 2001; MacDonald &

DeMaris, 2002). Also, stepchildren believe that stepfather involvement should be minor and secondary to that of the mother (Moore & Cartwright, 2005). Retrospective interviews with adult children, who were first studied 20 years earlier when their parents divorced (Ahrons, 2007), show that those whose parents remarried quickly described the quality of the stepfather–stepchild relationship as more tenuous early on and stabilizing over time. In another study, when young adult men are asked about their stepfathers, they report higher nurturance and involvement by adoptive compared with nonadoptive stepfathers (Schwartz & Finley, 2006).

A new area of investigation related to stepfathers has focused on relationships with the biological father. These few qualitative studies demonstrate the importance of alliance building for enhancing both the involvement and quality of stepfathering (Marsiglio, 2004; Marsiglio & Hinojosa, 2007). We believe these studies provide valuable information from which future studies can explore the father–stepfather coparental relationship and stepfamily and child adjustment.

Another newer area of research examined the differences in parenting quality and cooperation between married and cohabiting fathers and married and cohabiting stepfathers. Using data from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study, Berger et al. (2008) found that parenting quality was higher among married fathers and stepfathers compared with cohabiting fathers and stepfathers. Findings also showed that although all stepfathers were perceived as less trustworthy, they were engaged in cooperative parenting more than were fathers. Such studies provide valuable insight into understanding stepfamilies and stepfathering in the new millennium, emphasizing within-group variation.

Stepmothering

Because the majority of nonresident parents are biological fathers, the majority of nonresident stepparents are stepmothers (Stewart, 2001). These women have received more attention than have resident stepmothers (Sweeney, 2010), although research on both groups is quite limited

(e.g., Henry & McCue, 2009) and deserving of increased attention. Earlier research suggested the potential for conflict and other negative interactions is greater with resident stepmothers compared with nonresident stepmothers (e.g., MacDonald & DeMaris, 1996), and this may be a reflection of the gendered nature of daily family life, including stepfamily life (Dunn, Davies, O'Connor, & Sturgess, 2000). Other research on resident stepmothers suggests a diversity of roles that are not clearly understood by family members, although these stepmothers report difficulty establishing positive roles due to the wicked stepmother stereotype (Sweeney, 2010).

More contemporary research on nonresident stepmothers (Weaver & Coleman, 2005) identified three themes in their interviews with 11 stepmothers about their roles. These stepmothers saw their role as (a) an adult friend in which they were mentors and provided emotional support to stepchildren; (b) supporters of the father–child relationship and acting as a liaison between the father and mother—a role others have found to be linked to increased conflict, especially when the father was reluctant to intervene in parenting-related conflicts (Henry & McCue, 2009); and (c) an outsider, where they were invisible parents during father–child interactions. Other research on nonresident stepmothers shows that they report higher levels of depressed mood, anxiety, and stress often related to perceptions about their inability to take an active role in stepfamily functioning, especially in terms of parenting, financial matters, legal issues (Henry & McCue, 2009) and division of household labor (Johnson et al., 2008). Taken together, this research suggests that when nonresident stepmothers and their families are able to negotiate a balance between being an invisible stepparent and an entirely engaged parent, family and individual adjustment might be improved; however, no studies have examined this.

Residential Status, Step/Parenting, and Coparenting Dynamics

Changes in the legal context have resulted in more joint custody (sometimes referred to as shared parenting) and regular coparenting involvement of nonresident parents after divorce

(Gately, Pike, & Murphy, 2006). Although coparental conflict can serve as a barrier to nonresident parent involvement (Stewart, 1999), there is mounting evidence of the value of continuing involvement by nonresident parents for child development (Jackson, Choi, & Franke, 2009). Much of the recent research on nonresident parenting used data from the NSFH, did not differentiate findings by sex of nonresident parent. The focus of this research was on issues pertaining to the nature (frequency, e.g., Aquilino, 2006) and quality of contact (e.g., White & Gilbreth, 2001) with the nonresident parent and child outcomes (e.g., Gunnoe & Hetherington, 2004).

Generally, scholars suggest that nonresident parents should not be “replaced” by stepparents or cut off from being involved in the child’s life (e.g., Clapp, 2000). Thus, the continued contact and involvement by both parents is important. Research indicates that nonresident mothers tend to have more contact and involvement with their children compared to nonresident fathers (Gunnoe & Hetherington, 2004; Stewart, 1999). Factors that are known to decrease involvement by nonresident parents include parental remarriage (Amato, Meyers, & Emery, 2009; Stewart, 1999) or repartnering (Stewart, 1999) as well as the increased age of children (Amato et al., 2009), an effect that may reverse as children make the transition to young adulthood (Aquilino, 2006). Other factors that decrease nonresident parent involvement include negativity in the coparental relationship, lower educational attainment by parents, poor parental employment (Jackson et al., 2009), failure to pay child support, and the birth of a child outside of marriage (Amato et al., 2009).

Because our interest is primarily on the relationship between nonresident parents and stepparents, we note that several models exist that explain how nonresident parent–child relationship quality affects child outcomes within the context of stepfamilies. Specifically, White and Gilbreth (2001) offered three explanations: (a) the *accumulation model* suggests that having a nonresident father and resident stepfather results in improved child outcomes because of the added resources brought by two fathers, (b) the *substitution model* asserts that the stepfather becomes the

de facto father figure by replacing the biological father, and (c) the *loss model* suggests that stepfathers do not perform all of the functions of a biological father, and therefore, the child loses an important functional relationship when the biological father lives elsewhere. King (2006) refined and extended these models to include the following: (a) the *additive model*, similar to the accumulation model; (b) the *redundancy model* suggests that as long as the child is close to one father, their well-being will not be affected and that the addition of a second father is unnecessary; (c) the *primacy of biology* model suggests that closeness to the biological nonresident father is most important in predicting positive child outcomes; conversely (d) the *primacy of residency* model suggests that residency is most important; and (e) the *irrelevance model* suggests that the relationship with a biological mother is most important to child outcomes above any relationship with a father. We agree with Pryor (2008b) who concluded that research findings provide the most support for the *additive* and *accumulation models*, suggesting that both father and stepfather affect child outcomes. Unfortunately, none of these models have been adequately tested.

The Effects on Children

The myriad difficulties associated with union, household, and life transitions accompanying a parent’s repartnering have some negative effects on children (e.g., academic, behavioral, and emotional). Several comprehensive reviews (e.g., Coleman & Ganong, 1990; Coleman et al., 2000; Pasley & Moorefield, 2004; Sweeney, 2010) over the past decades and two meta-analyses (Amato, 1994; Jaynes, 2006) have documented these effects well, with most attention given to children with remarried parents specifically. Much of this research also takes a deficit perspective and uses between-group designs (Coleman & Ganong, 1990; Coleman et al., 2000) and has provided little insight into within-group differences. Over the past 20 years increasingly studies have relied on longitudinal data, thereby lending confidence to the findings.

In general, results from studies suggest that children living in a stepfamily fare worse than children living in an intact family and similar to those living in single-parent households. These differences tend to be small (Amato, 1994; Jeynes, 2006), and many dissipate over time particularly when a remarriage occurs earlier in a child's life (e.g., Zill, Morrison, & Coiro, 1993). Overall, scholars conclude that most children do well (Coleman et al., 2000), with the recognition that some findings have been mixed or vary in strength, especially when demographic controls are not used (e.g., Hoffman, 2002; Jeynes, 2006). Research using a normative–adaptive perspective focuses on within-group designs (Coleman & Ganong, 1990), and this approach has been used recently to identify family processes that support or hinder child development (e.g., Dunn, 2004).

In this section, we address common findings in the research as well as unique findings from recent studies. We focus on children's academic outcomes, behavior problems (internalizing, externalizing, conduct problems), and substance use. A strength of many of the recent studies is their use of longitudinal data.

Academic Outcomes

Consistent with previous reviews (e.g., Coleman & Ganong, 1990; Coleman et al., 2000; Pasley & Moorefield, 2004) and compared with children from intact families, children living in stepfamilies, on average, fare worse. In contrast, children from stepfamilies fare slightly better in some indicators of academic outcomes (e.g., school engagement; Teachman, 2008) compared with those in single-parent homes (cf. Jeynes, 2006). As noted, the effect sizes are smallest for academic outcomes (Amato, 1994), but the effects last longer (Cavanagh, Schiller, & Riegle-Crumb, 2006) and are stronger when children experience more transitions (Halpern-Meeekin & Tach, 2008; Hanson & McLanahan, 1996; Jeynes, 2006). Transitions that occurred more recently had less effect on academic outcomes than those occurring in the more distant past (Tillman, 2008). Importantly, recent research that produced such

findings typically used longitudinal data (e.g., Heard, 2007) and examined the role of stepfamily complexity and diversity in ways that promote greater confidence in the findings (Foster & Kalil, 2007; Tillman, 2007).

A variety of indicators of academic outcomes have been included in these studies (e.g., grades, school completion, achievement test scores; Coleman et al., 2000) and continue to be used. For example, compared with children from intact families, Ham (2004) found that those in single-parent homes had GPAs 17.6 % lower, and for those in stepfamilies GPAs were 19.2 % lower. Adolescent males in stepfamilies had higher GPAs, but the reverse was true for adolescent females. Within stepfamilies, having a half- or stepsibling (Halpern-Meeekin & Tach, 2008; Tillman, 2008) or being from a cohabiting stepfamily (Heard, 2007) was related to lower GPAs, especially for stepfather cohabiting stepfamilies (Tillman, 2008). Further, having half- or stepsiblings also was related to a decreased likelihood of graduating high school, obtaining higher education (Ginther & Pollak, 2004), and overall lower academic performance (Tillman, 2008). Other research (Heard, 2007) shows that those in a cohabiting stepfamily are 12 % more likely to be suspended, expelled, and score lower on math, reading, and general knowledge tests (Artis, 2007). Whereas most studies control for variables such as race and ethnicity (e.g., Heard, 2007) rather than study their effects, Foster and Kalil (2007) examined the role of race and ethnicity in relation to family structure and literacy. They found a weak relationship between family structure and literacy, except for Latino children from stepfamilies who outscored children from single-parent families.

Problem Behaviors

Internalizing

Coleman et al. (2000) concluded from the studies published in the 1990s that stepchildren experience more internalizing problems than do children in intact families, although the results by sex of child are mixed. Once again, these effects are

generally small to moderate (Amato, 1994). Newer research continues to report mixed findings. For example, results from a recent meta-analysis of 61 studies (Jeynes, 2006) suggest that stepchildren experience more internalizing behavior compared with children in intact and single-parent families. Other studies (e.g., Cavanagh et al., 2006; Saint-Jacques et al., 2006; Willetts & Maroules, 2004) did not find a direct effect of family structure on internalizing behaviors using both cross-sectional and longitudinal data. Instead, the number of transitions that children experience and other factors were more predictive of internalizing. For example, Saint-Jacques et al. (2006) found that internalizing was higher among children in a higher-order stepfamily compared with children in a first step-, intact, or single-parent family. Others (Foster & Kalil, 2007) found that family structure negatively influences internalizing only for Blacks, but these effects disappear when controls are added. Still others (Breivik & Olweus, 2006) reported higher internalizing behaviors among children in step- and single-parent families compared with children in intact families, especially when the family is a stepfather family (Sweeney, 2007). Overall, these studies suggest that there are several factors affecting the link between family structure and child internalizing behaviors, especially the number of transitions, race, and type of stepfamily; some studies also show that positive stepparenting can buffer these effects (e.g., Rodgers & Rose, 2002; Willetts & Maroules, 2004).

Externalizing

Regarding externalizing behavior problems, previous research suggests slightly more consistent findings, with children living in stepfamilies exhibiting higher levels (Coleman et al., 2000), though some mixed results also are evident. Recent research on family processes shows that positive stepparenting buffers the effects on externalizing behavior similar to the buffering of internalizing behaviors (e.g., Rodgers & Rose, 2002; Willetts & Maroules, 2004). Results from a cross-sectional study (Attar-Schwartz, Tan, Buchanan, Flouri, & Griggs, 2009) indicated that conduct-related behaviors and difficulties with peers are also higher for

children from step- and single-parent families than those from intact families. Other research shows that these findings are most pronounced in single-father families compared to step- and single-mother families (Breivik & Olweus, 2006). Yet, other scholars report no differences in externalizing behaviors of children by family structure (Willetts & Maroules, 2004) or differences only among higher-order stepfamilies (Saint-Jacques et al., 2006). Findings from longitudinal studies indicate that externalizing behaviors are lower than in previous decades (see Collishaw, Goodman, Pickles, & Maughan, 2007), but children in stepmother families and those in which half- and stepsiblings are present are most at-risk for these problems (Hoffman, 2006). Although there has been less attention in recent research on sex of child, some research suggests that, after controlling for parenting and maternal depressed mood, aggressive behavior is 2.5 times higher among girls than boys in stepfamilies and than those in single-parent families regardless of sex.

Substance Use and Health

Although some attention was paid to the substance use of children in stepfamilies in the past (Coleman et al., 2000), the topic gathered more attention recently with some attention also paid to health outcomes in these children. Studies using composite measures of substance use found that, compared to children in intact families, those in stepfamilies (Hoffman, 2002) and single-parent families report more use (Barrett & Turner, 2006). When examining individual drugs, a more mixed picture emerges. Specific to tobacco use, Griesbach, Amos, and Currie (2003) reported that living in a stepfamily was related to adolescent smoking even after controlling for socioeconomic status (SES), parental smoking habits, disposable income, and presence of a stepfather (Bjarnason et al., 2003); such findings were not confirmed in longitudinal analyses (Menning, 2006). Compared with those in intact families, children in stepfamilies also are 1.5 times more likely to use marijuana, but not more likely to use alcohol (Longest & Shanahan, 2007). Compared to children in

single-parent families, other studies found a significantly higher rate of alcohol use in children from stepfamilies (Bjarnason et al., 2003).

Regarding global health, after controlling for education and SES, the health of stepchildren appears comparable to children in intact families (Heard, Gorman, & Kapinus, 2008). In some cases, there is evidence that stepfamilies may be more protective of children's health compared to intact families (Wen, 2008).

Sibling Interactions

Although not the focus of much past research (Coleman & Ganong, 1990; Coleman et al., 2000), several recent studies examined sibling relationships within stepfamilies. However, this remains an understudied area. Consistent with previous decades (Baham, Weimer, Braver, & Fabricius, 2008; Coleman et al., 2000), research focused on parental treatment of siblings in complex stepfamilies and on children's perceptions of being part of a stepfamily. Findings from both qualitative (Wallerstein & Lewis, 2007) and longitudinal quantitative studies (Jenkins, Simpson, Dunn, Rasbash, & O'Connor, 2005) indicated that stepparents argued more about and responded less to stepchildren than biological children. Also, differential treatment related to arguments was more pronounced in stepfather families, whereas stepmothers were less engaged with stepchildren overall. Contrary findings exist, as Deater-Deckard, Dunn, and Lussier (2002) reported no differences in the amount of sibling conflict between those in intact and stepfamilies, although the level of conflict was slightly higher among biological siblings than stepsiblings. Regardless of type of sibling, higher sibling conflict and perceiving differential treatment by parents was related to more internalizing problems (Yuan, 2009). Other findings indicate that siblings in stepfamilies experience decreased academic achievement (Ginther & Pollak, 2004; Tillman, 2008), and that these negative effects decreased over time (Tillman).

When asked about their families, children with stepsiblings were more likely to exclude them as

family regardless of their residency (Roe, Bridges, Dunn, & O'Connor, 2006); such exclusion was related to a decreased sense of family belonging (Leake, 2007). In another study that followed children of divorce over 20 years, Ahrons (2007) found that age and frequency of contact was related to feelings of exclusion by stepchildren, but these feelings were less dramatic when a half-sibling was present. Interestingly, Dunn et al. (2002) reported that exclusion was related to higher levels of both internalizing and externalizing behaviors, and Leake found that the presence of stepsiblings decreased contact with the non-resident parent, which continued into young adulthood (Ward, Spitze, & Deane, 2009).

Unfortunately, much less is known about these sibling interactions and perceptions in other types of stepfamily structures, although some evidence suggests higher negativity and exclusion (Sweeney, 2010). Clearly, more research on sibling relationships in diverse stepfamilies is needed. To this end, Baham et al. (2008) provided a testable model to guide these endeavors. They assert that psychosocial outcomes are influenced by the various child and family demographic characteristics, and that the quality of the parent-child relationship is mediated by the quality of sibling relationship. Given the lack of previous research, studies that test this model may provide meaningful insights.

Experiences of Gays and Lesbians in Stepfamilies

Since 1999 there has been a slight increase in the number of published research studies examining the experience of gays and lesbians in stepfamilies, consistent with calls from scholars to study stepfamily diversity more (e.g., Coleman et al., 2000). However, the need to understand these families is more important now, given recent changes in how stepfamilies are conceptualized in general and the changing legal situations for gays and lesbians regarding partnership, marriage, and adoption laws (Robson, 2001), as well as advances in reproductive technologies (e.g., van Dam, 2004).

Research on gay and lesbian stepfamilies most often has focused on those formed when one or both partners have a child from a prior heterosexual marriage that ended in divorce (e.g., Berger, 2000; Crosbie Burnett & Helmbrecht, 1993). Conceptualizing stepfamilies as including those formed after a prior marriage and those formed through prior cohabiting relationships, consideration of the diverse pathways by which gay and lesbian stepfamilies are formed and how these pathways differentially influence stepfamily life is needed. Because the number of family transitions experienced is linked with the possibility of negative outcomes (Demo, Aquilino, & Fine, 2004), the general literature on gay and lesbian relationships often fails to ask about previous cohabiting unions. When this information was garnered, both types of couples were included together in analyses without controlling for prior union influences. From an inclusive perspective, gay and lesbian couples in current cohabiting relationships or marriages with at least one prior cohabiting relationship or marriage are considered a repartnering or a stepfamily when a child from a previous union is present, regardless of how the child was conceived.

Previous research suggested differences in relationship processes and outcomes by type of heterosexual family structure (e.g., Bradbury, Fincham, & Beach, 2000; Brown & Booth, 1996). Other research suggested similarity between gay and lesbian couples and heterosexual married couples (e.g., Kurdek, 2004, 2006). Although there is limited comparative data between heterosexual and gay and lesbian couples, little is known about the diversity of gay and lesbian families in general, and even less is known about gay and lesbian repartnerings and stepfamilies particularly. Certainly it follows that much can be done in the future to better understand the experiences of these families; however, efforts to better conceptualize and theorize within-group diversity among gay and lesbian families is needed.

Aside from research suggesting similarity between gay and lesbian families and their heterosexual counterparts, recent research has provided some additional insights into gay and lesbian stepfamilies specifically. For example, Berger

(2000) suggested that gay male stepfamilies are stigmatized for being gay, for being a stepfamily, and for being parents, and this stigma can negatively influence stepfamily functioning (e.g., Crosbie Burnett & Helmbrecht, 1993). Other research suggests that this negative influence might be more indirect than direct. For example, Lynch (2000) interviewed 17 lesbian and 6 gay stepfamilies and found that parents in stepfamilies experienced difficulty integrating their gay/lesbian and parenting identities which resulted in reduced family functioning. Other evidence suggests that the lack of legal connections may further exacerbate these difficulties (Moore, 2008; Robson, 2001). Certainly, legal ambiguity can strain both the couple and the step/parent-child relationships. In fact, results from a longitudinal study (Hatzenbuehler, Keyes, & Hason, 2009) showed that, over 12 months, gays and lesbians experience more psychological distress when they lived in states without supportive and protective policies specific to them. It might be that geographic location (serving as a proxy for state-level policies) moderates the link between stress and various family outcomes in gay and lesbian stepfamilies. Also, potential mediators of stress might include process around certain family functions, parenting interactions, and couple dynamics.

Children living in gay and lesbian stepfamilies report more stigmatization from having gay or lesbian parents than from being part of a stepfamily (Robitaille & Saint-Jacques, 2009). Further, reports from interviewing 11 children indicated that most identified internalizing the stigma experienced which resulted in ambiguity concerning when and how to disclose their family structures; most decided to not disclose (Robitaille & Saint-Jacques). Unfortunately, van Dam (2004) found that adults in lesbian stepfamilies earned lower wages, were younger, had less education, came out later, and were less likely to be involved in gay and lesbian family organizations than were lesbian mother families. Although all of these factors increase the risk and vulnerability of lesbian stepfamilies, they also are characteristics consistent with their heterosexual counterparts (Coleman et al., 2000). Interestingly, there is no research to suggest these risks translate into

detrimental outcomes for these families. As such, more research that focuses on the resilience of gay and lesbian stepfamilies is needed, especially that which focuses on the identification of protective factors for the adults and children involved.

Communication and Conflict

Much of what we have discussed about stepfamily living included aspects of communication and conflict underlying family interactions, especially around step- and coparenting processes. In fact, greater attention has been paid to communication and conflict in recent research than in the past (see Coleman & Ganong, 1990; Coleman, et al., 2000). Generally, the potential for conflict is greater in stepfamilies than first married families (Pasley & Lee, 2010), although the top two sources of conflict identified by both groups are the same (children/stepchildren and finances) but the order is different (Stanley, Markman, & Whitton, 2002). That is, remarried couples report children as being the primary source of conflict, whereas first-marrieds report money as the primary source. This increased potential for conflict around children/stepchildren stems from issues with former spouses (e.g., Adamsons & Pasley, 2006; Ganong & Coleman, 2006) and about parenting/stepparenting or the relationship between stepparents and stepchildren (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002; Shelton, Walters, & Harold, 2008), especially stepdaughters and stepfathers or when the stepchild is an adolescent (e.g., Feinberg, Kan, & Hetherington, 2007). Understandably, conflict also often is focused on issues specific to rule setting and boundaries as these new families form (Afifi, 2008).

From studies using only stepfamily samples, and thus adopting a normative-adaptive approach, results indicate that open communication and flexibility is predictive of the ability to negotiate new rules and boundaries and deal with loyalty conflicts (Golish, 2003). Other results indicated that these families also have a higher probability of successful stepfamily development (e.g., Braithwaite, Olson, Golish, Soukup, & Truman, 2001). Not surprising, primary communication

about everyday life and problems rather than unintrusive small talk occurs more frequently between resident parents and children than between children and stepparents or nonresident parents (Schrodt et al., 2007). However, in their study that included all family members, no differences in the use of conflict were found between children and any type of parent. Alternatively, studies find that avoidance can deter stepfamily development, and that the use of avoidance communication techniques are higher among stepfamilies compared with first-married families (Halford et al., 2007) and among adolescents and young adults in stepfamilies (Golish & Caughlin, 2002).

The influence of communication and conflict on individual, couple, and family adjustment also received considerable attention recently. For example, among men and women, the spouse's perceived communication abilities predicted marital satisfaction, and the strength of this relationship was stronger for men (Beaudry et al., 2004). Further, age and number of children from previous unions and income level moderate this link—a finding consistent with other studies (Gosselin & David, 2007). The nature of the remarital relationship also is influenced by conflict with former spouses and stepchildren. Interparental conflict has strong links to mother-child and stepfather-stepchild conflict (Dunn, Cheng, O'Connor, & Bridges, 2004), and more frequent stepfather-stepchild conflict is linked with more frequent child involvement in stepfamily arguments and siding with their mothers (Dunn, O'Connor, & Cheng, 2005). Certainly, this creates potential for feedback loops to occur that likely undermine family adjustment if continued, and there is evidence to support this (Ruschena, Prior, Sanson, & Smart, 2005). Alternatively, when relationships are not laden with conflict, stepfamily and individual adjustments are better (Greff & Du Toit, 2009; Yuan & Hamilton, 2006).

Interestingly, Shelton et al. (2008) showed that the mechanism through which interparental conflict affected children differed for those in first-married and remarried families. Specifically, those in first-married families were affected by perceived threat and their own experiences with

self-blame. For children in stepfamilies, findings were that neither threat or self-blame affected their outcomes. However, when conflict between mother and stepfather resulted in more hostile and rejecting parenting/stepparenting, the child was negatively affected. Studies such as this one demonstrate the increased sophistication of the research questions asked and answered, as scholars seek to understand the mechanisms through which certain factors influence outcomes and adjustment processes for all involved in step-family life.

The Broader Social Context

Three areas outside of immediate family relationships have garnered the attention of scholars as influential to family processes within stepfamilies. These areas include extended family members (i.e., grandparents), societal views (e.g., stigmatization and stereotyping), and the legal context.

Grandparenting in Stepfamilies

Bengston (2001) and others (e.g., Johnson, 2000) argued for the inclusion of a multigenerational component in the conceptualization of family, partially because of changes due to remarriage and stepfamily life witnessed in the past. From a social capital perspective, grandparents and stepgrandparents can play a significant role in child adjustment to stepfamily life and to other life transitions (Demo et al., 2004). Few studies occurred before 2000, and their primary focus was on the nature and role of step-/grandparent-step-/grandchild relationships, particularly changes in grandparent–grandchild relationships post-divorce and into remarriage. Although limited, research published in this decade relied almost entirely on convenience samples (e.g., Christensen & Smith, 2002; cf. Lussier, Deater-Deckard, Dunn, & Davies, 2002), whereas later publications relied on analyses of existing longitudinal data (e.g., Bridges, Roe, Dunn, & O'Connor, 2007; Ruiz & Silverstein, 2007; cf. Attar-Schwartz et al., 2009).

Generally, this body of research suggests that grandparent–grandchild dyads experience reduced contact post-divorce (Bridges et al., 2007) and after a parent's remarriage (Ruiz & Silverstein, 2007). Further, this reduction in contact is highest when the grandparent's adult child is the nonresident parent (Lussier et al., 2002). However, the quality of these relationships is less affected by family transitions and changes in structure. Most studies find no negative reductions in relationship quality (e.g., closeness, cohesion, satisfaction) over time from longitudinal data (Bridges et al., 2007) or from cross-sectional data (Lussier et al., 2002). One study using Wave 2 data from the NSFH did find that remarriage was negatively linked with the quality of the grandparent–grandchild relationship (Ruiz & Silverstein, 2007).

It may be that overtime the initial negative effect on the quality of this relationship stabilizes and is reduced. In fact, some research (Attar-Schwartz et al., 2009) found that the presence of a grandparent was linked with enhanced adjustment and reduced internalizing symptoms (Lussier et al., 2002; Ruiz & Silverstein, 2007) in grandchildren. However, such effects may vary by age, sex, and status of the grandparent. For example, Block (2002) found that grandmothers were perceived by stepgrandchildren to be more supportive than stepgrandfathers, and other research found that younger grandparents perceived the relationship to be higher quality compared to older grandparents (Christensen & Smith, 2002). However, stepgranddaughters reported their relationship with stepgrandparents to be of higher quality compared with stepgrandsons, and stepgrandfathers reported more conflict with stepgrandchildren than stepgrandmothers.

Overall, we speculate that grandparents and stepgrandparents are an untapped resource to other family members. However, more research is needed to understand such possibilities.

Societal Views

The decade reviews of the 1990s, Coleman et al. (2000) presented findings from a number of studies addressing societal views of stepfamilies.

Overwhelmingly, the results of these studies (e.g., Ganong & Coleman, 1997; Levin, 1993) indicate that participants viewed stepfamilies negatively. Beyond stigmatization, there was research suggesting that they were invisible to other social contexts (e.g., schools, Crosbie-Burnett, 1994). There is also past research showing fewer norms for steprelationships regarding obligations and other role expectations (Grizzle, 1999), with similar results appearing in more recent studies (Coleman, Ganong, Hans, Sharp, & Rothrauff, 2005; Ganong & Coleman, 2006).

Interestingly, stereotypes about stepfamilies continue to be a topic of empirical studies. For example, Claxton-Oldfield, Goodyear, Parsons, and Claxton-Oldfield (2002) surveyed two groups of college undergraduates ($N=99$) and found that they were likely to suspect stepfathers of sexual abuse more than biological fathers. Other contexts showed similar negative stereotyping. For example, a content analysis of 27 commercially produced films (Leon & Angst, 2005) that included stepfamilies showed that half of the movies portrayed stepfather families, with about 39 % depicting stepfamilies in an entirely negative manner. Almost 35 % of these films depicted stepfamilies in both positive and negative ways. Moreover, a recent study (Planitz & Feeney, 2009) of two samples provided results suggesting that children believe the negative stereotypes about stepfamilies, especially those revolving around conflict and negativity. Certainly, children who are exposed to such stereotypes and then enter a stepfamily are likely to experience a more difficult transition, potentially undermining the union formation itself.

Legal Context

Consistently, there has been little research addressing legal or social policy applied to stepfamilies and their members over time (see Coleman & Ganong, 1990; Coleman et al., 2000; Sweeney, 2010). Kisthardt and Handschu (1999) and Mahoney (2000) reviewed a variety of legal issues specific to stepparents who want to maintain contact or gain custody over a stepchild

following divorce or death of the parent. They suggested that stepparents have almost no legal standing. Mason (2001) reviewed the area of family law specific to stepfamilies for the preceding 3 decades and concluded that stepparents and stepchildren have few family rights, thereby placing them at risk. From the stepparent's perspective, there are benefits in being afforded legal recognition, and stepparents report a desire for such benefits (Mason et al., 2002); yet legally, they more often perceive themselves as invisible parents during court proceedings (Gately et al., 2006). Clearly, this remains an area requiring more attention and advocacy.

Methodological and Theoretical Trends

Although we have mentioned methods and theories as part of other sections in this chapter, here we present a broader look at trends in these two areas. As with most substantive areas of research, both the methods and theories used became more sophisticated and complex. Given the changing nature of families, new methods and theories are needed to address such changes, and scholars have applied this argument to remarrieds and stepfamilies (Coleman & Ganong, 1990; Coleman et al., 2000; Pasley & Moorefield, 2004). As Coleman and Ganong (1990) cautioned, conceptual advances also influence the choice of methods and theory. For example, conceptualizing remarriage (with or without the presence of children) as a dynamic event which unfolds overtime is consistent with two comprehensive models of stepfamily development (Papernow, 1993) and adjustment (Fine & Kurdek, 1994b). Conceptualizing remarriage and stepfamily adjustment as processes overtime and across households requires the use of longitudinal methods and family process theories (e.g., life course, family systems) which is evident in more recent research efforts (see Sweeney, 2010 for a summary), and this produced a depth of knowledge not witnessed earlier. Accordingly, the use of multimethod approaches increased slightly since 2000, as has the use of sophisticated data analytic

techniques (e.g., latent growth curve modeling and HLM approaches; see Langenkamp, 2008, as an example). However, we argue that much of the literature lacks attention to both methods and theory. We then discuss some of the basic methodological and theoretical issues and trends noted in this body of work, with emphasis on the last 10 years.

Methodological Issues and Trends

Overtime the use of data from longitudinal studies has become increasingly common (e.g., ALSPAC, Add-Health, NELS, NSFH, the Virginia Longitudinal Study of Divorce and Remarriage). As new waves of data become available, we expect their use will continue. When longitudinal data are available, multiple waves should be used rather than relying on only a single wave of data, as is common. Although panel data allows for some level of causal inference, several limitations to generalizability exist, especially regarding remarriage and stepfamilies. For example, scholars suggest that stepfamilies are less likely to participate in research (Hobart & Brown, 1988) often due to the stigma from stereotypes about them (Coleman & Ganong, 1987); they are more mobile, increasing their attrition from participation in a longitudinal effort (Spanier & Furstenberg, 1982); and there is difficulty identifying correct addresses when using marriage license records (Clingempeel, 1981; Hanzal & Segrin, 2008). Additionally, samples tend to be overrepresented by those who are White, middle-class, and highly educated, as well as including responses from a single family member.

Given the large number of questions asked of respondents in panel studies, the depth of the information obtained can be problematic. For example, large studies often lack information on relationship histories, making it difficult to ascertain particular subsamples and distinguish certain family relationships and structures; some first-married families may actually be stepfamilies, if prior cohabiting information was available. Also, family processes (e.g., relationship quality, communication) are not measured adequately

(Coleman et al., 2000; Pasley & Moorefield, 2004). Further, the use of secondary data limits the questions that can be asked and, accordingly, the theories used to explain them. Certainly, the benefits of having such data outweigh the deficits, but such issues suggest a need to initiate new studies to overcome some of these problems, if greater insight into stepfamily life is to be forthcoming. In fact, some advances in measurement have been made recently, as with the development and validation of the Stepfamily Life Index (Schrodt, 2006a) and the Stepparent Relationship Index (Schrodt, 2006b).

The depth of our understanding about the experiences of stepfamilies has improved greatly with our increased use of diverse methods, such as qualitative interviewing (e.g., Marsiglio & Hinojosa, 2007; Weaver & Coleman, 2005) and observational approaches (Halford et al., 2007). The use of daily diaries (e.g., Moore, 2008; O'Brien, DeLongis, Pomaki, Puterman, & Zwicker, 2009), the Internet to obtain samples (e.g., Johnson et al., 2008), and mixed methods (Langenkamp, 2008) are evident in recent studies of stepfamilies. The diversity of methods that is now becoming evident is promising and should enhance both our theory development and understanding of the phenomena.

Theoretical Trends

Theoretically, the extant literature on remarriage and stepfamilies predominantly relied on either implicit use or no use of theory (Coleman et al., 2000), and this has continued (e.g., Bir-Akturk & Fisiloglu, 2009; Hanzal & Segrin, 2008). Consistent with suggestions from others (e.g., Coleman et al., 2000; Price Bonham & Balswick, 1980), we believe that scholars need to explicitly use theory to guide their research, continue to refine existing theories, and develop new theories to better explain the complexity of stepfamily life. The increased use of grounded theory (e.g., Brimhall, Wampler, & Kimball, 2008; Marsiglio & Hinojosa, 2007; Sherman & Boss, 2007) has resulted in a more rich understanding of these families, but much of this work has not informed

larger, quantitative studies. For example, Brimhall et al. developed a model suggesting that trust plays an important role in mediating the effect of a previous marriage on current remarriages. Testing the findings with larger samples is an important next step, especially in understanding variation among those in remarriages and stepfamilies.

Our intent in making these observations is not to suggest that theory use has been scant. In fact, studies have generated and tested several important theoretical hypotheses and models that are influential in this literature. We summarize this literature in two tables. In Table 22.1 we provide an overview of the most widely used hypotheses and models. Due to space limitations we do not offer a thorough discussion (see Coleman & Ganong, 1990; Coleman et al., 2000; Stewart, 2007, for a more complete discussion), but we do offer a basic explanation of each theory with sample references. In Table 22.2, we provide an overview of theories commonly used in this literature with examples of research questions and citations for further reading. Our purpose in constructing these tables is to demonstrate the explicit connection between theory and research in this literature.

Based on our review, we believe that certain theories hold the most potential for increasing our understanding of remarriage and stepfamilies, especially their diversity, variations in family processes, and successful stepfamily development. These theories include stress perspectives, grounded theory, family systems theory, life course theory, and risk and resiliency theory. Lastly, as evident in both tables, the majority of the theoretical work focuses on children in stepfamilies. As such, the development and use of theories to better understand and explain couple relationships and the multiple pathways of relational development deserves more attention in the future.

Conclusions

Since the 1980s, there are many consistent findings regarding remarriages and stepfamilies and consistency in many of the methods and the-

ories used. In fact, although many questions asked since 1999 have been largely similar to those asked earlier, we have more confidence in many of the findings because of the methods and theories used. Overwhelmingly, the extant literature has focused on children rather than relational dynamics, so we have greater confidence in the findings related to children in general and child outcomes specifically. Ideologically, the literature on child outcomes upholds the advantages of being reared in a nuclear family. However, from a pluralistic perspective the opposite is true, and we believe that assuming a pluralistic perspective is consistent with the diversity of families in the twenty-first century (Levin, 1999). Following, we summarize some of the key consistencies across these two views and highlight a few areas to guide future research.

Compared to those in nuclear families, adults in remarriages and stepfamilies experience largely similar levels of well-being, life satisfaction, and marital quality. In spite of this, those in remarriages have slightly higher probabilities of divorce, and this likely is most related to problems associated with stepchildren and being a stepparent. We believe there is good evidence across studies to support a bidirectional effect of remarital and stepparent-stepchild relationships. Although adjustment to life in a stepfamily is difficult and prone to more conflict, particularly related to defining the stepparent role and interacting with stepchildren, many stepfamilies adjust well overtime (Gosselin & David, 2007). The academic, social, and psychological outcomes of children in stepfamilies are lower than those reared in nuclear families (Amato, 1994; Jeynes, 2006). However, these differences are small and of limited practical meaning, even when statistically significant. On average, children in stepfamilies tend to do well over time and into adulthood. Age of children, sex of children, match of sex between stepparent and stepchild, and duration of remarriage all moderate these outcomes (Bray & Kelly, 1998; Falci, 2006; Golish & Caughlin, 2002; Schmeeckle, 2007).

In the past few years we have learned more about the diversity and complexity of stepfamilies (e.g., Johnson et al., 2008; Tillman, 2007). It appears that diversity and complexity moderate

Table 22.1 Perspectives and models used to examine the experiences of stepfamilies

Perspective	Model/hypothesis	Explanation	Example references	
Deficit perspectives	Deficit-comparison approach	Outcomes of children in stepfamilies are worse than those of children living in a nuclear family, and these are exacerbated when the stepfamily is nonlegal	Berger et al. (2008); McLanahan and Sandefur (1994)	
	Stress hypothesis	The stress of multiple family transitions (e.g., remarriage, divorce) are associated with reduced psychological and social functioning in children	Ahrons (2007); Bray (1988); Cavanagh et al. (2006); Zill (1988)	
	Socialization hypothesis	Children who experience marital disruptions will experience difficulty developing appropriate adult values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors	Amato (1987); Goldscheider and Sassler (2006)	
	Additional adult hypothesis	Adding a stepparent to the household mitigates some of the negative effects outlined by the socialization hypothesis.	Coleman and Ganong (1984); Demo and Acock (1988)	
	Biological discrimination hypothesis	Stepparents lack the necessary biological ties to a stepchild resulting in less concern for their stepchild's well-being	Adler-Baeder (2006); Flinn (1988); Wilson, Daly, and Weghorst (1980)	
	Incomplete-institution hypothesis	Those in remarriage and stepfamilies lack institutional guidelines for appropriate role and family behavior	Cherlin (1978)	
	Parental support hypothesis	Adult children are less likely to provide support for older parents who are remarried compared with those who are widowed or continuously married	Lin (2008)	
	Cumulative effects hypothesis	As the number of marital transitions increase, children's internalizing and externalizing problem behaviors increase	Capaldi and Patterson (1991); Halpern-Meehin and Tach (2008)	
	Parental competencies	The stress of adding a stepparent reduces the quality of parenting through a reduced ability to monitor and interact with a child, thereby negatively affecting that child	Dawson (1991); Hoffman and Johnson (1998)	
	Conflict hypothesis	Conflicts between former and new spouses negatively affects the child as do conflicts between step- and halfsiblings	Aquilino (1991); Dunn et al. (2005); Feinberg et al. (2007); Kiernan (1992); Yuan (2009)	
Stress perspectives	Economic deprivation hypothesis	Stepchildren are financially disadvantaged due to financial disadvantages associated with union transitions	Hoffman and Johnson (1998); Pong (1997); Walper, Kruse, Noack, and Schwarz (2004)	
	(Step)parent involvement models/social capital models	Stepchildren experience more behavioral and academic problems due to the reduced involvement of parent and stepparents	Downey (1995); Pong (1997); Teachman, Paasch, and Carver (1996); Wen (2008)	
	(Step)parental style models	Stepparents are less close to and more disengaged from stepchildren	Kurdek and Fine (1995a); Schenck et al. (2009); Svara, Jay, and Mason (2004)	
	Selection models	Characteristics present prior to remarriage influence child outcomes rather than the remarriage itself	Amato (2000); Booth and Edwards (1992); Capaldi and Patterson (1991)	
	General model	Marital disruptions and transitions are normal family events, thus the focus should be on within-group variations in family processes	Brevik and Olweus (2006); Fisher et al. (2003); Ganong and Coleman (1987); Seltzer and Bianchi (1988)	
	Normative-adaptive perspectives	General model	Outlines a developmental model through which stepfamilies can expect to progress	Papernow (1993)
		General model	Perceptions and their consistency at each family unit level influence stepfamily adjustment. Overtime the consistency between them increases	Cartwright and Seymour (2002); Fine and Kurdek (1994a); Koerner, Rankin, Kenyon, and Korn (2004)
		General model	Outlines a developmental model through which stepfamilies can expect to progress	Papernow (1993)
		General model	Perceptions and their consistency at each family unit level influence stepfamily adjustment. Overtime the consistency between them increases	Cartwright and Seymour (2002); Fine and Kurdek (1994a); Koerner, Rankin, Kenyon, and Korn (2004)

Table 22.2 Examples of recent explicit theory use in the study of remarriage and stepfamilies

Theoretical framework	Example research questions	Example references
Biosocial/evolutionary theories	How does father involvement and investment differ between biological married fathers, married stepfathers, and cohabiting fathers with resident biological and nonbiological children?	Anderson (2000); Hofferth and Anderson (2003); Michalski, Russel, Shackelford, and Weekes-Shackelford (2007)
Ecological theory	How do individual characteristics, family processes, and father involvement differ between biological and stepfathers? How are grandparental involvements and the emotional and behavioral outcomes of grandchildren linked, and how do they differ by family structure?	Adamsons et al. (2007); Attar-Schwartz et al. (2009)
Equity/exchange theories	How do fairness beliefs about modifications to child support arrangements influence the financial impact of remarriage?	Elman and London (2001); Hans (2009); Sweeney (2002)
Family stress theory	Does stepfamily complexity influence stepmother stress, and does disparity in child care, household labor, and social network size and satisfaction mediate this relationship? Does stepmother stress mediate the relationship between stepfamily complexity and marital satisfaction? How do pathways to various family structures influence academic outcomes among children in stepfamilies?	Johnson et al. (2008); Tillman (2007)
Family systems theory	How do interdependence, wholeness, and complexity influence everyday talk in stepfamilies? What are the roles, challenges, and complexities successful stepmothers experience, and how do they cope with these?	Claxton-Oldfield and O'Neil (2007); Furrow and Palmer (2007); Leake (2007); Sherman and Bauer (2008); Schrodt et al. (2007); Stewart (2001, 2005); Whiting, Smith, Barnett, and Graftskey (2007); Yu and Adler-Baeder (2007)
Feminist/gender/stigmatization theories	How does social stigmatization influence the complexity of experiences among youth and young adults living in gay and lesbian stepfamilies? How do Black, lesbian stepfamilies make decisions about household labor and childcare, and how do these reflect bargaining and power relations?	Berger (2000); Humble (2009); Moore (2008); Robitaille and Saint-Jacques (2009)

Grounded theory	How did a previous marriage influence a current remarriage or relationship? In what ways do stepfathers act as allies toward biological fathers?	Brimhall et al. (2008); Marsiglio and Hinojosa (2007); Neil (2007); Sherman and Boss (2007); Weaver and Coleman (2005)
Life course theory	How's is a child's sense of family influenced by divorce and subsequent parental remarriage or cohabitation? How are grandparent–grandchild relationships influenced by social phenomena, family processes, and individual practices within and across generations? How do divorce, remarriage, and rediivorce influence one's typifications in mid- and later-life?	Ahrons (2007); Kemp (2007); Langenkamp (2008); Vartanian and McNamara (2002); Wilmoth and Koso (2002)
Phenomenological framework	What are the experiences of stepparents whose spouses are involved in family court litigations with a former spouse? How do children communicate and interact with family members (e.g., nonresident parents) outside the stepfamily household boundaries?	Gately et al. (2006); Radina, Hennon, and Gibbons (2008)
Relational dialectics framework		Braithwaite and Baxter (2006)
Risk and resiliency	What are the factors associated with resilience in remarried families? Which individual, interpersonal and systemic factors promote positive psychosocial adjustment in stepfamilies with adolescent children?	Greff and Du Toit (2009); Gosselin and David (2007); Jaynes (2006)

many of the above outcomes with those in cohabiting stepfamilies faring worse than those in legal stepfamilies. However, greater understanding of these cohabiting stepfamilies and other stepfamily variations, especially those of different races/ethnicities and sexual orientations, is required in the future (cf. Stewart, 2007).

We continue to know much less about successful stepfamilies. We concur with others (e.g., Coleman et al., 2000) that a shift in focus is needed to glean insight into how some stepfamilies develop successfully rather than focusing on deficits. However, this shift was not apparent in a good number of the studies in this recent decade (see Sweeney, 2010). Using family process-related theories and those that incorporate family systems perspectives in concert with more observational methods may serve us well here. That said, we do know of several factors that appear to enhance successful stepfamily development. For example, adoption by a stepparent (Schwartz & Finley, 2006) and cooperation between a stepparent and nonresident parent (Marsiglio, 2004; Robertson, 2008) seem to ease transitions and enhance child adjustment and outcomes. Changes in family laws that allow legal recognition of stepparents might aid adjustment, as might participation in educational programs directed toward both parenting within and coparenting across and within households (Adler-Baeder & Higginbotham, 2004; Mason et al., 2002). However, more research is needed to better support any legal suggestions we might advocate, and this is consistent with a general need to better understand the interface between stepfamilies and social institutions. Importantly, there is growing evidence that specialized programs that address parenting processes and stepfamily adjustment are also helpful (e.g., Whitton, Nicholson, & Markman, 2008), but more research is needed. Clearly, family systems, ecological, and feminist theories are positioned well to guide such studies.

Taken together, we believe that stepfamilies are functioning well in spite of the many challenges they experience both within their family system and within the broader social and legal contexts. Such resilience is an important stepfamily

strength and one that we hope scholars will dedicate more energy toward understanding in the future.

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Part III

Families and Other Institutions

Work and Family Through Time and Space: Revisiting Old Themes and Charting New Directions

23

Maureen Perry-Jenkins and
Shelley MacDermid Wadsworth

As we began work on this chapter we were acutely aware of the current state of the economy in the United States as the backdrop for our review. With the highest unemployment rates since the early 1990s, record numbers of families facing foreclosures on their homes, and the demise of some of the countries' most stable industries, citizens of the United States are facing economic challenges never before seen in our lifetimes. According to the Economic Policy Institute, a Washington think tank that monitors economic issues, "This recession has become the longest and deepest economic downturn since the Great Depression" (Mishel & Shierholz, 2009). We begin our chapter describing this economic and social context because it highlights a primary theme of our comments, a theme highlighted long ago by Urie Bronfenbrenner in his Ecological Model, namely that the social contexts from the broadest level, a national recession, to the most proximal level, one's parent losing their job, shape the path of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). As we consider how economic and work factors influence workers and their families

we must also remain cognizant of a second premise of the ecological model, individuals can also shape their environments. It is with these two key notions in mind, that contexts can shape individual development and individuals can shape contexts, that we tackle the work and family literature from the 1960s through the first decade of the twenty-first century.

Work and Family Through Time and Space

The main tenet of the Ecological perspective is that human development is shaped by a multi-level complex of family, social, and historical contexts in our environments. Many scholars have argued that the two most salient contexts that shape human development are work and family. In a now seminal piece entitled "Work and Family through Time and Space," Bronfenbrenner and Crouter (1982) reviewed the current state of the work and family literature with an eye towards the reciprocal relationship between the two, such that aspects of work can shape family functioning and families can affect work settings. In their paper, they highlighted the importance of understanding work and family phenomena within the historical, social, and family contexts, or what they referred to as "space," within which they exist. They also emphasized the critical concept of time, at the broadest level being historical time and at the narrowest level, representing an individual's life course. Thus, the

M. Perry-Jenkins, PhD (✉)
University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA 01003, USA
e-mail: mpj@psych.umass.edu

S. MacDermid Wadsworth, PhD
Child Development and Family Studies,
Purdue University, 101 Gates Road, West Lafayette,
IN 47907-2020, USA
e-mail: shelley@purdue.edu

concept of “time,” considered at multiple levels, plays a powerful role in human development. As a developmental psychologist, Bronfenbrenner focused much of his theory on the power of social contexts and social time to shape individual life course trajectories, but with equal attention to the role of the individual in influencing his or her environments.

As noted above, the concept of “time” refers to historical time, social time, family time, and individual time, all of which give shape and meaning to our lives. For example, our current historical time period is one of great economic upheaval, a historic event that has created a social time in which unemployment and underemployment are viewed less as personal failings and more as consequence of our failing economy. In turn, “family time” can be affected such that when a family member is unemployed or fears that their job may be at risk, family decisions such as when to marry, when to have a child, or when to retire may be affected. Finally, all of these events occurring outside of the individual can affect their developmental trajectory differently depending upon their age and life cycle stage.

The concept of “space” refers to those multiple levels of influence that are in place at any given time point. At the macro-level, we must consider the cultural and social values that guide a given society. For example, values such as individualism or collectivism that are embraced by a society, in turn, influence beliefs about the role of government or workplaces in the lives of individuals. At the level of the exosystem, we must assess those social settings that are not a part of our everyday life but have a clear influence on individual’s lives. So for example, how do social policies enacted at the state and federal level, such as determining minimum wage rates, parental leave policies, or health care policies, affect the well-being and development of workers and their families? Microsystems, the contexts most proximal to the individual, include those settings in which we have day-to-day experiences like at work, in our families, at school, and in our churches. Finally, mesosystems are those influences that comprise the interaction between our microsystems, such as the intersections of

work and family in our lives and how that interrelationship shapes our development.

Our goal in this chapter is to review current theory and empirical research in the area of work and family with an eye towards how “time” and “space” provide important contexts for the questions that we ask, the answers we uncover, and the interpretations we place on our discoveries. Bronfenbrenner and Crouter provided a historical review of the work and family literature prior to the 1960s and from the 1960s to the 1980s, a time when work and family research became a recognized and vibrant field of inquiry. We plan to extend their vision to consider how the field of work and family has developed from the 1980s to 2010. As we consider how research and theorizing on work and family has progressed over the past 30 years, and as we consider key questions such as how does work affect individual well-being and development and how does an individual influence work, we will pay close attention to the concepts of “time” and “space.” Specifically, we propose that shifts in ideology, government, policy, work settings, and family structure over the past three decades give new meaning to what we mean by “work” and “family,” which can, in turn, lead to new conceptualizations of how they influence each other and the meanings that we place on that relationship.

Work and Family Issues Through Time and Space: Before the 1960s

In the book entitled, *Turning Points: Historical and Sociological Essays on the Family*, Demos and Boocock (1978) pulled together an interdisciplinary team of scholars to consider the topic of families. This set of interdisciplinary chapters on the history of families highlighted the ever present role of the economy in shaping the lives of families. For example, Smelser and Halpern (1978) argued that the most popular formulation of work-family relations between the 1920s and 1950s was that industrialization resulted in the intensification of the nuclear family comprised of spouses and children. While these scholars presented some data to support this perspective, they

also pointed to a more “flexible and interactive conception of the relations between the economy and the family” (p. s288) from very early on in American history. In addition, they went on to suggest that this relationship between the economy and families was influenced deeply by a third institutional factor—education. Thus, family historians placed great emphasis on the social context of the family-work connection, highlighting the critical role of education (a proxy for social class) as a moderator of these relations.

In this same volume, Kanter (1978) presents an equally strong argument for considering the family as an “independent variable” shaping economic life. A number of family historians have provided evidence to suggest that families are a force on economic life in several ways: (a) cultural traditions carried by the family and kin network shape family members decisions about work, (b) from an early time, merchants’ family and business decisions were often intertwined, and (c) a family’s structure and organization, emotional climate and demands influence the ways in which members become involved in organizations (Kanter, 1978). Thus, the bidirectional pushes and pulls linking economy and work settings and families’ lives has a long history in the annals of sociology prior to the overwhelming onset of empirical work that began to emerge in the 1960s. In addition, Kanter also highlighted the importance of time in considering work and family connections. As she notes, “Daily, weekly and yearly rhythms are not the only way work time and timing enter family life. There is also a longer term aspect: the way the timing of major career events over the life cycle of the worker and the major family events over its life cycle intersect and interact (p. s328).” For example, research by Hareven (1975) documented the way in which immigration patterns of French Canadian families to the textile mills of New Hampshire affected family roles, marriage, caregiving patterns, and the organization of the workplace. Thus, notions of “time” and “space” received great attention in the early sociological writings on work and family, however, as documented in the next section, the first wave of empirical studies that emerged in this field often

lost sight of the ecological settings within which work and family relations exist.

Work and Family Issues Through Time and Space: 1960s–1980s

The period of 1960–1980 brought social changes that ultimately transformed the lives of many families. In the two decades following approval of the birth control pill in 1960 and no-fault divorce in 1961 (Pruitt & Rapoport, 2003), fertility rates fell by almost half (42%), ending the baby boom (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1975, 1999), and the divorce rate doubled (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1975, 1999). Thus, it is not surprising that labor force participation rates among married mothers of young children also doubled over this period (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1975, 1999), and that extensive legislative initiatives related to employed parents, mothers in particular, were proposed, including the Pregnancy Discrimination Act, the Equal Pay Act, and the creation of Head Start (Pitt-Catsouphes, 2002). Job opportunities in the agricultural sector continued a long-standing decline, and the contraction of the manufacturing sector also accelerated. Meanwhile, the service sector continued rapid expansion during the 1960s and 1970s (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1999). The unemployment rate rose and median earnings of men gradually stagnated during this period, although median family earnings continued to rise due largely to the rapidly increasing labor force participation of women (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1999).

Bronfenbrenner and Crouter (1982) organized their review of research during the 1960s and 1970s into the following themes: the effects of maternal employment on children and their mothers; the effects of fathers’ occupations on family life; conflict and resolution in work and family roles; long-term effects of parental work on child development; and work and family in an ecological perspective.

Perhaps the most memorable conclusion of Bronfenbrenner and Crouter’s review of this period is that “Taken by itself, the fact that a mother works outside the home has no universally

predictable effects on the child” (p. 51). This statement represents a turning point in the work-family literature. For decades, researchers had attributed differences between children of employed and homemaker mothers to mothers’ work status, but by 1980, the accumulated evidence made it clear that other factors were at least as important, including mothers’ work hours and schedules, education level, the family’s socioeconomic resources, and children’s age and sex. For example, positive outcomes for daughters suggested that their employed mothers served as positive role models, but young sons, especially of middle-class mothers, appeared to experience difficulties, such as in academic achievement. In one study (Bronfenbrenner, Henderson, Alvarez, & Cochran, 1982), mothers who were employed full-time and had sons were less likely than other mothers to portray their children positively. Maternal education also was important: less-educated mothers of both sons and daughters described their children less favorably than mothers with more education.

The patterns just described were observed only among middle-class families, or more precisely, families in which fathers worked in middle-class jobs. Bronfenbrenner and Crouter (1982) observed that the interpretation and consequences of mothers’ employment varied systematically as a function of social class. For example, working-class women’s employment could be seen by their families as improving their standard of living, but also as an indictment of their husbands’ ability to provide. In contrast, middle-class women’s employment might be seen as leaving children poorly supervised. These recognitions connected multiple kinds of spaces or contexts by recognizing that the connections between work and home might play out differently depending upon social class. The different interpretations of employment experiences as a function of social class reflect a complex set of contingencies that researchers were only just beginning to understand.

These speculations about the role of social class in shaping the consequences of mothers’ employment introduced a new dimension of “space” into discussions of work and family.

Instead of focusing solely on the category or social address of employment status, researchers during this period began to identify the factors that gave the social address its meaning—such as the level of mothers’ involvement in employment, the degree to which they were satisfied with their circumstances, and the meaning of their employment to themselves and their families. For example, part-time work emerged during this period as a way for mothers to reap the benefits of employment while also minimizing the perceived costs to their children.

The findings just summarized focused primarily on patterns observed among White men and women than on other ethnic groups. African-American families, for example, have a long and continuous history of mothers’ employment that might have generated, had it been thoroughly studied, different implications of parental employment for their children. More specifically, counter to the trend for sons of middle-class White mothers, studies showed that children of low-income employed Black mothers did better in school than their counterparts with homemaker mothers (Bronfenbrenner & Crouter, 1982). Studies during this period, however, rarely gave distinct attention to ethnicity, and even fewer examined confounds between family structure, social class, and job type. There were exceptions: Piotrkowski (1979) completed a rich qualitative examination of life in working-class families, and Stack’s *All Our Kin* (1974) enriched understanding of family life among African-Americans.

A major contribution to the understanding of “space” from this period was Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) volume, *The Ecology of Human Development*. The ecological perspective provided a framework with which to consider the structure and function of both the proximal and distal contexts that affect the development of children. It made it easy to see that the effects of work-family relationships could depend not only on parents’ employment status, but also on the content of their experiences at work, as well as where children spent their time during parents’ absences. Even macro-level policies in organizations and the nation, such as access to job

flexibility, could now be understood as potentially connected to the growth and development of individuals.

Bronfenbrenner and Crouter (1982) pointedly recognized the lack of parental leaves, high-quality child care, and family-responsive national policies in the United States relative to almost all of its industrialized peers, highlighting in particular the difficulties faced by families in gaining access to high-quality childcare. Not coincidentally, the first onsite corporate child care center in the United States was created at StrideRite corporation in 1975 (Pitt-Catsouphes, 2002).

Another theme in research during this period was the recognition that fathers' experiences at work could affect their participation in family life, significantly shaping their children's experiences. Innovative work by Melvin Kohn (1969) during this time highlighted the important role of the social context of work, specifically the job conditions of working- vs. middle-class occupations, identifying specific mechanisms through which experiences in one domain, such as work, could effect life in another domain, namely the family. Researchers recognized that fathers in working-class and middle-class jobs were systematically rewarded for different behavior and values. For example, obedience and conformity were valued more by working-class fathers, while self-direction and autonomy were valued more by fathers in middle- to upper middle-class occupations (Kohn, 1969). In turn, fathers tended to encourage similar behavior and values in their children, especially their sons. In addition, fathers' psychological absorption in their work was recognized as a potential threat to the quality of their relationships with their children. Although some of these same dynamics were eventually found to apply to mothers' occupations, most of this research was not conducted until much later (Bronfenbrenner & Crouter, 1982). This line of work socialization research remains a key theme in the work-family field to this day.

Another milestone in the work-family literature during this period was the development and refinement of role conflict as a construct that could account for interdependence among settings. Seminal publications in both sociology (Goode, 1960) and psychology (Kahn, Wolfe,

Quinn, & Snoek, 1964) drew attention to the ways in which multiple roles could be expected to pose competing and burdensome demands on individuals. In the most widely-cited article in the work-family literature between 1977 and 2000 (Mason, 2002), Pleck (1977) laid out the "work-family role system" as a framework for understanding role conflict as it pertained to the work and family responsibilities of employed partners. He used the term "work-family interference" to label the competition between work demands and family needs.

Later during this period, Marks (1977) proposed an expansionist view of involvement in multiple roles, work among them, arguing that involvement in multiple roles could bring positive resources to individuals and families. Consistent with Marks, both Piotrkowski (1979) and Crouter (1982) identified positive ways in which work and family could affect one another, including the transmission of skills and positive moods.

Both women's roles and researchers' perspectives about them were changing rapidly during this period. For example, women's allocations of time to paid work increased and their time devoted to housework declined. The *proportion of household work* completed by men thus increased, but Pleck & Staines (1985) concluded that this was due almost entirely to women performing fewer household chores, presumably as a function of paid work demands, as opposed to men performing more chores. Studies during this period revealed "no appreciable change in fathers' involvement with family work as a function of their wives' employment status" (Bronfenbrenner & Crouter, 1982, p. 58).

In terms of "time" or the developmental implications of work and family, the focus of work-family research during this period, as in prior decades, was primarily focused on parents with young children, although studies of older children also began to appear. A major leap forward was provided by Elder's (1974) research using life course principles to understand the developmental implications for children of their parents' job losses during the Great Depression. Children who were very young when the Depression began appeared to suffer more severely, and

longer—well into adulthood—than adolescents, whose identities were more well formed and who were old enough to provide real help to their families. Although the developmental implications of work-family relationships for adults was not yet a major theme in this literature, Elder's recognition of "linked lives," or the processes that connect developmental trajectories within families over many decades laid a foundation for later examinations of intergenerational issues. In so doing, Elder significantly expanded the conceptualization of time as it related to the relationships between work and family.

In another expansion of the consideration of time, Kanter (1977) articulated an agenda for research on work and family in which she drew attention to both the duration and the timing of work, including not only when in the life course individuals are and are not employed (consistent with Elder's approach above), but also the scheduling of work over the course of days or months. Research by Mott, Mann, McLoughlin, and Warwick (1965), for example, showed that fathers working evening shifts spent less time with their school-aged children and experienced tension with their wives.

Methodologically, Bronfenbrenner and Crouter (1982) lauded the research literature between 1960 and 1980 for including many more studies of work and family, as well as more rigorous designs (some longitudinal), more theory-driven testing of hypotheses, and greater attention to process as opposed to simple group comparisons. Researchers paid much more attention to what occurred inside contexts, such as what parents did when they were at work and how family responsibilities were allocated at home—for both men and women. Mothers' employment status was recognized as having relatively little predictive power in the absence of other important variables like social class, although there was still relatively little attention to race, ethnicity, or diverse family structures as distinct and important factors in the work-family realm. Our understanding of space was further deepened by the full articulation of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological perspective. Conceptions of time expanded to more fully include the duration and timing

of employment, as well as the life course effects of major historical events. Finally, work-family conflict emerged as a distinct construct for the first time, part of a growing recognition of the potential for jobs to negatively influence family life.

Work and Family Issues Through Time and Space: 1980s–1990s

During the 1980s, the United States experienced a period of economic upheaval. A recession in the early part of the decade was accompanied by high inflation and unemployment. Growth in both earnings and productivity slowed, and stable, well-paying jobs in the manufacturing sector continued to decline, creating a structural mismatch between job-seekers and job opportunities (Menaghan & Parcel, 1990). The composition of the labor force also continued to shift during this decade, with men's labor force participation falling and women's rising past 60% (although this pattern applied mostly to white women; the labor force participation of black women declined rather sharply at least twice during this period) (DiCecio, Engemann, Owyang, & Wheeler, 2008). Over 50% of mothers with children younger than six had now entered the labor force (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2002). The rising proportion of women in the labor force also reduced the sex segregation of some occupations (Menaghan & Parcel, 1990).

In the family realm, one of the most notable changes was the high proportion of families who were headed by unmarried mothers or fathers—by 1985, single parents accounted for more than one in five families (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1987). Especially when headed by mothers, these single-parent families were significantly more likely to be poor than married-couple families, even when the mother worked full-time year-round (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1989).

Menaghan and Parcel's decade review of the work-family literature in the 1980s focused on the influences of parents' employment on their own well-being, the quality of their marriages, and the development of their children (Menaghan & Parcel, 1990). They organized the review

around four perspectives: the “new home economics;” role conflict; work socialization; and the work stress perspectives.

In 1981 Gary Becker produced the *Treatise on the Family*, using economic principles to explain household decisions regarding the allocation of domestic labor. These principles led to the proposition that it was economically efficient for mothers to reduce their labor force responsibilities in favor of devoting time to raising children, because mothers’ disadvantage in the labor market constrained the economic return on the investment of their time relative to that of fathers (Becker, 1981).

Becker’s treatise energized the debate about men’s and women’s actual and ideal roles in families and in the economy, launching new discussions of gender as a “space” within which work and family occur. The recognition of gender as constructed, contested, and negotiated in the work-family domain led to examinations of cultural, couple, and personal expectations that shaped behavior at home and at work (Berk, 1985; Geerken & Gove, 1983), helping to produce the sex differentiation Becker observed. Geerken and Gove (1983), for example, pointed out that the arrangement of responsibilities at home lagged behind changes in economic responsibilities, suggesting that factors beyond basic economic principles were operating. Berk (1985) argued that Becker paid insufficient attention to gendered patterns of dominance and submission. Bielby and Bielby (1988) even questioned the degree of sex differentiation in the economy, pointing out that when family circumstances were controlled, women made greater contributions to market work than men.

In a way, these debates culminated at the end of the decade with Hochschild’s (1989) publication of *The Second Shift*, which “unpacked” men’s and women’s experiences of gender in negotiating work and family. Each chapter documented the processes through which a particular couple arranged work and family in their own lives, and the often convoluted stories they constructed to minimize disconnects between their gendered beliefs and behavior. In so doing, the “deep space” of gender was revealed within these couples.

Intra-couple dynamics also were revealed during this decade, as researchers began to adopt more parallel approaches to studying men’s and women’s employment, unemployment, and unpaid family work, in contrast to earlier approaches that problematized unemployment for men but employment for women. Attention to the content, perceptions, and meanings of experiences at work grew, and a new line of research recognized the connection between not only one’s own work experiences and well-being, but also the connection to spouses’ well-being. In particular, the implications of wives’ employment for their husbands’ well-being and husbands’ participation in family work for their wives’ well-being were considered, revealing small negative effects for the former and positive effects for the latter (Menaghan & Parcel, 1990).

A new innovation was recognition of the importance of the match between preferences and behavior, such that employment was associated with lower distress when it matched individual preferences. For wives, the net benefits of employment for their own well-being were usually positive, especially when consistent with their preferences. Some husbands whose wives were employed experienced more distress if they were doing more household work than they believed appropriate (Perry-Jenkins & Crouter, 1990). Another dimension of meaning associated with within-couple experiences of employment and distress was attitudes regarding breadwinning. The positive effects of employment and the negative effects of unemployment were particularly strong for workers who saw themselves as breadwinners, and the husbands of employed wives were more distressed when their wives’ employment threatened their sense of adequacy as breadwinners (Menaghan & Parcel, 1990).

During this period, men’s participation in child care and housework grew much more slowly than women’s rapidly rising participation in the labor force. Fathers’ interactions with children increased, though largely in a role secondary to that of mothers, while mothers’ involvement in household work declined. Studies suggested that wives (whether or not they were employed) were more distressed when their husbands’

participation in family work was lower (Parcel & Menaghan, 1994b).

In addition to delving more deeply into dynamics within families, researchers also delved more deeply into the dynamics within workplaces, “unpacking” the previously observed relationship between social class and job content. For example, working-class jobs were found to offer far less “substantive complexity” meaning or opportunities for workers to make decisions, to confront complexity, and to experience novel and stimulating environments. Instead, they were more likely than other workers to experience low autonomy, close supervision, and high routinization. As a result, their intellectual flexibility was eventually stunted and they developed guarded orientations to society (Kohn & Schooler, 1983). In contrast, in more participatory work environments, workers engaged in more problem-solving and in turn valued more self-directed qualities in their children (Crouter, 1982).

Experiences at work also were linked to workers’ experiences of strain. Several studies based on Karasek’s demand-control model supported the contention that workers experienced significant strain when they faced high demands combined with low control. Such conditions were found to be more common in women’s jobs (e.g., Karasek, Baker, Marxer, Ahlborn, & Theorell, 1981). Also especially important for women was the degree to which coworkers and supervisors were supportive of work and family issues—especially when women faced disproportionately heavy responsibilities at home (Menaghan & Parcel, 1990).

Mortimer and London (1984) combined characteristics of jobs with understanding of work-family conflict to predict how families in different ecological niches might experience relationships between work and family differently. For example, single-mother households might be preoccupied by financial problems, but managerial families might struggle more with psychological absorption in work. Dual-provider families would find themselves challenged by role overload. This work highlights the importance of “space” as it influences the types of problems families face as well as the solutions they devise to address their unique challenges.

In addition to delving deeply within the spaces of family and of work, researchers during this decade developed much deeper understanding of the nature of the mesosystem connecting these two domains. In the most influential scientific article about work and family published between 1977 and 2000 (Mason, 2002), Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) proposed that conflict between work and family would occur because the roles competed for time, or because they would generate strain or require behavior that would interfere with effective performance in the other domain. Most measures of work-family conflict are still grounded in this original conceptualization. Other researchers suggested additional nuances of this relationship. For example, Crouter (1982) acknowledged the possibility of positive influences traveling between work and family, such as problem-solving skills learned at work proving useful at home.

The largest “spaces” affecting work-family relationships are those defined by public policies enacted by nations, and the private policies created in workplaces. During this decade, recognition of the relevance of work and family policies expanded significantly. Kamerman and Kahn (1978) drew attention to the policy solutions being tried in industrialized countries around the world, almost all which were absent in US policy (and most remain absent to this day). Nonetheless, there were some changes in the private policy arena. The Conference Board launched its work-family research council. The consulting firm Work-Family Directions (now WFD) was founded, as were the Families and Work Institute and the Center for Work and Family at Boston College. Working Mother magazine published its first list of the 100 best companies for working mothers (Pruitt & Rapoport, 2003). Also, in one of the first empirical evaluations of work and family policy, Bohlen and Viveros-Long (1981) published an evaluation of an experimental effort to evaluate the ability of work schedule flexibility to reduce work-family conflict.

Although dimensions of space received more attention during this decade than dimensions of time, the development of methods to study daily stress was an important innovation. For the first time, researchers were able to track in

chronological order the emergence of stressors, over the course of days or weeks, in one domain and their connection to later feelings or behavior in the other (Bolger, DeLongis, Kessler, & Wethington, 1989; Repetti, 1989). Repetti (1989) found that after especially busy or stressful days at work, male air traffic controllers were likely to socially withdraw from their families in the evening. Bolger et al. (1989) added a gender dimension by showing that wives adjusted their evening activities to accommodate their husbands' stressful work days more than they did their own and more than their husbands did for them. Interpersonal conflicts both at work and at home emerged as a potent source of daily fluctuations in emotional distress and depressed mood.

Staines and Pleck (1983) continued to expand considerations of time at work by examining relationships among nonstandard work schedules, schedule flexibility, and work-family conflict. In particular, they focused on the implications of parents' schedule demands for time with their children. For example, to the extent that low-wage jobs demanded more work hours during the evening or weekends, children could be deprived of time with their parents. Moen and Dempster-McClain (1987) expanded thinking about time in another way by recognizing that employed parents may need to develop ways to arrange roles sequentially across the life course, adjusting their involvement across the role system to achieve their family goals.

During the 1980s, work-family research focused more on space than on time. Researchers paid considerable attention to the construction of gender and its intersection with economic opportunities (Spitze, 1988). Researchers also generated many useful insights about systematic variations among work settings, as well as the relationship between spouses' employment experiences and distress. The conceptualization of work-family conflict expanded, including the recognition that the reciprocal influences between work and family may be positive as well as negative. Conceptualizations of time also expanded to include greater recognition of the duration and timing of parents' work and its implications for behavior at home, as well as attention to the daily

processes connecting work and home. Studies, however, most often examined these questions for working families with young children. Although there was expanded attention to social class as a context during this decade, there still was relatively little attention to ethnic variations in work-family relationships. Also remaining to be developed more fully were the developmental implications of parents' work for themselves and their children, and the role of other settings such as child care, school, and community.

Work and Family Issues Through Time and Space: 1990s–2000

In comparison to the 1980s, the nation experienced a period of economic calm in the 1990s. "Prices were stable, unemployment dropped to its lowest level in 30 years, the government posted a budget surplus and the stock market experienced an unprecedented boom" (Conte & Karr, 2001). It was a time of dramatic technological advances in computer and communication technologies that brought advances such as cell phones, pagers, and wireless computing; it was also a time where the income gap between the rich and poor, the skilled and the unskilled worker widened (Mishel, Bernstein, & Schmitt, 1999). With these broader economic and social conditions as the backdrop, the work-family literature continued to expand and crossed multiple disciplines including sociology, developmental psychology, family science, organizational behavior, economics, and occupational health. In an effort to review this sprawling, multidisciplinary literature, Perry-Jenkins, Repetti, and Crouter (2000), in their decade review of the work and family literature in the 1990s, outlined four main themes in the field: (a) maternal employment literature, (b) work socialization literature, (c) occupational stress literature, and (d) multiple roles literature. Our aim is to briefly explore these four topics with an eye towards those aspects of time and space that were addressed in the 90s and what aspects deserve greater attention.

The maternal employment literature has a long tradition in developmental psychology with an

initial aim of understanding how mothers' employment affected young children. As early as the 1980s, a focus solely on maternal work status as the predictor of child outcomes declined and more attention was turned to "how much" and "when" parents worked (Hochschild, 1997; Presser, 1994; Schor, 1991). Researchers found, for example, that parental overwork and underwork mattered for children such that fathers working less than full-time during their children's early years were more likely to have children with behavior problems, whereas fathers' overwork was linked to children's decreased verbal facility.

During this decade research began to pay closer attention to the temporal patterning of work hours with studies indicating that nonday-time work shifts were associated with higher divorce rates (White & Keith, 1990). Temporal variations across seasons of the year, days of the week, and hours of day also became the focus of research studies recognizing that patterns and hours of employment are rarely stable phenomenon and patterns of change in work hours can affect family life in multiple ways (Crouter & Larson, 1998; Crouter & McHale, 1993; Larson & Richards, 1994). For example, Moorehouse (1991) was one of the first to identify multiple changes in employment status as a risk factor for children's social and cognitive competence; but she also found that the negative effects of maternal employment changes could be mitigated by mothers' frequent involvement with her child in shared activities such as reading books and telling stories.

From a "time" perspective, a strength of research in the maternal employment tradition is its focus on children's "individual time," more specifically their developmental outcomes. For example, many studies explored parental work as it affects children's social and cognitive outcomes. A shortcoming, however, was its emphasis on the development of very young children with far less attention to how school-aged or adolescents fared. Moreover, the concept of "family time" received little attention, however, it is likely that the timing of parenthood, meaning whether parents were still in school (teenage parenting),

starting their first jobs, or well-established in their career, could affect their ability and availability to parent and, ultimately, influence child outcomes.

The concept of "space," meaning the broader social context surrounding work and family processes, did not receive a great deal of attention in the maternal employment literature of the 1990s. Presser and Cox (1997) did emphasize that less-educated parents are more likely to work nonstandard hours than more highly educated parents, highlighting differences by social class. Few studies, however, examined how unique conditions of high-wage and low-wage work might differentially affect child outcomes, and there was surprisingly little attention to how race and ethnicity might intersect with social class to create distinct ecological niches for child development.

The second theme of work-family research in the 1990s was the continued emphasis on the work socialization perspective. Research in this tradition, which blossomed in the 1980s, explored how conditions of employment, such as occupational self-direction, job complexity, and control, influenced life off the job. Building on Kohn's early work, Menaghan and Parcel published a number of studies in the 1990s demonstrating that higher levels of occupational complexity in mothers' jobs was related to more positive home environments that provided greater cognitive stimulation, emotional support, and safety (Menaghan & Parcel, 1991; Parcel & Menaghan, 1994a, 1994b). Menaghan and Parcel's work points to the value of looking beyond work status, to explore conditions of employment as they affect children. As important, were their efforts to explore how family contexts, such as family structure (e.g., single- vs. two-parent) and socioeconomic status, might moderate work-family linkages. For example, they found that the mothers who experienced the greatest gains from highly complex work were continuously employed, single mothers (Menaghan & Parcel, 1995). They also found that mothers who began employment in jobs characterized by low to average complexity showed decrements over time in the quality of the home environment they provided to their children, introducing the importance of lagged effects whereby work has greater effects

over time, than concurrently, on child development. The program of research conducted by Menaghan and Parcel across the 1990s highlights the importance of considering both issues of time and space in the work-family relationship. In terms of time, they documented, with longitudinal data, that early work experiences can influence later child developmental outcomes. From a social context, or space, perspective, they showed that linkages between work and family may differ for single-parent and two-parent families. Important questions still remain from the work socialization perspective as to how the intersection of multiple contexts, such as family structure, race, ethnicity, and social class create unique multidimensional, ecological niches that shape work-family process in distinct ways.

Turning to the third work and family theme in the 1990s, we focus on the occupational stress literature, yet another consistent theme from the 80s. Work stress received a great deal of attention from work and family scholars in the 1990s. In terms of time, researchers began to distinguish between the effects of short-term fluctuations in stress vs. long-term, or chronic, work stressors. Distinctions were also drawn between objective, stressful conditions of the job (e.g., time pressures, noisy, high job demands) vs. individuals' internal responses to work conditions.

The chronic stress literature is fairly consistent in documenting that the relationship between job stress and individual or family outcomes is mediated through individual well-being, such as role strain or emotional distress (Barling & MacEwen, 1992; Crouter, Bumpus, Maguire, & McHale, 1999; Galambos & Maggs, 1990; Greenberger, O'Neil, & Nagel, 1994). A shortcoming of this research, however, is the assumption of causal priority. In fact, little research during the 90s on chronic stress has been devoted to testing the effects of emotional distress and family dysfunction on job stress. To date, even less research has questioned the effects of chronic stress on workers at different stages of the life course, or the effects of these stressors on children of different ages.

From a social contextual perspective, it is argued that the lack of "uniform, across-the-board

chronic stress transfer effects" (p. 287, Perry-Jenkins et al., 2000) in studies that use heterogenous samples is because individual, family and social context differences exert important influences on the work stress to family functioning relationship. For example, vulnerability to role strain has been shown to vary as a function of job hours, family size and ages of children, and occupational prestige (Guelzow, Bird, & Koball, 1991; Marshall & Barnett, 1991; O'Neil & Greenberger, 1994). Another key moderating variable appears to be relationship quality, however, the moderating effect is complex. On the one hand, Rook, Dooley, and Catalano (1991) found that stress transfer between spouses may occur more readily between spouses in close, stable relationships. On the other hand, an unhappy marriage can exacerbate the effects of job stressors (Bumpus, Crouter, & McHale, 1999). These studies begin to highlight the importance of social contextual factors as they give different meaning to the connections between job stress and family life.

In the 1990s, we began to see evidence to suggest that race, ethnicity, and social class may also be important moderators of the chronic job stress-family connection. Marshall and Barnett (1991), in their study of 229 Black and White, female social workers and licensed practical nurses (LPNs) found that LPNs were less likely to report rewards from decisions authority on the job and more likely to report concerns about lack of advancement and exposure to illness and injury. Black LPNs in particular reported less challenging jobs, poorer supervision, and fewer job rewards. In a related study, Frone, Russell, and Cooper (1992) found social class differences between work-family conflict and family distress and between job involvement and work-family conflict. The authors offered no explanation for why work-family conflict predicted family distress for blue-collar but not white-collar workers. Perhaps, white-collar families have more resources to buffer the conflict such as one "at-home" parent, services such as child care and house cleaning, or extra vacation time. In terms of the finding linking job involvement and work-family conflict that only emerged for white-collar

workers, the authors posit that this finding might reflect differences in structural characteristics of jobs such that those in white-collar occupations may spend more discretionary time on work matters and may bring work home more than their blue-collar counterparts. These two studies begin to highlight the importance of social context, or “space” as it serves to moderate work-family connections.

The final theme underlying research in the 1990s focused on the implications of managing the multiple roles of worker, spouse, and parent for parents’ well-being and for the quality of family relationships. Although some research suggests that the demands of multiple roles have the potential to increase stress and undermine mental and physical well-being (O’Neil & Greenberger, 1994; Repetti, 1993), the majority of studies in this area find that multiple roles often bring rewards such as monetary gain, enhanced mental health, power to delegate tasks, and opportunities for social relationships (Barnett, 1994, 1999). The discrepancy in findings, however, may best be explained by examining social class as a moderator of these relationships. For example, managing multiple roles that includes a worker role where one has job autonomy, complexity, and control may indeed enhance worker well-being but a worker role where one has little control with monotonous job tasks may undermine well-being.

From a theoretical perspective, Marks and MacDermid (1996) have critiqued the multiple roles literature for assuming a hierarchical structure to roles from most important to least important. They argue that individuals may organize roles in a more holistic, balanced approach. It may also be the case that there are individual differences in how individuals coordinate multiple roles and some of these differences may be understood by social contextual factors and/or timing issues. In addition, attention to the meaning that men and women attach to their roles is a critical mediating factor that links role behaviors to individual and family functioning. Employment status alone reveals little about the meaning and value a role holds for an individual, however, research on provider-role beliefs and attitudes

has shown that beliefs about men’s and women’s provider-role attitudes affects division of labor and marital quality outcomes (Perry-Jenkins & Crouter, 1990).

Research on multiple roles often views work and family roles as fairly static and unchanging. A life course perspective would challenge researchers to consider how role demands and negotiation fluctuates over a lifetime. For example, during times of extreme pressure, such as when one has very young children and is balancing a high pressure job, individuals may feel the need to prioritize role demands, even in cases where they aim for balance. In contrast, “empty nesters” may have more freedom to create a balance among their roles. From a social contextual perspective, the ability to balance roles is likely to be enhanced for more affluent individuals who can buy goods and services to ease role pressures, such as quality child care, takeout food, or housecleaning services.

A number of methodological advances occurred through the 1990s. More longitudinal studies emerged, allowing researchers to examine change in both work and family processes as well as to begin to examine the thorny issue of causality. For example, Rogers (1999) in a longitudinal study of work and marriage found that as marital discord increased so did wives’ income because increases in marital conflict increased the likelihood that unemployed women would enter the labor force. Greater use of structural equation modeling (SEM) and hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) made it possible, in the absence of random samples and nonexperimental designs, to use the individual as their own “control” by examining individual change trajectories over time.

To summarize, by the end of the 1990s, the work and family literature had become a recognized area of study in multiple disciplines. This diversity of thinking on the topic is both a strength and weakness. Given the wide variety of theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of work and family and the rich array of studies, some with great benefits in terms of either work constructs or family constructs, some with large representative samples, some with qualitative stories, much has been learned. Conversely, the

sprawling literature makes it difficult to summarize consistent findings and accept or reject theoretical assumptions. In terms of “time and space” issues, we would argue that during the 1990s more advances were made addressing the issue of time than space. For example, more studies arose that examined work-family phenomenon for families with older children as well as families coping with retirement. More attention focused on short-term processes that could examine bidirectional connections between work and family. Although there was greater acknowledgement of the importance of social contextual factors such as social class, race, ethnicity, and family structure, few studies explicitly explored how these constructs may moderate the very nature of work-family connections. In the handful of studies that did explore these issues directly, almost all found evidence for moderation of work-family linkages by social class, fewer findings emerged for race and ethnicity.

Work and Family Issues Through Time and Space: 2000–2010

As we ushered in the new millennium the US economy appeared to be on relatively strong footing and the Bureau of Labor Statistic’s projections for the upcoming decade predicted continued growth during the 2000–2010 decade (Su, 2001). Few projections predicted the global financial crisis that shocked the world in 2008 where we witnessed the collapse of the housing market, the demise of some of the largest banks in the United States and Europe, a 40% plunge in the stock market, and the near financial collapse of the US car industry (Conte & Karr, 2001). Over the course of this decade, Bianchi and Milkie (2010) also noted two other important demographic shifts relevant to the work-family agenda, specifically (a) increasing diversity in the structure and ethnicity of American families and (b) the stagnation of married women’s employment rates coupled with an increase in single mothers’ employment rates (Hoffman, 2009). All of these broader macro-level events created an interesting “time and space” for the study of work and family issues.

In their 2010 decade review of the work and family literature, Bianchi and Milkie (2010) provided a broad overview of the key topics that were researched over the past decade and highlighted the key strengths and insights that emerged over this decade. They organized their review around six main topics: (a) Gender, time and the division of labor in the home, (b) Paid work: Too much or too little?, (c) Maternal employment and child outcomes, (d) Work-family conflict, (e) Work, family, stress and health, and (f) Work-family policy. Building upon this excellent review of work and family research during the first decade of the twenty-first century, our goal is not to recreate the wheel but to use the ecological constructs of time and space to consider what new knowledge has emerged while considering new areas for development.

In reviewing the literature on gender, time and the division of labor in the home, Bianchi and Milkie (2010) point out that men’s and women’s allocation of time to paid and unpaid work has become more similar over time, with the gender gap in household and childcare tasks narrowing. From a time and space perspective, some intriguing questions arise. For example, how does the allocation of paid and unpaid work differ by social class and for families of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds? It also becomes important to consider the fairly dramatic change in family structures in the United States with more single-parent households, grandparent households, and step family households than ever before. How does the allocation of labor differ across different types of households? How do we assess the division of paid and unpaid labor when grandmothers, sisters, or extended kin share the work load? From a time perspective, how do patterns of allocation change across the life course? Is the gender gap most apparent for families with young children? Also, how have generational shifts in attitudes about egalitarianism and father involvement affected time allocation trends across generations?

Bianchi and Milkie (2010) next addressed the topic of paid work and the issue of time. Unique and different issues arise for those working too many hours and experiencing overwork vs. those who are underemployed and cannot secure

enough paid work. Jacob and Gerson (2001) found that too many hours and inflexible hours leave little time and energy for family life. Many jobs began to demand more of workers beyond the traditional work day and given new technology work was accessible 24/7, a phenomenon more common in higher prestige jobs. At the lower end of the socioeconomic spectrum, a common problem was the lack of full-time, benefitted employment. Bianchi and Milkie point out that unemployment and underemployment for men, in particular, disconnected them from family life, and researchers found a father's financial contribution was almost a precursor to active parenting (Coley & Morris, 2002; Landale & Oropesa, 2001). Thus, research has shown that the social context within which we study the time and timing of work reveals quite different problems.

Of course, in the current economic context the issue of overwork, underwork, and unemployment have taken on new meaning. More individuals from every walk of life are currently unemployed in the United States, approaching a 10% unemployment rate. Unemployed individuals are less stigmatized than in the past given the volatility of the economy. In contrast, many of those who are employed feel grateful to have a job and perhaps are less likely to complain or feel dissatisfied. In terms of time and timing, beyond issues of overwork and underwork is the stability of work. More attention needs to be paid to the trajectories of individual work lives and the notion that movement into and out of jobs can be as disruptive to family life as over- and under work. Moreover, much of this literature has focused on mother and father as the primary earners in families when, in fact, given new family structures and living arrangements, extended family and relatives often contribute to the economic security of families. Our lens must broaden to consider all those members of the family that extend beyond the nuclear constellation of mother, father, and children.

The literature on maternal employment produced a number of more nuanced and complex studies that paid greater attention to issues of "space." For example, maternal employment was shown to have the strongest, positive effects for

children in low-income households, in part by improving the home environment and providing stability. In contrast, the few negative effects of maternal employment seemed to arise in the area of cognitive development and placed White boys from middle-class families at greatest risk (Brooks-Gunn, Han, & Waldfogel, 2002). The issue of time arises here in a number of ways. First, are these effects long-lasting, and still present in adolescence and early adulthood? Are we seeing effects of early maternal work patterns or concurrent work patterns in these studies? In fact, a handful of studies began to explore developmental issues past early childhood. For example, Gennetian et al. (2004) report that maternal employment may hold small, but negative, effects for adolescents' school performance. Chase-Lansdale et al. (2003) however, found no positive or negative effects of employment on adolescents' academic outcomes. The question of how and under what conditions parents' early and current employment affects the lives of their adolescent children is an area ripe for development. Of course, a key criticism of studies that focus solely on parental work hours is the lack of attention to the actual conditions and experiences of employment that can enhance or undermine parental well-being, which in turn affects parenting ability.

Interestingly and importantly, Bianchi and Milkie (2010) raise child care as an important issue to explore when understanding work and family phenomenon, "in part because it forms the nucleus of what much "work-family" conflict is about—how to care for children adequately when parents need or want to work outside of the home" (p. 15). Social contextual factors play an important role in understanding the effect of child care on parents and children. Child care is expensive and was often a barrier to employment for low-income mothers (Baum, 2002). In addition, since many low-income jobs require shift work, including hours in the evening or overnight, securing child care becomes even more challenging. Data also indicate that African-American and Mexican mothers are more likely to use relative care as compared to European-American mothers (Uttal, 1999).

Studies in the area of maternal employment and child care began to move the clock forward

to examine issues for school-aged children and adolescents (Heyman, 2000; Kurtz, 2002). This relatively new avenue of study examines the self care and supervised care for children before and after the school day when parents are employed. As Barnett and Gareis (2006) point out, little research has focused on the unique demands faced by working parents who have school-aged and adolescent children. With a scarcity of after-school options, and a school schedule that includes numerous holidays, vacations and summer breaks, working parents face great challenges in securing child care. Yet, unsupervised children are at higher risk for juvenile crime, substance abuse, and sexual activity (National Center for Schools and Communities, 2010). In addition, parental after-school stress is related to parents' psychological well-being. As we pay closer attention to issues of "time," in this case child's developmental age and family's life stage, we will broaden our view of work and family issues over the life course

Work-family conflict continued to be a major topic of study and in this area we saw a number of advances in terms of time and space. Specifically, studies began to document how work-family conflict varied as function of family size, family socioeconomic status, and earner status (dual- vs. single earner, single employed parent). In addition, the use of a life course perspective and longitudinal study designs highlighted work and family trade-offs that families make at different life stages. Bianchi and Milkie (2010) identified a handful of studies that have begun to examine cultural and ethnic differences in experiences of work-family conflict. For example, Wharton and Blair-Loy (2002) found that workers in Hong Kong, who feel high levels of obligation to family and relatives, reported higher work-family conflict than Western workers due to stronger cultural norms related to family caregiving. Roehling, Jarvis, and Swope (2005) found that in the United States, Hispanics report higher work-to-family and family-to-work spillover than either Whites or Blacks. They surmise that more traditional gender roles among Hispanics may explain these differences, although research is needed to test this hypothesis.

The family-to-work connections, though acknowledged by many researchers, still received far less attention than the work-to-family connections. Having young children and/or children with developmental or behavioral problems was associated with more family-to-work conflict (Hyde, Else-Quest, Goldsmith, & Biesanz, 2004; Lewis, Kagan, & Heaton, 2000); and women were shown to experience more family-to-work conflict than men (Keene & Reynolds, 2005). This is clearly an area where research would benefit from attention to issues of space and time. For whom and under what conditions is family-to-work spillover more likely to occur? In addition, is family-to-work spillover more likely to occur at different life course junctures, such as for families with young children or families caring for elderly parents and relatives?

Work, family, stress, and health remained another theme in the field over the past decade, underscoring the findings that work and family experiences influence physical and mental health. An intriguing line of research examined mastery, or sense of control, as an outcome of work-family stress and a possible mediator of the relationship. For example, a sense of mastery was enhanced by marriage but diminished by the presence of children (Reynolds & Aletraris, 2007). As Bianchi and Milkie (2010) point out, gender and cohort effects play an important role in shaping workers' sense of self and mastery of their lives (Carr, 2002).

Although work-family policy became an area of increased attention over the past decade, many critics continued to emphasize lack of a coherent approach to "family-friendly" work-life policies in the United States (Gornick & Meyers, 2003). Davis and Mitchel (2009) argued that, "In the United States today, not only are our work-life policies limited, especially compared to other industrialized countries (Kelly, 2006), but they are also mismatched with the needs of workers and are unequal in availability and use." (p. 323). At the same time, it appears these criticisms have sparked both national and international research that has highlighted different challenges facing families of different social class levels and the recognition that the "success" of any given policy or intervention often depends on the desired outcome

of either the worker or employer (Bianchi & Milkie, 2010). In an edited volume by Crouter and Booth (2009) published by the Urban Institute, a number of new intervention studies evaluating the consequences of work place policies were highlighted. These projects are only now coming to fruition and may offer some of the best insights as to how policy change as well as informal changes in organizational culture may affect employers, employees, and employees' families

Work and Family Through Time and Space: 2010 and Beyond

Over 25 years ago, Bronfenbrenner and Crouter (1982) made 15 recommendations for future directions in research and policy on *the impact of maternal employment*. Using our review of the past three decades of research on work and family, the aim in this final section is to explore how far we have come in achieving some of the goals set out by Bronfenbrenner and Crouter as well as to make suggestions and recommendations for the next quarter century.

Bronfenbrenner and Crouter's first recommendation in the early 80s focused on moving past simple "social address" research models that compare, for example, the children of employed and unemployed mothers, to explore processes whereby work conditions affect a family process, such as parenting or shared time, which in turn affects some aspect of child development. Our review of research over the past 25 years clearly indicates that this recommendation was heeded; with much research emerging through the 1980s and 1990s and the first decade of the twenty-first century addressing the processes linking work-to-family functioning and child development. For example, multiple studies by Parcel and Menaghan revealed how complexity of thinking at work was related to more positive home environments created by mothers which in turn benefitted children's cognitive development. Numerous studies by Crouter and colleagues highlighted how parents' overwork, underwork, and work stress are related to parents' effectiveness in monitoring their school-age and adolescent children leading to different socio-emotional

outcomes for children. For higher SES workers, job absorption interfered with time for children and other family members (Blair-Loy, 2003), for lower-income workers, varying shift schedules diminished mental health and was linked to more marital discord (Perry-Jenkins, Goldberg, Pierce, & Sayer, 2007). As specific processes are documented and replicated in our studies, key areas ripe for interventions and policies arise.

The second recommendation of Bronfenbrenner and Crouter highlights the importance of the mediating, and we would argue moderating, effects of child's age and sex, race and ethnicity, family structure, social class, hours of employment, mothers' work preferences, satisfaction with work, and gender attitudes on work-family relationships. The authors also recommended that specific attention be paid to conceptualizations of social class that include not only occupational status but education, and income of *both* parents, if present, or the economic contributions of other family members in the household. Although numerous studies have emerged that attend to some aspects of this recommendation, we would suggest we still have far to go in understanding how multiple social contexts and the intersection of those contexts shape the nature of work-family connections and ultimately hold implications for children's developmental outcomes. A common analytic strategy has been to statistically control for variation that may emerge from constructs such as age, race, ethnicity, class and family structure, an assumption being that there are "universal" work-family processes that occur outside of these social contexts. As noted in this review, however, studies that have specifically examined how race, family structure, and social class moderate relationships between work and family often uncover unique relationships, especially by social class. For example, as noted earlier Frone et al. (1992) found work conditions and links between work and family life differed for Social workers and LPNs (class differences) and for Black and White LPNs (race differences). In addition, work by Goldberg and Perry-Jenkins (2004) revealed that the unequal division of household labor in working-class households held negative implications for mental health only for those wives with more egalitarian

attitudes. More studies are starting to emerge that look within specific ecological niches defined by race, ethnicity, class and family structure, and child age (e.g., see Burton, Lein, & Kolak, 2005; Chase-Lansdale et al., 2003; Crouter, Baril, Davis, & McHale, 2008; Henley & Lambert, 2005; Perry-Jenkins, 2005) to explore work and family issues.

Recommendations 3 and 4 point to the importance of using both short-term and long-term longitudinal research designs to understand how decisions to enter and leave the labor force are influenced by preexisting conditions related to work and family life. Bronfenbrenner (1979) emphasized the importance of “ecological transitions” as times when children and families experience movement into and out of different microsystems. These represent “natural experiments with considerable scientific power since subjects serve as their own controls and the direct and indirect effects of change can be assessed as they evolve in a variety of domains” (Bronfenbrenner & Crouter, 1982, p. 72). Great methodological advances have occurred over the past quarter century in the quality and number of longitudinal data sets that have emerged. From a developmental perspective, studies that follow the same individuals over time provide the greatest insights into developmental trajectories as we can explore patterns of change within and across individuals. Advances in statistical software, such as SEM and HLM have enhanced our ability to examine bidirectional relationships and growth curve trajectories in individual developmental outcomes while also examining multiple levels of context (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002).

Recommendations 5 and 6 challenged researchers to take into account the nature of the child’s experiences when the mother is at work. Thus, more knowledge about child care situations, after-school supervision, school experiences, and peer friendships are all key proximal settings in the child’s life that can shape development. In addition, Bronfenbrenner and Crouter recommended examining the specific nature of parent–child activities engaged in by employed and nonemployed mothers. In future writings, Bronfenbrenner pointed to the importance of proximal processes,

those daily and weekly consistent events and interactions in one’s microsystem, as they can shape one’s life and developmental outcomes. In addition, linkages among those key settings in a person’s life, such as linkages between school and family, peer group and family, or work and family also have unique effects on the developing individual. These recommendations received some much needed attention by researchers over the past two decades. For example, the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) Study of Early Child Care followed more than 1,300 children from their birth in 1991 to the present, marking the largest national undertaking ever to examine the effects of early child care on child development (NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 1997, 1998). A number of studies have begun to emerge examining the effects of after-school supervision, or lack thereof, on children’s risky behaviors and development. A large literature on peers as socializers in children’s lives has also emerged (Ladd, 2005) and provided insight into the role of friends, bullies, and group behavior as it influences children’s development. Interestingly, the question of how parents’ work hours, schedules, and experiences affect the time and nature of children’s experiences in these multiple other settings has received less attention.

Recommendations 7, 8, and 9 pointed to the critical role of fathers in children’s lives, a neglected topic up to that time in child development research. How does fathers’ parental role change as function of mothers’ employment? How does a father’s work hours and schedule taken alone, and in combination with mothers’ work, influence family life and child well-being? Bronfenbrenner and Crouter also pushed for more research on conditions of fathers’ employment, such as job absorption, complexity, and organization, as they influence the mother, family routines, and child outcomes. The literature on fathers and fathering burgeoned through the late 80s, 90s, and in the first decade of this century with an entire journal devoted to the topic of Fathering established in 2003. Research emerged that examined how fathers’ work status, job hours, and job conditions shaped family involvement and child outcomes (Crouter, Bumpus,

Head, & McHale, 2001; Repetti, 1993). One line of research with lower-income families and divorced or separated families suggests that often a precondition of fathers staying involved with their children was that he be employed and paying child support (Carlson & McLanahan, 2002; Johnson, Levine, & Doolittle, 1999). The link between economic providing and fathering has been a topic of empirical investigation and the research suggests that economic providing remains a key characteristic of fathering in our society, binding work and family roles differently for men than for women. The multiple roles literature has done much to illuminate how both mothers and fathers juggle the demands of spouse, parent, and worker but we know far less about how those negotiations differ as a function of “space,” social class, race, ethnicity, and “time,” meaning families with infants, toddlers, school-aged children, or adolescents. In addition, methodological advances have made it possible to examine dyadic, dependent processes between mothers and fathers and parents and children. Future research will greatly benefit from research efforts that capture the mutual influence that occurs within families and describes these processes over time (Helms, Walls, Crouter, & McHale, 2010; Perry-Jenkins et al., 2007).

Recommendation 10 addressed the issue of the bidirectionality of effects and challenged researchers to examine how family life and conditions can affect mothers’ role at work. As we have reviewed above, the work-family conflict area has probably been the one most focused on exploring work-to-family spillover and family-to-work spillover (Frone et al., 1992; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000). Not surprisingly, they have found some consistent gender effects whereby family-to-work spillover is more robust for women than men. Our research in this area has grown much more sophisticated with studies examining short-term bidirectional linkages between work and family and longer term linkages. In addition, researchers have looked at both men and women and explored gender differences in the nature of work and family spillover (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000). From a “time” and “space” perspective, many intriguing questions

remain to be examined. Do family-to-work and work-to-family spillover processes peak at certain times over the life course, such as when families are raising young children and/or caring for aging parents (Grzywacz, Almeida, & McDonald, 2002)? Do these processes differ for low-wage vs. high-wage workers? In what ways are there positive linkages between work and family life that have the potential to enhance both adult and child development?

The 11th recommendation challenged researchers to dig into the perplexing finding that maternal employment appears to have negative effects on one specific subgroup of children, namely middle-class, White boys. This finding emerged in a number of studies in the 1970s, however, during the 80s and 90s the result appeared to dissipate. Very recently, however, we saw again in research that White, middle-class boys seemed to be the most vulnerable to mothers’ work (Brooks-Gunn et al., 2002). Researchers are uniquely poised to address this question given recent efforts to explore how intersections of race, ethnicity, class, and family structure create unique contexts for development. Given the number of readily available national data sets it seems likely that some more definitive studies with representative samples could address this finding.

Recommendations 12, 13, and 14 all address, in some way, issues of social policy and the group or groups who may be in need of the greatest supports. Specifically, in recommendation 12, it is suggested that research needs to tease apart how the effects of mothers’ employment may differ in single-parent families, two-wage households, families where mothers work part time, and possibly a new and vulnerable minority in the United States—mothers who are not employed outside of the home. Of course, family structure is highly related to issues of social class, thus researchers face challenges determining whether it is family structure issues or depleted financial resources that may be affecting children’s developmental outcomes. With that said, a great deal of research has emerged from the mid-90s to present examining issues of family structure, race, ethnicity, and social class as they shape families’ experiences of both work and family (Chase-Lansdale et al.,

2003; Raver, 2003). Much of this research emerged in response to the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996 which placed a 5-year lifetime limit on receipt of government benefits for unemployed individuals and stricter sanctions for noncompliance. It is important to note that this legislation passed during a time marked with the steady erosion in the quality of jobs available to workers with less than a college degree. Unionized jobs that offer benefits, training, and security had been replaced with employment opportunities in the service and health care sectors which, at the lowest levels, offer few benefits, little security and variable, non-day work schedules (Wilson, 1997). Thus, this unique confluence of events in the 90s resulted in many young mothers with children being forced into some type of employment. One consequence of these events is that although the welfare rolls plummeted across the country, the “working poor,” a well-worn term in the media increased in alarming numbers. Chase-Lansdale et al. (2003) found few negative effects for mothers’ transition to employment for preschoolers and modest effects on teenagers. The question, however, of how conditions of low-wage work can have positive and negative effects on workers and their children is still in need of attention. Specifically we need to examine the potentially deleterious effects of mothers moving into low level, low-paying, routinized work with little support on children’s development. Thus, the questions raised by Bronfenbrenner and Crouter over 25 years ago about the needs of vulnerable families remain as important today.

The final recommendation posed by Bronfenbrenner and Crouter, which they argued at the time should be given the highest priority, is “research on the environmental stresses and supports experienced by working mothers and their families both within and outside the home and job” (Bronfenbrenner & Crouter, 1982, p. 75). They argued that research needed to identify key sources of stress and support in family and work settings and appropriate workplace policies and practices must be put in place to support these families. It is encouraging to be able to report, that in fact, efforts to explore the effects of various

workplace interventions on workers’ lives have begun as a result of an initiative funded through the NICHD to examine workplace policies and interventions as they influence the lives of workers and their children. It is interesting that these projects only got under way over the past 5 years, however, the very fact that the National Institutes of Health recognized the importance of studying workplace interventions and policies for working families is a remarkable milestone. Early reports from some of these intervention projects show promise in developing effective workplace interventions, while also documenting the complexity of modifying workplace cultures (Lambert, 2009; Moen, Kelly, & Chernak, 2009). As we await the final reports and papers from these projects, it is instructive to see what can be learned from the process prior to finding out the results.

Time and Space have changed quite a bit since Bronfenbrenner and Crouter published their agenda for work and family research in 1982. A number of new issues have emerged over these past three decades that have changed the work and family landscape in the United States. First, as we have already noted in this review, the US population is aging. The number of Americans 65 and older is expected to double over the next 20 years. At the same time, the health of older Americans is improving and they are engaged in the work force for more years than ever before. The aging of the US population has led to a new set of work-family issues that include the challenges facing working adults caring for elderly and ill parents, and employed workers caring for ill and aging spouses. Szinovacz and Davey (2008) highlight the complexity of issues that surround these topics, not the least of which focus on gender ideologies about who should provide care and cultural mandates about kinship obligations; all dimensions of family caregiving that are likely to conflict with workplace demands. If we extend this topic to include cultural contexts such as race, ethnicity, and class as they provide different meanings to caregiving for the elderly, we have an area ripe for new investigations.

In terms of new “spaces” within which the study of work and family must move, the issue of

immigration is critical. Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco (2001) highlight the fact that the United States is in the midst of the largest wave of immigration in our nation's history. In their longitudinal study of immigrant children these scholars highlight the ways in which forces outside of families, a key one being work, shape children's sense of identity in their new country. New research should explore work-family issues among immigrant workers and their families with special attention to "generational" time as it differentially affects parents' and children's views of and acculturation into their adopted country.

With an even broader view, most family scholars are aware of the rapidly shifting racial and ethnic demography in the United States. As of 2008, 66% of the population was non-Hispanic White, 15% Hispanic, 14% African-American, and 5% Asian American; by 2050 the U.S. Census Bureau projects the population will be 46% non-Hispanic whites, 30% Hispanic, 15% African-American, and 9% Asian (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). Thus, the cultural context of work and family life will be changing over the next half century and important questions as to how socio-cultural contexts shape the nature of work-family relations will need to be addressed.

Couple the changing racial and ethnic profile of the United States with the long running income inequality that persists (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008; Weinberg, 1996) and it is clear that the social and ecological niches that define the work and family lives of workers and their families are quite unique and variable. According to Bronfenbrenner, it is these unique sociocultural contexts that are likely to promote distinct types of work-family processes and relationships. Moreover, these processes may differ across the life course and affect parents and children differently as a function of developmental stage, age, and personal characteristics. It should not be surprising that the nature of these relationships that occur within contexts and over time are complex and dynamic and it will take combined efforts across disciplines and using multiple methods to develop the full story. As Bronfenbrenner and Crouter (1982) pointed out long ago, "The impact of parental work on family functioning and the

development of children cannot be understood without taking into account the larger context of which both work and family are a part." (p. 78), yet, at the same time they cautioned, "There is a danger that in our recognition of the broader contexts of human development we forget about the human beings themselves (p. 78)." An ecological perspective challenges work and family scholars to be acutely sensitive to issues of "time" and "space" as they provide meaning and context for arguably the two most important "human" pursuits of all: to work and to love.

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Jing Jian Xiao

Introduction

To survive and thrive in a highly commercialized modern world, adequate family economic resources are important for family well-being. As a Chinese saying described, “Money is not everything but no money is totally unacceptable.” This chapter reviews research relevant to family economic well-being. It first discusses the definition of economic well-being, and then examines research relevant to important indicators of family economic well-being, such as income, expenditure, debt, asset, and financial satisfaction. The final section concludes with summaries of major findings and suggestions for future research.

Definition of Family Economic Well-Being

In the literature of family economic issues, economic well-being, financial well-being, and material well-being are used in an interchangeable way (Joo, 2008). For the convenience of clarity, economic well-being is used in this chapter. Family economic well-being is defined here

as a family economic status that has sustainably adequate economic resources to live a comfortable life.

In the literature, economic well-being is traditionally measured by income but more recently has been measured by expenditure and wealth. In recent years, more economists have recognized the importance of subjective measures of economic well-being and the relationship between objective and subjective measures (Clark, Frijters, & Shields, 2008; Di Tella & MacCulloch, 2006; Frey & Stutzer, 2002; Kahneman & Krueger, 2006).

Economic well-being can be measured by numerous indicators. When Alex C. Michalos, a well-known researcher in the area of well-being studies, discussed the philosophical issues upon which social indicators are based, he suggested that these indicators can be measured in various dimensions such as objective vs. subjective, positive vs. negative, input vs. output related, etc. (Sirgy et al., 2006). Following his suggestion, indicators of economic well-being can be categorized in similar manners. Table 24.1 presents examples of indicators of economic well-being.

These examples are generated by two dimensions, objective vs. subjective and input vs. output. An objective measure is tangible and a subjective measure is intangible that is relevant to human perception. An input measure refers to a factor that is used as an entry for a system or process while an output measure refers to a factor that is the outcome of a system or process. Many of these indicators are continuously measured

J.J. Xiao, PhD (✉)
University of Rhode Island, Department of Human
Development and Family Studies Transition Center,
2 Lower College Road, Kingston, RI 02881, USA
e-mail: xiao@uri.edu

Table 24.1 Indicators of economic well-being

	Input	Output
Objective	Income	Expenditure
	Debt	Asset
	Economic behavior (earning, spending, borrowing, saving)	Bankruptcy
Subjective	Money attitude	Financial satisfaction
	Materialism	
	Consumer confidence	

and the two extreme ends represent desirable or undesirable aspect of the item. For example, for income, low is undesirable while high is desirable. For subjective measures such as materialism, a low score is good and a high score is bad. For categorical variables such as employment, having a job is good and losing a job is bad. Some indicators with multiple dimensions are less obvious to classify within either the positive or negative categories such as money attitude. For many of these indicators, only comparisons to others and comparisons to one self's past are meaningful (Clark et al., 2008). For example, comparing to last year, experiencing an increase in this year's income is good. Having one's income classified as below the poverty level, as defined by a country or an international organization, is not good. Defining a family as doing well economically means that economic indicators of this family are above the average of a particular population. In addition, indicators can be measured at an individual and collective level. For example, economic well-being can be measured individually by family income or collectively by income inequality of a country.

In a general sense, behaviors lead to outcomes (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980) and, as expected, positive economic behaviors contribute to economic well-being. Economic behavior can be defined as any human behavior that generates and manages economic resources to improve economic well-being. Common economic behaviors include earning, budgeting, spending, borrowing, and saving. Except for earning, the other behaviors refer to financial behaviors (Xiao, 2008) and, in recent years, certain financial behaviors are encouraged by public policy makers such as saving for retirement and taking control of consumer debts.

Several behavior science theories are applied for studying family economic behaviors. Included among these perspectives is the transtheoretical model of change (TTM) that focuses on behavior changes (Prochaska, DiClemente, & Norcross, 1992). Another is the theory of planned behavior that focuses on predicting and understanding human behaviors (Ajzen, 1991). These theories are applied to promote positive financial behaviors for improving family economic well-being. For example, TTM was applied in a consumer education program to encourage saving (Xiao, O'Neill, et al., 2004) and for debt reducing behavior among consumers with heavy debts (Xiao, Newman, et al., 2004). The theory of planned behavior was applied to debt repayment behavior in the context of credit counseling services (Guo, Xiao, & Tang, 2009; Xiao & Wu, 2008). Family economists recommended specific positive financial behaviors in areas of cash, credit, and saving management (e.g., Hilgert, Hogarth, & Beverly, 2003; O'Neill & Xiao, 2003). Positive financial behavior may help improve well-being within the economic domain of life, other life domains, and in an overall sense (Xiao, Sorhaindo, & Garman, 2006; Xiao, Tang, & Shim, 2009). In the following sections, we review research on family income, expenditure, debt, asset, and financial satisfaction.

Income

Income is the most commonly used indicator for economic well-being, though it can be defined in many different ways for different purposes. The US Census Bureau has been compiling income estimates since 1947 (Weinberg, Nelson, Roemer, & Welniak, 1999). Based on Annual Social and Economic Supplements (ASEC) to the Current Population Survey (CPS) conducted by the US Census Bureau, in 2009, median household income is \$49,777 (DeNavas-Walt, Proctor, & Smith, 2010).

Using the national median income as a norm, couple households fare better (median income \$71,830), whereas male headed households are close to the national median (\$48,084). Other

household types have lower than the national median: female headed households (\$32,597), female nonfamily households (\$25,269), and male nonfamily households (\$36,611). Racial and ethnic differences are found in household income. Asian and white households have above the national median income (\$65,469 and \$54,461, respectively) while Hispanic and black households have below the national median income (\$38,039 and \$32,584, respectively). Such patterns demonstrate persistence by having lasted for the last 40 years (1967–2009) (DeNavas-Walt et al., 2010, Figure 1).

Rich and not so rich families have different income sources evidenced by various levels of net worth. According to the 2007 Survey of Consumer Finance (SCF), income sources and average percentages of receiving them among families are wages (64.5%), business, farm, self-employment (13.6%), social security or retirement (9.6%), capital gains (6.7%), interests or dividends (3.7%), and transfers or other (1.9%). Families at the bottom 25% of net worth are most likely to receive wages (79.9%) and transfers or other income (8.6%). Families at the top 10% of net worth are most likely to receive income from business, farm, self-employment (24.7%), capital gains (14.4%), and interests or dividends (7.8%). Families at the middle level (25–90%) of net worth are more likely to receive incomes from social security or retirement incomes (10.9–14.1%) (Bucks, Kennickell, Mach, & Moore, 2009, Table 2).

Poverty

For a family, living in poverty is an indicator of economic ill-being. According to a US Census report, in 2009, the official poverty rate is 14.3% and 43.6 million people are in poverty. The poverty rate in 2009 is the highest since 2000. Female headed households are more likely to be in poverty than couple and male headed households (29.9% vs. 5.8 and 16.9%), with 4.4 million of these families being in poverty. Black and Hispanic Americans are more likely than white and Asian Americans to be in poverty (25.8 and 25.3% vs. 9.4 and 12.5%). Children under 18 are

more likely than adults and elders (65 or older) to be in poverty (20.7% vs. 12.9 and 8.9%) (DeNavas-Walt et al., 2010).

Not having health insurance is another indicator of economic ill-being. Based on a US Census report, in 2009, the percentage of Americans without health insurance is 16.7% or a total of 50.7 million Americans do not have health insurance. Hispanic, African, and Asian Americans are more likely than European Americans to be without health insurance (rates of lack of coverage are 32.4%, 21.0%, 17.2% vs. 12.0%, respectively). Rates of lack of coverage are higher than average among young and middle aged adults, age 18–24 (30.4%), 25–34 (29.1%), and 35–44 (21.7%). Lower-income Americans are more likely to be uninsured. Rates of lack of coverage for Americans with household incomes less than \$25,000 and \$25,000–\$49,999 are 26.6% and 21.4%, respectively, compared to those with household incomes \$50,000–\$74,999 and \$75,000 or higher for which the rates of no coverage are 16.0% and 9.1%, respectively (DeNavas-Walt et al., 2010). On March 23, 2010, President Obama signed the affordable care act into law. The law puts in place comprehensive health insurance reforms that will roll out over 4 years and beyond, with most changes taking place by 2014. This new law expects to provide health insurance coverage for more Americans who are currently uninsured (About the law, 2010).

Low-income families are facing a different set of financial issues compared to their higher-income counterparts, such as financial service access, asset accumulation, homeownership, credit use, and health insurance access (Garasky, Nielsen, & Fletcher, 2008; Xiao et al., 2010). Low-income individuals often reside in high-density, low-to-moderate income (LMI) communities that often display minority and ethnic enclave characteristics or geographical isolation characteristics (such as rural communities or tribal areas). Access to affordable financial products and services becomes a function of limited income (e.g., lack of auto ownership) along with geographical-spatial considerations (e.g., limited or nonexistent public transportation and geographical isolation). Such limitations create barriers to

conveniently accessing affordable financial services for LMI individuals and families. Payday lenders and check-cashing outlets tend to concentrate in high-density LMI communities (Graves, 2003; Immergluck, 2004; Praeger, 2009). In addition, LMI communities can be characterized as supplier-driven, cash-oriented economies and markets (Robles, 2007, 2009a).

Low-income individuals are more likely to be the unbanked (Berry, 2004; Washington, 2006). The bulk of the research on the unbanked has focused mainly on the recently arrived immigrant or immigrant legacy LMI individuals and families (Perry, 2008). As a result, there is a significant gap in our research knowledge into individuals who are “unbanked” due to poor credit and increasing dissatisfaction with banking experiences (Robles, 2009a). For recent immigrants, learning the host country’s culture and social system would help them in effective consumer decision making (Ogden, Ogden, & Schau, 2004). In addition, new research is exploring how recently arrived immigrants assimilate into host communities in the unit of “communities” instead of “individuals” (Hatton & Leigh, 2009). We know that in high-density immigrant and immigrant legacy communities, saving behaviors occur outside of mainstream financial institutions and often in an extended family or communal context (Chang, 2010; Chung-Hevener, 2006; Robles, 2007, 2009a). Research indicates that the unbanked often seek out businesses that engage in predatory practices and charge excessive fees and prices (Rhine, Greene, & Toussaint-Comeau, 2006).

Started in the 1990s, the antipoverty policy was implemented to help low-income individuals and households build assets or wealth (Blank, 2002). Lifting welfare eligibility limits on the value of a vehicle resulted in the greater likelihood that low-income individuals and families could own a car (Sullivan, 2006). Automobile ownership is important because it provides access to employment opportunities (Garasky, Fletcher, & Jensen, 2006) and affordable financial services that are rarely located in inner cities or LMI communities (Graves, 2003; Praeger, 2009). Partially under the rubric of asset building, government has intensified efforts to promote low-income

homeownership in the early to mid-2000s prior to the housing crisis (Belsky, Retsinas, & Duda, 2005). However, the targeting of subprime financial products in LMI communities—and specifically, communities of color—has exacerbated the wealth divide and created uncertainty surrounding future nuclear family homeownership opportunities. The continuing high national unemployment rate has contributed to a return to 1930s-style intergenerational households with adult children moving in with elder parents in order to protect assets and minimize depletion of savings (PEW Research Center, 2010). Recent lump-sum tax refund research indicates that LMI families do display future-oriented financial behaviors and asset building resiliency focused on children’s educational expenditures and family communal mobility aspirations (Garcia, 2009; Robles, 2009b).

Sherraden (1991) has proposed an institutional saving theory that promotes individual development accounts (IDA) to help low-income consumers save. More than 40 states have initiated some type of IDA policy (Greenberg & Patel, 2006). Longitudinal research suggests that IDA participants have significant variations in saving patterns (Han & Sherraden, 2009). Research also indicates that experiential knowledge contributes to cognitive ease and familiarity with financial services and products even for limited income individuals and households (Tescher, Sawady, & Kutner, 2007).

Earning Behavior

Bowles, Gintis, and Osborne (2001) conducted a literature review on determinants of earning and found several puzzles: (1) individuals with similar characteristics receive quite different earnings; (2) advantages of children of successful parents receive benefits besides superior education, the inheritance of wealth, or the genetic inheritance of cognitive ability; and (3) seemingly irrelevant personal characteristics, including beauty, height, obesity, and even whether one keeps a clean house, are often robust predictors of earnings.

Bowles et al. (2001) also review several conceptual models that explain the determinants of earning. Three models reviewed are labeled with names of three famous economists. A Walrasian model considers that services provided by an employee to the production process is an exogenously determined attribute of the worker. Productively identical individuals will receive the same wage in all employments. The behavioral characteristics of the parties to an exchange may be ignored. A Schumpeterian model contends that, at any given moment, factor payments typically include what may be termed “disequilibrium rents.” These rents are attributed to technical change, product innovation, changes in business organization, and other shocks. People differ in their ability to identify and capture these rents, and the personal dispositions and capacities contributing to success in this may correspond only weakly to productive skills. A Coasean model identifies that individual traits may be relevant to attenuating the incentive problems when labor effort is endogenous. These *incentive-enhancing preferences* may bear a competitive return even if they do not contribute directly to production. After reviewing these conceptual models, Bowles et al. then provide their own model, the model of incentive enhancing preferences. Three examples of incentive enhancing preferences include time preference, sense of self-efficacy, and increase of marginal utility of income. A study using the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID) suggests robust effects of incentive enhancing preferences (Duncan & Dunifon, 1998). They study adult males whose motivational and behavioral traits measured 15–25 years prior to the observations of their current earnings. The motivational traits measured are preference for challenge over affiliation, fear of failure, sense of personal efficacy, and degree of trust. Behavioral measures include church attendance, participation in social clubs, television viewing, newspaper reading, and an interviewer’s assessment of the cleanliness of the respondent’s home. These variables, along with a cognitive test score, a measure of years of schooling completed, and an unusually rich set of other controls are then used to predict the average of

the log of hourly wages between 1988 and 1992. Another study using the National Longitudinal Survey of Young Women (NLSYW) and the National Child Development Study (NCDS) finds behavioral traits to have a significant influence on the earnings of women, controlling for standard human capital variables (Osborne, 2000). Reasoning and evidence suggests that incentive-enhancing preferences and other earnings-relevant behavioral traits may be influenced by schooling, and may explain some of the economic returns to schooling, as well as other individual differences in earnings (Bowles et al., 2001).

Bowles et al. (2001) suggest that while both cognitive functioning and schooling are important determinants of earnings, the economic return of schooling is not accounted for primarily by its contribution to enhanced cognitive scores. Instead, differences in cognitive scores account for very little of the residual earnings variance and these data provide no support for the hypothesis that the effect of cognitive scores on earnings increased secularly over the four decades covered by their estimates. However, schooling types may make differences in human capital investment. In the last four decades, average colleges in the United States are less selective but students who attend more selective colleges receive higher return on the investment (Hoxby, 2009).

Income Inequality

Income inequality can be considered an indicator of economic ill-being at a collective level. From a family perspective, research on income inequality may provide implications for directions that can be used to improve the economic well-being of individual families. Consistent with this perspective, family advocates are concerned about trends of income inequality to lobby for pro-family public policies. The Census Bureau has traditionally used two methods to measure income inequality—the shares of aggregate household income received by quintiles and the Gini index. In 2009, the top quintile of households receive 50.3% of total income in which top 5% receive 21.7% of total income, while lowest quintile of

households receive 3.4%. The Gini index is 0.468 (0 refers to perfect equality and 1 refers to perfect inequality) (DeNavas-Walt et al., 2010).

Gottschalk and Danziger (2005) analyze distributional changes over the last quarter of the twentieth century. Both male wage rate inequality and family income inequality has accelerated during the early 1980s, increased at a slower rate through the early 1990s and then stabilized at a high level through the early 2000s. The similarity in the timing of changes in these two distributions has been used as evidence that increased family income inequality primarily reflects increased inequality of wage rates.

Wolff and Zacharias (2009) analyze the level and distribution of economic well-being in the United States during the 1980s and 1990s based on the standard measure of money income and a measure of imputed income. Over the 1982–2000 period, median well-being increases faster when these adjustments are made than when standard money income is used. This adjustment also widens the income gap between African-Americans and whites but increases the relative well-being of the elderly. Adding imputed rent and annuities from household wealth to household income considerably increases measured inequality and the share of income from wealth in inequality. However, both measures show about the same rise in inequality over the period.

A research review on income inequality concludes that inequality in wages, earnings, and total family incomes in the United States has increased markedly since 1980, with some trends beginning as early as the late 1960s. The level of inequality today, for both market income and disposable income, is greater than at any point in the past 40 years or longer and may be as high as in the late 1910s or 1920s (McCall & Percheskie, 2010).

Bourguignon and Morrisson (2002) investigate the distribution of well-being among world citizens during the last two centuries. The estimates show that inequality of world distribution of income worsened from the beginning of the nineteenth century to World War II and after that seems to have stabilized or to have grown more slowly. In the early nineteenth century most inequality was due to differences within countries;

later, it was due to differences between countries. Anand and Segal (2008) review key studies on global interpersonal inequality and conclude that there is no change in global interpersonal inequality over 1970–2000.

Determinants of Income Inequality

A recent review on income inequality concludes that rising income inequality from the mid-1990s to the present was characterized by rapid income growth among top earners and new patterns of employment and income pooling across families and households. Research on economic inequality has expanded from a more narrow focus on wage inequalities and labor markets to other domains including incentive pay, corporate governance, income pooling and family formation, social and economic policy, and political institutions (McCall & Percheskie, 2010).

Income instability, work skill, and occupation may affect income inequality. Based on data from PSID, Gottschalk and Moffitt (2009) find that income instability should be considered as a major cause for income inequality. According to their research, income instability has been increased in the last 25 years. Gottschalk (1997) concludes that the increase in inequality reflects an absolute as well as a relative decline in the earnings of less skilled workers. In fact, the decline in wages for less skilled workers canceled out the impact of the rising wages for more skilled workers, so little or no change in mean wages has occurred. Kim and Sakamoto (2008) examine the rise of intra-occupational wage inequality in the United States in 1983–2002 with data from the CPS. They find that the direct association between occupations and wage inequality declined over this period as within-occupational inequality grew faster than between-occupational inequality.

Technology may cause income inequality. Acemoglu (2002) examines associations between technology change and income inequality. He concludes that the behavior of wages and returns to schooling in the United States indicates that technical change has been skill-biased during the past 60 years, and probably for most of the twentieth century. DiMaggio and Bonikowski (2008) study the impact of internet use on the earnings

of US workers with data from the CPS. Their analyses reveal robustly significant positive associations between web use and earnings growth, indicating that some skills and behaviors associated with Internet use are rewarded by the labor market. Analyzing data from the CPS for 1963–2005, Autor, Katz, and Kearney (2008) analyze trends of overall, upper-tail and lower-tail inequality. Overall, the growth of overall wage inequality in the 1990s is slowing down. However, two different paths existed. Upper-tail inequality existing between 90 and 50 percentile increased steadily since 1980 even adjusting for changes in labor force composition, while lower-tail inequality existing between 50 and 10 percentile rose sharply in the first half of the 1980s and plateaued or contracted thereafter. These patterns are potentially reconciled by a modified version of the skill-biased technical change hypothesis that emphasizes the role of information technology in complementing abstract tasks required by higher education and substituting for routine tasks required by lower education.

Income inequality may be resulted from family demographic and structure changes. Western, Percheski, and Bloome (2008) examine inequality among American families with children. From 1975 to 2005, the variance in incomes of American families with children increased by two-thirds. Their analyses show that disparities in education and single parenthood contribute to income inequality, but rising educational attainment and women's employment offset these effects. Most of the increase in family income inequality is due to increasing within-group inequality, which is widely shared across family types and levels of schooling. A study documents the trends of family structure and income inequality during 1976–2000 and argues that single mother families are always at the bottom of the income distribution that contributes to their greater income inequality within the group (Martin, 2006). Beenstock (2008) uses matched data for parents and siblings in Israel to decompose the sibling correlation in schooling and earnings. The findings indicate that sibling interaction plays a more important role than child–parent interaction to explain sibling correlation in schooling and earning. Sibling size

is negatively associated with schooling and earning. To reduce inequality, decreasing sibling size is one possible way.

Intergenerational Transfer

Factors that affect intergenerational inequality are in several dimensions (Bowles & Gintis, 2002). Intergenerational transfer is relevant to redistribution economic policies. Early research on the statistical relationship between parents' and their children's economic status after becoming adults found only a weak connection and thus seemed to confirm that the United States was indeed the "land of opportunity." But more recent research shows that the estimates of high levels of intergenerational mobility are artifacts of two types of measurement errors: mistakes in reporting income, particularly when individuals are asked to recall the income of their parents, and transitory components in current income uncorrelated with underlying permanent income. When corrected, the intergenerational correlations for economic status appear to be substantial, many of them three times the average of the US studies surveyed by Becker and Tomes (1986). On the basis of these and other empirical regularities, it seems safe to conclude that the intergenerational transmission of economic status is accounted for by a heterogeneous collection of mechanisms, including the genetic and cultural transmission of cognitive skills and noncognitive personality traits in demand by employers, the inheritance of wealth and income-enhancing group memberships, such as race, and the superior education and health status enjoyed by the children of higher status families. They find that the combined inheritance processes operating through superior cognitive performance and educational attainments of those with well-off parents, while important, explain at most three-fifths of the intergenerational transmission of economic status. Moreover, while genetic transmission of earnings-enhancing traits appears to play a role, the genetic transmission of IQ appears to be relatively unimportant. Most economic models treat one's income as the sum of the returns to the factors

of production one brings to the market, like skills, or capital goods. But *any* individual trait that affects income and for which parent–offspring similarity is strong will contribute to the intergenerational transmission of economic success, which are race, geographical location, height, beauty or other aspects of physical appearance, health status, and personality (Bowles & Gintis, 2002).

Grawe and Mulligan (2002) present a simple model of investment and intergenerational decision making that can be interpreted as a conceptual aggregation of many more detailed economic models. From it they derive one class of predictions about the role of endowments and credit markets in determining intergenerational correlations. The theory asserts that intergenerational earnings mobility is determined by the transmission of ability. Parents can transfer consumption between generations and among siblings using bequests. When credit constraints are considered, middle-earning families may be most susceptible to credit constraints; earnings mobility then would be least prevalent among families in the middle of the parent earnings distribution.

Erikson and Goldthorpe (2002) discuss a sociological approach to intergenerational transfer. When economists are concerned with the inheritance of inequality, they typically focus on the intergenerational transmission of income or wealth. In contrast, sociologists are more likely to analyze intergenerational mobility between (and immobility in) different class positions. Sociologists' results relating to the mobility regimes that operate within class structures are more complex, since it is supposed that the association between class origins and destinations may vary in strength across the component cells of the mobility table—that is, from one intergenerational transition to another. This supposition turns out in fact to be fully warranted, so what is lost in parsimony is gained in realism. Although somewhat simplified, the main findings from recent sociological research could be summarized as follows: (1) in all modern societies, significant associations between class of origin and class of destination prevail; (2) there is a general propensity for intergenerational class immo-

bility through the operation of class-specific inheritance effects; (3) within particular societies, mobility regimes show a high degree of constancy over time; (4) educational attainment is a major—probably *the* major—mediating factor in class mobility; (5) modern societies are not meritocracies in the sense that, once educational qualifications and other “merit” variables are controlled, class of destination is no longer dependent on class of origin; and (6) the mediating role of education varies significantly in its importance from one type of intergenerational transition to another.

Solon (2002) discusses issues of intergenerational transfer measurements and international comparisons. Based on his review, most US studies that have used multiyear measures of father's earnings and have measured son's earnings after his first few years in the labor market have estimated the intergenerational earnings elasticity at about 0.4 or higher. After comparing international studies on this topic, he concludes that the United States and the United Kingdom appear to be less mobile societies than are Canada, Finland, and Sweden. By making more efficient use of the available information in the PSID, Lee and Solon (2009) generate more reliable estimates of the recent time series variation in intergenerational mobility. Their results, which pertain to the cohorts born between 1952 and 1975, do not reveal major changes in intergenerational mobility.

Expenditure

Expenditure is considered a better measure of consumption than income. In recent years, expenditures are used to indicate family economic well-being. According to the Consumer Expenditure Survey, in 2009, the average annual expenditure is \$49,067, decreased 2.8% from the previous year (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010). Major expenditure categories are housing (34.4% of total annual expenditure), transportation (15.6%), food (13.0%), and pension and social security (11.2%) (author calculation based on raw data provided by US Bureau of Labor Statistics).

The influential life cycle model in economics suggests that consumers would smooth life cycle consumption by borrowing and saving (Ando & Modigliani, 1963; Modigliani, 1986). This theory suggests that the consumption pattern over the life cycle should be fairly flat. Fernández-Villaverde and Krueger (2007) use Consumer Expenditure Survey data and a semiparametric statistical model to estimate life cycle profiles of consumption, controlling for demographics, cohort, and time effects. They find statistically significant, reverse U-shape patterns (humps) over the life cycle for total, nondurable, and durable expenditures. Changes in household size account for roughly half of these humps. The other half remains to be explained by factors not present in the standard complete markets life cycle model of consumption. If the ratio of peak consumption to consumption at age 22 is calculated, the ratio before demographic adjustment is roughly 1.6 and 1.3 thereafter. This finding is inconsistent with the basic version of the life cycle model.

Except for expenditure levels, it is not straightforward to link expenditure categories to economic well-being directly. Paulin (2008) examines both demographic and spending patterns changes for young, never-married adults from 1984–1985 to 2004–2005. For example, young singles experienced a decrease in real total outlays from 1984–1985 to 2004–2005, while other singles experienced an increase during that time. However, young singles today allocate larger shares of total outlays to food away from home and to travel, and smaller shares to food at home and to housing. He concludes that whether these changes indicate an increase or decrease in economic status is unclear.

Advances in technology may drive social norms of expenditures. For example, Creech (2008) examines cellular phone service and residential telephone services pending patterns for all consumer units and by age group from 2001 through 2006. The results show that cellular phone expenditures increased, while residential telephone service expenditures decreased, over that period. Wider availability and price packages that are comparable to residential telephone packages have been the main sources of this increase.

Also, cellular phone expenditures are now the majority of total telephone expenditures in three younger groups (under 25, 25–34, 35–44) of the six age groups.

Expenditures differ in family types. Using data from the Consumer Expenditure Survey, researchers find that cohabiting-parent families, compared to married-parent families, spend a greater amount on two adult goods (alcohol and tobacco) and a smaller amount on education. Cohabiting-parent families also differ in their spending patterns from divorced single-parent families and from never-married single-parent families (DeLeire & Kalil, 2005). Families with a nonbiological mother (a step-, adoptive, or foster mother) spend less on food than other two-parent families (Case, Lin, & McLanahan, 2000). Similar patterns are found for health investments (Case & Paxson, 2001). Single mothers are much more likely to purchase apparel and services for children than are single fathers (Paulin & Lee, 2002). Single-parent families spend a significantly smaller share of their budgets than do married-parent families on children's education expenses. Conversely, single-parent families spend significantly more on tobacco and alcohol products, as well as food consumed away from home, compared to married-parent families (Ziol-Guest, Kalil, & DeLeire, 2004).

Housing Expenditure

Housing is the single largest expenditure item in the budgets of most families and individuals. The average household devotes roughly one quarter of income to housing expenditures, while poor and near-poor households commonly devote half of their incomes to housing (Quigley & Raphael, 2004).

Microdata over the life cycle show different patterns for consumption for housing and non-housing goods: The consumption profile of non-housing goods is hump-shaped, while the consumption profile for housing first increases monotonically and then flattens out. These patterns hold true at each consumption quartile (Yang, 2009).

Racial/ethnic differences in housing expenditures are examined by Vendemia (2008). The amount households spend on housing varied depending on race or Hispanic origin. However, minorities spend a larger share of total expenditures on housing than do White households. When looking at consumer units that are homeowners only, the estimated market value of owned home as income, location of homes, family size, and age of reference person as possible major contributors to these differences. Renter households apportion the same share of total expenditures to housing as homeowners do. Renters spend, on average, about two thirds of their total housing expenditures on rent. Proportionately more Black and Hispanic households are renters, compared with Asian and White consumer units. Overall, data show that Black and Asian renters seem to have different spending patterns for housing, whereas shares spent by Hispanic and White consumer units among housing subcomponents are similar.

To examine whether or not there are housing market bubbles, Himmelberg, Mayer, and Sinai (2005) develop a formula to calculate annual cost of home ownership. The annual cost includes foregone interests if renting instead of owning is used, property taxes, maintenance costs, and risk premium, while minus mortgage interests and property related tax benefits and capital gains. Under certain assumptions, the predicted user cost is 5.0%, that is, for every dollar of price, the owner pays 5 cents/year in cost. Leaving aside other differences between renting and owning, people should be willing to pay up to 20 times (1/0.05) the market rent to purchase a house. Hence, for example, a two-bedroom apartment that rents for \$1,000 per month (\$12,000 per year) should sell for up to \$240,000.

For the two-thirds of US households who own homes, there is little evidence that housing has become less affordable in recent years. For the one-third of US households who are renters, the proportion of income that the median renter devotes to housing has increased only modestly. However, pronounced increases in the typical rental burdens for poor and near-poor households are found (Quigley & Raphael, 2004).

For the majority of American households—including more than two-thirds of those in the top three income quintiles—housing “affordability” refers to the terms on which dwellings can be purchased and loans to purchase these assets can be amortized. In contrast, for households of lower incomes, for the poor, for minority households, and for many young households, “affordability” refers to the terms for rental contracts and the relationship between these rents and their low incomes. For the owner-occupied sector, lack of affordability is a problem for younger households. Here, modest changes in institutional arrangements could greatly affect the affordability of home ownership, especially for young households whose incomes will increase over the life cycle. For low-income renters, more aggressive policy is needed. Rental housing can be made affordable to low-income households through policies that increase housing supply or those that augment the purchasing power of poor households (Quigley & Raphael, 2004).

Transportation Expenditure

Transportation expenditures is the second largest category for American families. The life cycle transportation expenditures differ in cohort and age. Research on age, period, and cohort effects on household transportation expenditure ratios in the United States and Japan indicates that (1) among a total of three effects, the period effect is the smallest; (2) with the exception of the latest birth cohort, the cohort effect shows a clear upward trend; (3) the age effect decreases in the 20s and 30s, and next increases with a peak detected in the late 50s, and finally decreases (Fukuda, 2010).

A study provides a comprehensive assessment of how household consumption patterns (including savings) would be impacted by increases in fuel prices or any other household expense. Using data from the 2002 Consumer Expenditure Survey, results show that households adjust their food consumption, vehicular purchases, and savings rates in the short run. In the long term,

adjustments are also made to housing expenses (Ferdous, Pinjari, Bhat, & Pendyala, 2010).

Another study models vehicle-fuel expenditure allocation in multi-vehicle households based on the Almost Ideal Demand System (AIDS). The AIDS model is estimated using data from surveys conducted by the Energy Information Administration in 1988, 1991 and 1994, augmented with a comprehensive set of household and vehicle characteristics for households owning 1–4 vehicles ordered by vehicle age. Results show that vehicle characteristics are the most significant factors in the expenditure allocation process. Own-price elasticities for all vehicles are close to 1 that suggests vehicle expenditures change at almost the same rate as the price change rate (Oladosu, 2003).

Food Expenditure

The third largest expenditure category is food. Food expenditures have different implications for different income groups. Using the US Bureau of Labor Statistics' 1992 Consumer Expenditure Survey and Detailed Monthly Consumer Price Indices, a study obtains expenditure elasticities (ratio of percentage change of food demand quantity to percentage change of food expenditure), own-price elasticities (ratio of percentage change of food demand quantity to percentage change of food price) and subsistence quantities (minimum or committed quantities) for each income group across nine broadly aggregated food commodity groups. Elasticity estimates and subsistence quantity estimates differ across income groups, supporting the premise that policies targeted at specific income groups should be based on the target group's elasticity estimates rather than average population elasticities (Raper, Wanzala, & Nayaga, 2002).

Family type differences are found in food expenditures. Using the Consumer Expenditure Survey Diary Component (1990–2003), researchers find that single parents, compared to married parents, allocate a greater share of their food budget to alcohol and food purchased away from

home. Conversely, they spend a smaller share of their food budget on vegetables and fruits. Compared to married parents, single fathers spend a greater share on alcohol and food purchased away from home and a lesser share on vegetables, fruits, meat and beans, desserts and snacks, and prepared foods. Single mothers, compared to married parents, spend a greater share on grains and nonalcoholic beverages and a lesser share on vegetables and alcohol. Single mothers and fathers differ from each other in almost all categories of food and beverage expenditure (Ziol-Guest, DeLeire, & Kalil, 2006).

Food expenditures also differ in age cohorts. Data from 23 years of the US Consumer Expenditure Survey (1982–2004) are analyzed to investigate cohort effects on food away-from-home (FAFH) expenditures using the age, period, and cohort (APC) model. Analyses reveal that later-born cohorts spend more on FAFH, both in dollar amount and in food budget share, compared with earlier-born cohorts. Significant cohort differences in FAFH remain after additional sociodemographic and economic variables are controlled (Zan & Fan, 2010).

Ethnic differences in food expenditures also are found. In 2009, on average, US households devoted approximately 13% of their income to total food expenditures, 7.6% of household income was devoted to food eaten at home (FAH), and 5.3% to food eaten away from home (FAFH) (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010). Hispanic households allocate significantly more of their budget to FAH and significantly less to food consumed away from home among other differences, compared to non-Hispanic white households (Fan & Zuiker, 1998). Hispanic households devote a higher proportion of their budget to FAH (25.8%) than the average American household, while the Hispanic proportion spent on FAFH is only 3.6% (Lanfranco, Ames, & Huang, 2002). Research suggests that there are statistically significant differences in budget allocations between Hispanic Americans and African Americans. Hispanic households allocate a larger proportion of their budget to both food consumed at home and food consumed away from home than African

Americans, at any level of total expenditure, but less than non-Hispanic Caucasians. On average, the difference in budget share for FAFH is about 15% between African Americans and Hispanics (Fan & Lewis, 1999).

FAFH may have negative associations with health. Using state-level data from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, evidence suggests that food-away-from-home expenditures are positively related to obesity, while food-at-home expenditures are negatively related to obesity. However, the magnitudes of these effects, while statistically significant, are relatively small (Cai, Alviola, Nayga, & Wu, 2008). Findings from a recent study examining the impact of household fast food expenditures and children's television viewing on children's dietary quality indicate that both factors have statistically significant negative effects (You & Nayga, 2005).

Health Care Expenditure

Health care expenditure is not a major expenditure category for American consumers but has increased rapidly in recent years. In 2009, health care expenditure share is 6.4% for the general population in the United States, increased 5% from 2009 after an increase of 4.3% in 2007–2008 (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010).

Health care expenditures are highly concentrated in the United States, with 5% of the population accounting for the majority of health expenditures (Berk & Monheit, 2001). This concentration has proved remarkably stable over time; however, the degree of concentration has declined over the past decade. Using data from the 1996 to 2003 Medical Expenditure Panel Survey (MEPS), researchers find that rapid growth in prescription drug spending, which is diffused over a large fraction of the population, vs. slower growth in spending for inpatient care largely accounts for the recent change in concentration (Zuvekas & Cohen, 2007). Wang (2009) examines the degree of convergence in per capita health care expenditure and its nine components across the US states from 1980 to 2004. This research provides moderate evidence of conver-

gence in total health care expenditures and the diverse performance of expenditure components regarding convergence. Also hospital care is responsible for the bulk of cross-state convergence in total expenditure, whereas, the expenditure on prescription drugs is the most important diverging factor.

Age differences are obvious. The expenditure share rises from 2.3% in the under 25 group to 7.0% in the 55–64 age group, while the share for 65 or older group is 12.5% in 2008 (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009). Duetsch (2008) compares health care expenditures between the 55–64-year-old and 65–74-year-old groups. For both age groups, the share of average annual expenditures allocated to health care expenditures rose over both decades. The increase in the share of health care expenditures allocated to health insurance from 1985 to 2005 mirrors a decrease in health care expenditures allocated to medical services over the period for both groups. Consumption of health care increases with age, with the 65–74 year-olds spending more overall on total health care in both decades. They also spend more on health insurance and drugs than the 55–64-year-old group in each of the survey years, while spending less overall on medical services and about the same on medical supplies.

Out-of-pocket health care expenditure patterns of households and the financial costs over the stages of the household life cycle are examined using the 1995 Consumer Expenditure Survey. The elderly households not only spend more for health care, but they also experience higher financial burdens than other households (Hong & Kim, 2000). Using data from the Consumer Expenditure Surveys 1980–2000, prewidowhood shifts in medical and funeral/burial expenditures and how these changes may affect postwidowhood economic well-being are researched. Results suggest that funeral/burial and medical expenditures, when combined, typically constitute a 63.1% income share for recently widowed households (Fan & Zick, 2004).

Health care expenditures differ across races/ethnicities and immigration status. Wee et al. (2005) estimate health care expenditures associated with

overweight and obesity and examine the influence of age, race, and gender with data from 1998 MEPS. The result shows that health care costs associated with overweight and obesity are substantial and vary according to race and age. Cook and Manning (2009) examine whether black-white and Hispanic-white disparities are evident in total health care expenditure. Black-white and Hispanic-white disparities diminish in the upper quartiles of expenditure, but expenditures by blacks and Hispanics remain significantly lower than by whites throughout the distribution. Blacks and Hispanics receive significantly disparate care at high expenditure levels, suggesting prioritization of improved access to quality care among minorities with critical health issues. Mohanty et al. (2005) compare the health care expenditures of immigrants residing in the United States with health care expenditures of US-born persons. The results show that per capita total health care expenditures of immigrants are 55% lower than those of US-born persons. Similarly, expenditures for uninsured and publicly insured immigrants are approximately half those of their US-born counterparts. Immigrant children have 74% lower per capita health care expenditures than US-born children. However, emergency department expenditures are more than three times higher for immigrant children than for US-born children. Overall, however, health care expenditures are substantially lower for immigrants than for US-born persons (Mohanty et al.). This study refutes the assumption that immigrants represent a disproportionate financial burden on the US health care system.

Health care costs are major concerns of policy makers, health care providers, insurers, and consumers (Sharpe, 2008). The high costs are particularly evident in two aspects of health care expenditures: aggregate health care expenditures tripled in the last five decades, rising from 5.2% of GDP in 1960 to over 16% in 2007 (Gruber & Levy, 2009). Another concern is that health care share of GDP in the USA is much higher than other developed countries (Sharpe, 2008). Detailed analyses reveal that this rise has virtually all been absorbed by increased insurance, with little increase in out-of-pocket exposure for

individuals. While individuals paid almost 70% of their medical costs out-of-pocket in 1960, that share has fallen to 26% today. Increased spending on health has instead manifested itself primarily in rising insurance spending, particularly for the public sector. Even as health care costs have been rapidly rising, private insurance has remained almost as generous as before, while public insurance has gotten much more generous. The generosity is expressed in three aspects. First, health insurance has shifted from fee-to-service contracts to other cost control approaches such as health maintenance organizations (HMO) that require minimal payment for using medical services. Second, portability of employer-sponsored required by law has decreased health insurance costs of those who are between jobs. Third, because of state and Federal mandates, private insurance includes benefits such as substance use and maternity costs. Public insurance programs mainly cover vulnerable families as illustrated by the fact that almost 40% of children from lower-education families had public coverage in 2007, or nearly twice the fraction that had it in 1989. A second implicit insurance mechanism is the provision of subsidized or free care by medical providers, also known as uncompensated care. Finally, bankruptcy offers a kind of last-ditch insurance for households, both uninsured and insured ones, with medical bills that they are unable to pay.

These patterns are consistent with the overall decline in the share of health spending borne by households as out-of-pocket medical spending and the general rise in risk-bearing by the public sector (Gruber & Levy, 2009). Shin and Moon (2007) examine the cost containment performance of HMO plans relative to non-HMOs using data from the 2000 MEPS. When various compounding factors are controlled, among the privately insured, nonelderly population, HMO enrollment is found to contain neither total health care spending nor total insurance payment, though it reduces total out-of-pocket expenditure. The favorable cost sharing for enrollees and the distinct reimbursement schemes in HMO plans seem to account for no significant overall cost saving.

To ensure health care coverage to most of the population, a series of public policies are enacted for this purpose. In the 1960s, for example, these concerns helped lead to the establishment of Medicare for the elderly and Medicaid for the poor. In more recent decades, similar concerns have led to the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1986, commonly known as COBRA, which provides displaced workers continued access to employer-sponsored health insurance. Other results are the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA), which limits the restrictions that can be placed on insurance coverage when workers change jobs and the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) program, which provides subsidized health insurance coverage for low-income children. Yet another policy change is Medicare Part D, the single largest expansion of Medicare benefits since the program's inception, which has provided drug coverage for senior citizens since 2006 (Gruber & Levy, 2009). The Congressional Budget Office estimates that under the new health care reform law, 94% of legal residents will have health coverage, up from 83% in 2010 (Regnier, 2010). The new law covers any Americans who get health benefits through work, buy insurance themselves, are on Medicare, or don't currently have insurance. It makes insurance more affordable right away by providing small businesses with a tax credit to provide coverage, and in 2014, by providing tax credits to those who need help in buying insurance. The Affordable Care Act is projected to reduce premium costs for millions of families and small business owners who are priced out of coverage today. This could help as many as 32 million Americans who have no health care today receive coverage (About the law, 2010).

Spending Behavior

To understand consumption behavior, economists have developed several theoretical models. One of the recent and influential is a hyperbolic consumption model (Angeletos, Laibson, Repetto, Tobacman, & Weinberg, 2001; Laibson, 1997).

This conceptual model integrates a standard economic theory of life-cycle planning with a psychological model of self-control. This integrated model provides a parsimonious formal framework in which to evaluate the quantitative effects of self-control problems. This conceptual modeling framework is built on three principles. First, the model adopts the standard assumptions of modern consumption models, including the ideas that consumers have uncertain future labor income and face liquidity constraints in the sense that they have limited ability to borrow against this future labor income. Second, the model extends the consumption literature by allowing simulated consumers to borrow on credit cards and by including a partially illiquid asset in the consumers' menu of investment options. Third, the model assumes that consumers have both a short-run preference for instantaneous gratification and a long-run preference to act patiently.

The hyperbolic discounting model generates numerous empirical predictions that distinguish the model from the standard model with exponential discounting. First, households with hyperbolic discount functions will hold their wealth in an illiquid form, since such illiquid assets are protected from consumption splurges. Second, households with hyperbolic discount functions are very likely to borrow on their credit cards to fund instant gratification. Thus, households with hyperbolic discount functions are likely to have a high level of revolving debt, despite the high cost of credit card borrowing. Third, since hyperbolic households have little liquid wealth, they are unable to smooth consumption, generating a high level of comovement between income and consumption. Indeed, hyperbolic households will even exhibit a high level of comovement between predictable changes in income and changes in consumption. Fourth, this comovement between income and consumption will stand out around retirement, when labor income falls and the lack of liquid wealth generates a necessary fall in consumption (Angeletos et al., 2001).

Smart spending behavior improves economic well-being. A study by Griffith, Leibtag, Leicester, and Nevo (2009) documents the potential and actual savings that consumers realize from four

particular types of purchasing behavior: purchasing on sale, buying in bulk (at a lower per unit price), buying generic brands, and choosing outlets. Researchers use data collected by a marketing firm on all food purchases brought into the home for a large, nationally representative sample of UK households in 2006. The results show that households save between 0 and 21% of their annual expenditures, with a mean of 6.5%. This translates into a saving of up to £794 a year (in the mid-2006, £1=US\$1.85) (Todd, 2010), with an average of £96 per year. The average household saves 16% of its annual expenditure from buying the largest package sizes, which translates into savings of £224 per year. Households save on average 2% of their annual expenditure by buying store economy brands, with households who buy standard store brands saving on average 3.7%. This translates into an average saving of £25 for economy own brands and £50 for standard own brands on average (Griffith et al., 2009).

Consumer Confidence

Consumer perception about economy is measured by consumer confidence. Consumer confidence is usually used to predict future consumption of consumers. The University of Michigan's Consumer Sentiment Index and the Conference Board's Consumer Confidence Index are the most widely followed measures of US consumer confidence. The Michigan index began as an annual survey in the late 1940s. In 1952, it was converted to a quarterly survey and in 1978 to a monthly survey. The Conference Board launched its index on a bimonthly basis in 1967 and expanded it to a monthly series in 1977 (Ludvigson, 2004).

Consumer confidence is usually used to predict consumer spending at the macrolevel of the US economy. Ludvigson (2004) evaluates what is known about the relationship between consumer confidence and consumer spending. In summary, the results on the predictability of consumer attitudes for consumer spending are somewhat mixed. For total consumer expenditures, there is

modest incremental information about the future path of spending in both the Michigan and Conference Board indexes. The inclusion of both surveys' measures of expectations delivers fairly strong predictability of expenditure growth on goods (excluding motor vehicles). For other expenditure categories, however, the results are generally weaker, and for some categories of expenditure the inclusion of confidence indicators actually weakens the statistical relation between contemporaneous indicators and future consumer spending (Ludvigson; Wilcox, 2007). Then consumer confidence may not be a good predictor of consumer spending in all categories. Some economists examine if precautionary motives drive consumer sentiment. If precautionary motive exists, consumption growth measured from today to tomorrow should be negatively correlated with consumer sentiment today. This result is not what is found in Ludvigson (2004), nor in Carroll, Fuhrer, and Wilcox (1994) and Bram and Ludvigson (1998), except for one study with microdata. Using the Michigan Survey of Consumer Attitudes and Behavior (CAB), the household-level data that underlies the Michigan Index of Consumer Sentiment, Souleles (2004) reports that higher confidence is correlated with less saving (lower consumption growth), consistent with precautionary motives.

Dominitz and Manski (2004) propose three strategies to improve the measure of consumer confidence. First, they do not see an obvious rationale for asking consumers about such distant, ambiguous phenomena as "business conditions." Consumers may usefully be queried about well-defined macroeconomic events that are directly relevant to their personal lives. Second, they believe that the traditional qualitative questions of consumer confidence surveys should at least be complemented by, and perhaps replaced by, probabilistic questions inquiring about well-defined events. Third, they suggest that the producers of consumer confidence statistics prominently report their findings for separate questions and for different subgroups of the population. They believe the improved consumer confidence indicators may be more useful for predicting consumer spending and making economic policies.

Debt

Consumer credit has potential to help families to smooth consumption flow over life-cycle stages. Without consumer credit, many families could not afford to own a home, go to college, and buy a car or other expensive consumer products and services. Thus, consumer credit improves the family economic well-being under the condition that families have control of it.

Debts are considered as an input, objective measure of economic well-being. Ideally, zero debt indicates the best economic well-being in terms of financial status, while bankruptcy is an indicator of economic ill-being (Lown, 2008). Some economists believe borrowing is good to smooth life cycle consumption and is a rational behavior. Dynan (2009) discusses advantages and disadvantages of consumer debts. Based on her research, although debt has positive and negative aspects, greater access to credit mainly has hurt household economic well-being in the last three decades.

Consumer debt has increased greatly in recent years. Using data from US Flow of Funds Accounts and National Income and Product Accounts, Dynan and Kohn (2007) show that the ratio of total household debt to aggregate personal income rose from 0.6 to 1.0 during 1980–2006. They also discuss potential factors associated with borrowing behavior of households. Changes in tastes, interest rates, and households' expected incomes do not increase household borrowing, but demographic shifts can explain part of the debt increase. The increase in house prices appears to have played the central role. House prices can be linked to household borrowing through several different channels. Financial innovations by financial institutions also seem to have boosted debt in both debt holdings and sizes.

Debt may also influence family relations such as marriage satisfaction. Dew (2008) studies the relationship between debt and marital satisfaction using data from the National Survey of Families and Households and finds that changes in consumer debt predict changes in the marital

satisfaction of married couples. Changes in consumer debt negatively predict couples' time together and positively predict arguments over money, which, in turn, are both associated with declines in marital satisfaction.

In 2007, 74.7% of debt amounts are in mortgages for primary residence. Other debts consisted of 10.2% for installment loans, 10.1% for mortgages for other residential property, and 3.5% for credit card debts. In the same year, 77% of American families hold debts. About half (48.7%) hold mortgages for their primary residences, 46.9% have installation loans, 46.1% keep credit card balances, 6.8% hold other debts, 5.5% have mortgages for other residential property, and 1.7% have other lines of credit not secured by residential property. The median value for those holding any debts is \$67,300. Median values for primary residence mortgages and other residential property debts are \$107,000 and \$100,000, respectively. Median values for installment loans, other debts, nonresidential property lines of credit, and credit card debts are \$13,000, \$5,000, \$3,800, and \$3,000, respectively (Bucks et al., 2009).

Debt-based financial ratios are used to measure economic well-being. A commonly used one is the leverage ratio that is the ratio of total debts to total assets. In 2007, the leverage ratio of American families is 14.9%. The very rich (top 10% income) and the very poor (bottom 20% income) have lower than average leverage ratios, 8.4% and 13.5%, respectively. Leverage ratios for middle income groups are between 18.5 and 25.3% (Bucks et al., 2009).

Another commonly used financial ratio is the debt to income ratio. In 2007, the average ratio of total debt payments to total income is 14.5%. The median ratio among debtors is 18.6%. The two groups that have highest median ratios are middle income in 40–59.9 and 60–79.9 percentiles, which are 20.3% and 21.9%, respectively. Two middle age groups (35–44, 45–54) have the highest median ratios, 20.3% and 19.3%, respectively. Two middle new worth groups (25–49.9, 50–74.9%) have the highest median ratios, 23.4% and 21.5%, respectively (Bucks et al., 2009). Using data from 1992 to 2005 Surveys of

Consumer Expenditures, Johnson and Li (2007) examine the relationship between debt service ratio (DSR) and consumption and find that a high DSR alone does not indicate higher sensitivity of consumption to a change in income. However, the DSR may help identify borrowing constrained households. In particular, the consumption of households with low liquid assets and high DSRs is more sensitive to income changes than the consumption of other low liquid asset households.

Two financial ratios are often used to measure financial difficulties or economic ill-being, the heavy debt-income ratio and serious delinquent payment rate. The percentage of debtors with the debt-income ratio over 40% is 14.7% in 2007. Bottom 20% income families, families with heads age 45–54, and lower 25–49.9% new worth families had the highest percentages, 26.9%, 16.0%, and 19.3%, respectively. The percentage of debtors with any payment past due 60 days or more is 7.1%. Bottom 20% income families, bottom 25% new worth families, and families with young heads under 35 had highest percentages of default, 15.1%, 9.4%, and 16.8%, respectively (Bucks et al., 2009).

Using the 1983 SCF data to examine factors associated with late payment behavior, Canner and Luckett (1990) find the late payment behavior is associated with marital status, age, number of children, race, and several other variables. Descriptive statistics of consumer debt delinquent behavior in recent years can be found in Federal Reserve Board staff papers (Aizcorbe, Kennickell, & Moore, 2003; Bucks et al., 2009; Bucks, Kennickell, & Moore, 2006). In these studies, the consumer debt delinquent behavior is measured by the percentage of consumers whose debt payments are late for 2 or more months. The trend of this measure has increased since the early 1990s, from 6% in 1992 to 8.9% in 2004 with fluctuations. However, the increasing trends are more consistent in several subpopulations. For example, for consumers who are at the bottom 20 percentile income, younger than 35 years old, at the bottom 25 percentile net worth, and nonhomeowners, proportions of the delinquent behavior among these populations have been going up linearly since 1995. The trend from 2004 to

2007 decreased a little but these disadvantaged groups still had highest percentages of being 2 or more months late in debt payment compared to their counterparts (Bucks et al., 2009). Family economic well-being has worsened because of heavy debts since the financial crisis started in 2007, which is evidenced by high numbers of consumer bankruptcy. According to American Bankruptcy Institute, consumer filings for the 12-month period ending September 30, 2010, totaled 1,538,033, an increase of 14% from the 1,344,095 total consumer filings calculated over the same period in 2009 (American Bankruptcy Institute, 2010a, 2010b).

Mortgage

Home mortgages have become increasingly important for American households. Mortgage debt was 15% of household assets in 1949, but rose to 28% of household assets by 1979 and 41% of household assets by 2001 (Green & Wachter, 2005). The structure of the modern American mortgage has evolved over time. The US mortgage before the 1930s would be nearly unrecognizable today: it featured variable interest rates, high down payments, and short maturities. Before the Great Depression, homeowners typically renegotiated their loans every year as common practices. However, the modern US mortgage provides many more options to borrowers than are commonly provided in other countries: choosing whether to pay a fixed or floating rate of interest, locking in their interest rate in between the time they apply for the mortgage and the time they purchase their house, choosing the time at which the mortgage rate resets; choosing the term and the amortization period, prepaying freely, and generally borrowing against home equity freely. They can also obtain home mortgages at attractive terms with very low down payments (Green & Wachter, 2005).

American families usually face choosing between a fixed-rate (FRM) and an adjustable-rate mortgage (ARM). Research indicates that an ARM is generally attractive, but less so for a risk-averse household with a large mortgage, risky income,

high default cost, or low moving probability (Campbell & Cocco, 2003).

The menu of choices for the overwhelming majority of borrowers is possible because the US mortgage system—with the implicit government guarantee for Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac—has solved the problem of how to persuade low-risk borrowers to join with higher-risk borrowers in broad mortgage pools. These mortgage pools provide the basis for mortgage-backed securities (A security that represents an investment in mortgage loans), which can then be sliced up in financial markets. But the benefits to mortgage borrowers come with their own set of risks, namely, the risk that Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac will malfunction in a way that will either cost the federal government a lot of money, or lead to a systematic crisis in US financial markets, or both (Green & Wachter, 2005). Unfortunately, this worry became a reality in 2008.

The first hints of trouble in the mortgage market surfaced in mid-2005, and conditions subsequently began to deteriorate rapidly. According to data from the Mortgage Bankers Association, the share of mortgage loans that were “seriously delinquent” (90 days or more past due or in the process of foreclosure) averaged 1.7% from 1979 to 2006. But by the third quarter of 2008, the share of seriously delinquent mortgages had surged to 5.2%. These delinquencies foreshadowed a sharp rise in foreclosures: roughly 1.7 million foreclosures were started in the first three quarters of 2008, an increase of 62% from the 1.1 million in the first three quarters of 2007 (Mayer, Pence, & Sherlund, 2009).

Mortgage defaults and delinquencies are particularly concentrated among borrowers whose mortgages are classified as “subprime” or “near-prime.” Some key players in the mortgage market typically group these two into a single category, which is called “nonprime” lending. Although the categories are not rigidly defined, subprime loans are generally targeted borrowers who have tarnished credit histories and little savings available for down payments. Near-prime mortgages are made to borrowers having more minor credit quality issues or borrowers who are unable or

unwilling to provide full documentation of assets or income. Some of these borrowers are investing in real estate rather than occupying the properties they purchase (Mayer et al., 2009).

Slackened underwriting standards—manifested most dramatically by lenders allowing borrowers to forego down payments entirely—combined with stagnant to falling house prices in many parts of the country appear to be the most immediate contributors to the rise in mortgage defaults. The surge in early payment defaults and the rise in the share of mortgages with low or no documentation suggest that underwriting also deteriorated along other dimensions. Unorthodox mortgage features such as rate resets, prepayment penalties, or negative amortization provisions do not appear to be significant contributors to date to the defaults because borrowers who experienced problems with these provisions could refinance into other mortgages. However, as markets realized the extent of the poor underwriting and house prices began to fall, refinancing opportunities became more limited. Borrowers may not be able to resolve their problems with these products through refinancing going forward and thus may be forced to default (Mayer et al., 2009).

Foreclosure is an indicator of economic ill-being. Campbell, Giglio, and Pathak (2009) use data on house transactions in the state of Massachusetts over the last 20 years to show that houses sold after foreclosure (or close in time to the death or bankruptcy of at least one seller), are sold at lower prices than other houses. Foreclosure discounts are particularly large on average at 27% of the value of a house. Foreclosure discounts appear to be related to the threat of vandalism in low-priced neighborhoods. They also estimate that a foreclosure at a distance of 0.05 miles lowers the price of a house by about 1%.

A mortgage is a complex product and needs strong cognition ability to understand (Campbell, Jackson, Madrian, & Tufano, 2010). Campbell (2006) presents evidence that in the late 1990s and early 2000s, many households paid higher mortgage rates than they needed to, particularly less educated and less wealthy households. Bucks and Pence (2008) assess whether borrowers know their mortgage terms by comparing the distributions of

these variables in the household-reported SCF to the distributions in lender reported data. Although most borrowers seem to know basic mortgage terms, borrowers with ARM appear likely to underestimate or not to know how much their interest rates could change. Borrowers who could experience large payment changes if interest rates rose are more likely to report not knowing these contract terms. Difficulties with gathering and processing information appear to be a factor in borrowers' lack of knowledge.

An environment of rising house prices and declining interest rates existed in the United States during the 1990s and early 2000s and presented opportunities for refinancing homeowners to extract home equity by increasing their mortgage balances. Lander (2008) described several factors associated with mortgage refinancing boom. To the extent that homeowners have present-biased preferences, this is a dangerous temptation that reduces saving (Khandani, Lo, & Merton, 2009).

Government regulations are needed to better inform families who would like to use mortgage to purchase houses. Woodward (2003) presents evidence that households pay lower mortgage fees when all fees are rolled into the interest rate, simplifying the task of cost comparison. Some economists have advocated mortgages with principal balances that automatically adjust to the regional level of house prices (Shiller, 2008). Thaler and Sunstein (2008) propose to require that mortgage terms be made available electronically in standardized form to permit the development of online sites for comparison shopping.

Installment Loans

Installment loans are also called consumer credits since consumers use these loans to purchase cars, education, and durable goods. In 2007, for installment loan value distributions, 51.7% are for vehicle loans, 33.2% education loans, and 15.1% other loans. Other loans refer to loans for furniture, appliances, and other durable goods (Bucks et al., 2009). A study examines effects of life-cycle stages on installment debt with data

from the 1998 SCF. Researchers find that compared to young singles, empty nests, solitary households, and single parents are more likely to borrow installment loans. In addition, single parents tend to borrow more than all other life-cycle stages except for the newly married. In addition, overspending is associated with both the status of having installment loans and the amount of installment loans (Baek & Hong, 2004). Favorable attitude towards using installment loans are associated with the loan amount (Chien & DeVaney, 2001).

Vehicle Loans

Automobiles, meaning cars and light trucks, are the most commonly held nonfinancial assets among Americans. In 2001, the share of families that owned automobiles was over 84%—higher than the share that owned primary residences at 68%. Roughly three-quarters of automobile purchases are financed through credit, and loans for automobile purchases are one of the most common forms of household borrowing (Agarwal, Ambrose, & Chomsisengphet, 2008).

Auto loans may help smooth consumption and reduce borrowing constraints. This has been examined with data from the Consumer Expenditure Survey, which illustrated the consumption reaction to predictable increases in discretionary income following the final payment of a vehicle loan. The results of this analysis demonstrated that a 10% increase in discretionary income due to a loan repayment led to a 2–3% increase in nondurable consumption (Stephens, 2008).

Consumer demands for auto loans differ in terms of maturity and interest rates. Using data from the Consumer Expenditure Survey on auto loan contracts researchers estimate the elasticities of loan demand with respect to interest rate and maturity. They find that, with the exception of high-income households, consumers are very responsive to maturity and less responsive to interest rate changes. Both elasticities vary with household income, with the maturity elasticity decreasing and the interest rate elasticity increasing with income (Attanasio, Goldberg, & Kyriazidou, 2008).

Factors associated with auto loan prepayments are identified in research and a competing risks framework can be used to analyze the prepayment and default options on auto loans with a large sample of such loans. Using this framework, researchers have found that a decrease in the credit risk of an auto loan holder, as measured by the Fair Isaac Corp score, lowers the probability of default and raises the probability of prepayment. An increase in the loan-to-value ratio also increases the probability of default and lowers the probability of prepayment (Agarwal et al., 2008). A study to estimate a competing risks model of default and prepayment on subprime automobile loans finds that prepayment rates increase rapidly with loan age but are not affected by prevailing market interest rates. Default rates are much more sensitive to aggregate shocks than are prepayment rates. Increases in unemployment tend to precede increases in default rates, suggesting that defaults on subprime automobile loans are driven largely by shocks to household liquidity (Heitfield & Sabarwal, 2004).

A study examines the role of relationship lending in the automobile loan market at a community development credit union (CDCU) and at a traditional community bank with data collected from actual car loan applications. Researchers find that the community bank relies on credit scoring, not relationship lending. Relationship lending is, however, a critical factor in the loan decision at the CDCU. Low-income households with strong ties to the CDCU are likely to receive loans, despite poor credit histories. If consolidation, deregulation, and technology move mainstream financial institutions away from relationship lending and toward credit scoring, CDCUs will occupy an increasingly critical niche for low-income households (Holmes, Isham, Petersen, & Sommers, 2007).

Educational Loans

Educational loans provide important resources for families to invest in their children's human capital. Education loan research is focused from public policy perspectives. A theoretical research on which, scholarship or student loan, is better to improve student welfare in the context of moral

hazard indicates that a scholarship scheme financed by a tax on graduate earnings is always at least as good as a student loan scheme. Indeed, the former will implement the first best allocation if individual effort and parental support are observable by the policy maker, and the second will be the best one if they are not (Cigno & Luporini, 2009). Scholars have argued that the unique nature of an investment in education results in a market failure for student loans. This market failure is said to exist despite the empirically established, attractive risk-return profile of educational investments. A review of the literature on school loan market failure argues against the market failure hypothesis and suggests that we should properly define and protect a borrower's property rights to his/her own future income. Protecting property rights and eliminating loan subsidies should result in a healthier market for educational funding (Carver, 2007).

A study investigates the determinants of taking out government-funded student loans of university students in Australia. The study finds that the probability of taking out student loans for the full cost of university is largely influenced by students' socioeconomic status. Other major influences on this decision include students' demographic and university enrollment characteristics (Birch & Miller, 2008). Another researcher studies repayment behavior for college graduates who borrow under the US Federal Student Loan Program to finance higher education with US data (Ionescu, 2008). A pattern revealed is that college graduates with lower debt will lock-in interest rates, while those with higher debt will switch to an income-contingent plan (designed to help students destined for low salary careers such as in nonprofit organizations or public services pay off their student loans). Using the model to quantify the effects of a reform introduced in 2006 that eliminates the possibility of locking-in interest rates for student loans, the reform leads to significant increases in default rates, which is largely accounted for by low-income borrowers (Ionescu, 2008). A study quantifies the effects of alternative student loan policies on college enrollment, borrowing behavior, and default rates in a heterogeneous model of life-cycle earnings and human capital

accumulation. The combination of learning ability and initial stock of human capital drives the decision to enroll in college, while parental wealth has minimal effects on enrollment. Repayment flexibility increases enrollment significantly, whereas relaxation of eligibility requirements has little effect on enrollment or default rates. A policy allowing flexibility benefits to low-income households, while relaxation of eligibility requirements has negligible effects on these households (Ionescu, 2009).

A review of government student loans in bankruptcy in Canada, Australia, England, the United States, and New Zealand suggests that all five jurisdictions are similar in that filing bankruptcy provides limited to no relief for loans funded or guaranteed by a government unit for funding postsecondary education. Two key justifications relied upon to justify this model—student abuse of the bankruptcy process and the need to protect the public interest—are unsubstantiated (Ben-Ishai, 2006). Currently, the US Bankruptcy Code gives student debt the extraordinary treatment of nondischarge ability, which means that, unlike all other unsecured debts, student loans are not discharged by bankruptcy proceeding. They survive a filing and continue to haunt the debtor in his postbankruptcy life. This is harsh and dramatic treatment and some scholars recommend an income-contingent approach similar to the debt relief programs used by several high-tuition law schools in the United States (Pottow, 2006). Recent decisions, however, have shown the courts' proclivities to step beyond the dictates of the Bankruptcy Code to fashion what they see to be a more equitable solution for struggling student loan debtors. For example, some courts now allow the partial discharge of student loans—discharging the portion of indebtedness that constitutes an undue hardship—as a way to mitigate the harsh outcomes produced by the undue hardship standard. Other researchers argue that partially discharging student loan debt is an ineffective and invalid option for bankruptcy courts under the Code for two reasons. The statute does not provide a definition for “undue hardship” and courts usually use the most stringent test to determine the presence of an undue hardship. Also no

statutory or equitable power gives the courts the authority to pick and choose which part of student loan debt to be forgiven (Miller, 2004).

Several studies reported research on student responses to student loans. A study examined the structure of attitudes to debt among current and prospective New Zealand tertiary (college) students. The findings show that the structure of these attitudes is reasonably described by two dimensions, Fear of Debt and Debt Utility. On average, longitudinally, the students became less debt fearful between the end of secondary school and the end of their first year of tertiary study, but their views as to the utility of debt remained unchanged (Haultain, Kemp, & Chernyshenko, 2010). College students are surveyed on their attitudes towards debt to determine why they are not concerned about their high debt levels. Overall, respondents are not too concerned about their debt and their financial future; optimism is greatest among sophomore/freshmen respondents; and discounting of current debt is greatest among graduate/senior/junior respondents (Wells, 2007). A study examines student workloads, debt levels, and the debt perceptions of junior- and senior-level College of Business students at a Midwestern state university during the current economic downturn. Overall, the students feel confident in securing employment upon graduation and in managing their debt load. Results indicate that expected salary is significantly influenced by this confidence. Additionally, students' confidence in their employment prospects and debt management abilities, and their belief that debt would impact their future lifestyles, are significantly related to student debt levels (Kuzma, Kuzma, & Thiewes, 2010).

Credit Card Debt

The deregulation of credit markets in late 1970s makes financial institutions prosper, such as credit card banks. Before the deregulation, credit card divisions in banks always lost money, but after the deregulation, the credit card divisions became cash cows (Manning, 2000). Ausubel (1991) demonstrates that, although the structure

of the credit card industry looks competitive after deregulation, its behavior is inconsistent with what conventional economic theory predicts. This inconsistency occurs because the credit sector in banking earned three to five times the ordinary rate of return in banking during the period 1983–1988. According to the economic theory, if credit card sector is competitive, it should not earn such a high rate of return compared to other sectors in banking industry. The profit of the credit card industry remained high in late 1990s (Ausubel, 1997).

Ellis (1998) argues that the 1978 Supreme Court decision (“Marquette”) fundamentally altered the market for credit card loans in a way that significantly expanded the availability of credit and increased the average risk profile of borrowers. The result is a substantial expansion in credit card availability, a reduction in average credit quality, and a secular increase in personal bankruptcies. The good news for consumers, especially low-income consumers, is that they have broader access to credit (Bird, Hagstrom, & Wild, 1999; Johnson, 2005; Lyons, 2003). The bad news is that the probability of default among these consumers may rise too and there may be an adverse selection process occurring in the credit market. A study using market experiment data provided by a major credit card issuer presents evidence supporting this theory and find that consumers with worse credit risks are more likely to respond to and accept inferior terms of credit card solicitation. Consumers who accept inferior offers are significantly more likely to default (Ausubel, 1999).

According to estimates by Lyons (2003) of trends in credit access by US families, the ability of all households to obtain their desired debt levels increased after 1983 and more dramatically between 1992 and 1998. Those experiencing the greatest gains in credit access were black households and households with low permanent earnings. Another study using data from the 1983 to 1995 SCF traces the evolution of the debt position of the poor as compared to that of the population at large (Bird et al., 1999). Findings from this research reveal that the fraction of poor households with a credit card more than doubled

and the average balances held on these cards rose almost as rapidly as the balances for nonpoor households. Draut and Silva (2003) document credit card use trends among American families in 1989–2001 and find that the proportion of households with income under \$10,000 that hold credit card debts increased by 184%, the largest increase among all income groups, from 1989 to 2001. Black and Hispanic consumers are more likely than whites to carry credit card balances.

Johnson (2005) documents recent changes in the credit card market by using data from SCF. Because of improvements in credit-scoring technology and risk-based pricing of credit card debt, the share of households, particularly lower-income households, having a credit card has increased. A study surveys credit card use among low- and middle-income consumers nationwide and provides evidence that seven out of ten households report using their credit cards as a safety net to pay for such things as car repairs, basic living expenses, medical expenses, or house repairs. Just under half had missed or are late with a payment in the last year, with nearly a quarter of households reporting paying a late fee at least one or two times in the past year (Demos and Center for Responsible Lending, 2005).

The effects of life-cycle stages on credit card debts also have been examined. Researchers find that, compared to young singles, solitary households and single parents are less likely and childless middle-aged couples are more likely to keep credit card balances, while only solitary households are more likely than young singles to owe more credit card debts. Overspending is associated with both the status of keeping credit card balances and the amount of credit card debt (Baek & Hong, 2004). Favorable attitude towards credit card use (i.e., approvals of using credits to make several types of purchases) is associated with credit card debts (Chien & DeVaney, 2001).

For young adults, credit management is a critical developmental task in personal finance. Research on credit card behavior of college students has been started in the last two decades (e.g., Grable & Joo, 2006; Hayhoe, Leach, & Turner, 1999; Hayhoe, Leach, Turner, Bruin, & Lawrence, 2000; Joo, Grable, & Bagwell, 2003;

Lyons, 2004, 2008; Palmer, Pinto, & Parente, 2001; Wang & Xiao, 2008; Xiao, Noring, & Anderson, 1995). A survey of over 4,000 students from Arkansas, California, and Ohio indicates that as students progress through college, they acquire more credit cards and debt; furthermore, students who work 10 or more hours per week are more likely to report debt problems than those students who work less than 10 h/week (Dale & Bevill, 2007). Risky credit behaviors refer to practices such as holding credit card debts, not making full payments to credit card bills, making credit card payment late, and maxing out credit card limits. These risky credit behaviors may result in negative life outcomes such as risky health behaviors (Adams & Moore, 2007; Nelson, Lust, Story, & Ehlinger, 2008).

Credit card debts of college students also have been found to contribute to the financial stress of college students (Grable & Joo, 2006). Risky use of credit cards demonstrates some tendency toward compulsive buying (Roberts, 1998; Roberts & Jones, 2001) and materialism (Pinto, Parente, & Palmer, 2000). Credit card debts also may affect the academic performance of college students adversely (Pinto, Parente, & Palmer, 2001). Research also indicates that engaging in positive financial behaviors, including positive credit behaviors, tends to increase life satisfaction and well-being in other life domains (Shim, Xiao, Barber, & Lyons, 2009; Xiao et al., 2009).

Payday Loans

Borrowing from subprime debt products is an indicator of economic ill-being because subprime products are high cost credit offered most frequently to economically disadvantaged consumers (Lander, 2008). Payday loans (PDL) are a typical form of subprime product, that while varying somewhat, often employ a relatively standard form and lending process. A consumer typically will walk into a storefront location, request a loan, have their employment verified, and if approved, walk out minutes later with the loan proceeds. The “typical” term is \$15–\$30 per \$100 borrowed (Stegman, 2007), extremely high

financial charges compared to those charged by mainstream financial institutions. Most PDL users are from low-income, racial and ethnic minority groups, and military families. By virtue of the product itself, PDL customers must have checking accounts and be employed. Lawrence and Elliehausen (2008) find that PDL customers are disproportionately young (under age 45) and 65% have children under age 18 living in the household. Most are from lower and middle-income households, with a moderate level of education and limited liquid assets. Fewer than half report having any savings (Elliehausen, 2009). Generally, they are in life stages where the demand for credit is high, and although 92% rely on other types of credit, many have been denied credit in the past 12 months, have credit cards that are at the limit, have concerns about their ability to access credit, and are less likely to be able to tap into mortgage credit (Lawrence & Elliehausen, 2008). Risks of payday lending include paying high interest rates and, if used repeatedly, the debts would be out of control. Some research studies indicate that PDLs do not help alleviate financial distress (Melzer, 2009) and are associated with poorer job performance by military borrowers (Carrell & Zinman, 2008). To discourage PDLs to military personnel, the 2007 National Defense Authorization Act caps PDLs to service members at a 36% APR, a regulation that industry critics support for all payday lending (Center for Responsible Lending, 2009).

However, some researchers argue there are may be reasons for the popularity of payday lending. PDLs may be the only credits these consumers can receive. Without PDLs, these consumers may use more expensive credit forms or face worse consequences of lack of credits such as utilities being shut down or losing jobs if car for work transportation is not fixed on time (Campbell et al., 2010).

Bankruptcy

Bankruptcy is an indicator of economic ill-being that, in its current form, allows consumers to choose between filing Chaps. 7 or 13 when fac-

ing extreme financial difficulties. Chapter 7 is the quick debt liquidation option, often referred to as straight bankruptcy, while Chap. 13 commits all of a debtor's disposable income to debt repayment for up to 5 years (Lown, 2008). The number of personal bankruptcy filings in the United States rose fivefold between 1980 and 2005, from around 300,000 per year in 1980 to over 1½ million in each of the years from 2001 to 2005. By the early 2000s, more people were filing for bankruptcy each year than were graduating from college, getting divorced or being diagnosed with cancer (White, 2009). From an economic perspective, bankruptcy has two benefits for consumers: consumption insurance (to cover negative consequences of overspending) and entrepreneurship insurance (to cover failure of running own business). After reviewing relevant research, White concludes that since state bankruptcy laws only differs in asset exemptions, researchers focus on effects of asset exemptions on bankruptcy and find that high-income consumers borrow more in high exemption states and high exemption states have more entrepreneurs.

Researchers have attempted to identify factors associated with filing bankruptcy. Using data from the Consumer Bankruptcy Project (CBP) in the late 1970s, Sullivan, Warren, and Westbrook (1989) conclude that debtors commonly are middle-class Americans who are drowning in debt because of uncontrollable debts and increasing economic volatility. In the CBP II, they identify five sources of financial distress, job losses, skyrocketing debt levels, divorces, risking medical costs, and unaffordable homes (Sullivan, Warren, & Westbrook, 2000). Some researchers believe other factors are more important, such as gambling, credit card, and other debts besides job losses and divorces (White, 2009). Examples of other sources of debt are identified in a study by Zhu (2008) who used data from personal bankruptcy filings in the state of Delaware during 2003. The research shows that household expenditures on durable consumption goods, such as houses and automobiles, contribute significantly to personal bankruptcy. After reviewing several relevant studies, White (2007) points out typical bankruptcy filers are not middle-class consumers

but become poorer overtime. Overall, the increase in credit card and possibly mortgage debt levels since 1980 provides the most convincing explanation for the increase in bankruptcy filings in the United States (White, 2007).

The new Bankruptcy Abuse Prevention and Consumer Protection Act took effective in October 2005. During 2005, the highest level of individual bankruptcy filings occurred, with over two million filings. The new law has two major changes: to limit the chapter choice by imposing means tests and raising filing costs and to require pre-filing counseling and post-filing education (Lown, 2008). The main purpose is to reduce the size of individual bankruptcies, a goal that seemed to be achieved in 2006 and 2007, 597,965 and 822,590, respectively. However, the numbers returned to very high levels in 2008 and 2009, 1,074,225 and 1,412,838 (close to the level of 2001) (American Bankruptcy Institute, 2010a, 2010b), which could be a result of the current financial crisis that caused high unemployment and lower income faced by many American families.

Li and White (2009) investigate whether the new personal bankruptcy law in 2005 plays a role in creating the mortgage crisis or making it worse. In particular, they show that there is a strong and previously unnoticed relationship between homeowners' decisions to default on their mortgages and their decisions to file for bankruptcy. In theory, bankruptcy and default could be either substitutes or complements. They show that theoretically the bankruptcy–default relationship is complementary for most homeowners, and the relationship between foreclosure and bankruptcy is also complementary. But they find that homeowners have responded to the 2005 bankruptcy reform by treating bankruptcy as a substitute for default and foreclosure.

White and Zhu (2008) examine how filing for bankruptcy under Chap. 13 helps financially distressed debtors save their homes after the new bankruptcy law. Chapter 13 helps debtors save their homes by stopping foreclosure, giving debtors extra time to repay mortgage arrears, and increasing their ability-to-repay their mortgages by discharging some or all of their unsecured debt. They also find that nearly all debtors who

use Chap. 13 are homeowners who wish to save their homes. This is despite the fact that a major bankruptcy reform adopted in 2005 was intended to force bankruptcy filers with higher incomes to repay some of their unsecured debt in Chap. 13. They also discuss how bankruptcy can be used to address the foreclosure crisis by allowing bankruptcy judges to “cram-down” (partially forgive) mortgage debt in Chap. 13 when debtors’ mortgages exceed the value of their homes. Some researchers point out that the new bankruptcy law does not solve fundamental issues that cause bankruptcies such as improving job opportunities and tightening credit regulations (Lown, 2008).

Asset

Asset is an important indicator of economic well-being that is accumulated through saving and investing. Dynan (2009) discusses changes in assets in the last five decades. According to her research, the ratio of housing value to income doubled from 1962 to 2008. For retirement savings, more households own IRAs, fewer own traditional defined benefit pension plans. Household equity holdings increased from 1989 to 2007. Low, middle, and high-income groups have the same pattern but different magnitudes.

Based on the 2007 SCF, 56.5% of families report having saved. Income is positively associated with self-reported saving, in which 33.7% of families at bottom 20% income report saving vs. 84.8% of families at top 10% income say so. Age shows a wave pattern. The youngest group (under 35) and the preretirement age group (55–64) are more likely to report saving (58.9% and 58.4%, respectively), while the oldest group (75 or older) is least likely to report saving (49.4%). In terms of family type, couple families without or with children are more likely to save (62% and 61.8%, respectively), whereas single headed families with children are least likely to save (45.8%). White non-Hispanic headed families are more likely than nonwhite families to save (58.8% vs. 50.8%) (Bucks et al., 2009, Table 1).

In 2007, the median net worth (total assets minus total debts) of American families is \$120,300. Net worth medians are diverse among

families with various incomes. The median net worth of bottom 20% income families is \$8,100 while that of top 10% income families is \$1,119,000. The age pattern is in an inverse U-shape. The preretirement age group has the highest median \$253,700. Younger groups such as under 35 and 35–44 have lowest medians, \$11,800 and \$86,600, respectively. Couple families without children have the highest median \$191,000. Couple families with children have the second highest median, \$141,100, which followed by single, age 55 or older headed families with a median of \$140,800. Single headed families without children, age under 55, have the lowest median, \$18,000. Single headed families with children have the second lowest median, \$41,000. White headed families have much higher median than nonwhite families, \$170,400 vs. \$27,800 (Bucks et al., 2009, Table 4).

Financial Assets. In 2007, 97.7% of American families hold any assets and 93.9% of American families hold at least some form of financial assets. Most commonly held financial assets are transaction accounts (checking and savings accounts) (92.1%) and retirement accounts (52.6%). Other commonly held financial assets are cash value life insurance (23.0%), stocks (17.9%), certificates of deposit (16.1%), savings bonds (14.9%), and pooled investments (11.4%). In addition, 9.3% of families held other financial assets, 5.8% other managed assets, and 1.6% bonds (Bucks et al., 2009, Table 6).

Nonfinancial Assets. In 2007, 92.0% hold nonfinancial assets. Most commonly held nonfinancial assets are vehicles (87.0%) and the primary residence (68.6%). Family holding rates of other nonfinancial assets include other residential property (13.7%), business equity (12%), equity in nonresidential property (8.1%), and other (7.2%) (Bucks et al., 2009, Table 9B).

Saving Motives

Saving motives were mentioned by Keynes (1936) long time ago as motivations to improve economic well-being. A review of saving theory

and corresponding empirical evidence finds that many motives mentioned by Keynes were still valid after 60 years (Browning & Lusardi, 1996).

Many economic theories speculate about saving motives with indirect evidence. For example, the life-cycle hypothesis conceptualizes the existence of a retirement savings motive. This concept encompasses the assumption that workers save in their work years and draw savings when they retire from work that implies a retirement saving motive (Ando & Modigliani, 1963). The precautionary saving motive assumes that people are uncertain about their future income and expenses so that they save for emergencies (Carroll, 1997, 2001). Somewhat related is the theory of intergenerational transfer, which suggests that people save to accumulate wealth for their children (Barro, 1974; Kurz, 1984).

In reality, it is possible to identify multiple saving motives (Browning & Lusardi, 1996). Most commonly cited saving reasons, according to the 2007 SCF, are retirement (33.9%) and liquidity (emergency) (32.0%). Other saving reasons are for future purchases (10%), educational cost (8.4%), for the family (5.5%), buying a home (4.2%), and investment (1.6%). Compared to the findings for 1998, two noticeable changes occurred. Saving for education reported by American families decreased from 11.0 to 8.4%, while saving for liquidity increased from 29.8 to 32.0% (Bucks et al., 2009).

Research on saving motives reported by consumers suggests that saving motives have a hierarchical pattern, in which saving motives reflecting financial needs move up when economic resources increase. For example, low-income consumers are more likely to save for daily expenses, middle income consumers for emergency, while higher-income consumers save for retirement (Xiao & Noring, 1994). The hierarchy of saving motives are found in other studies too (e.g., Canova, Rattazzi, & Webley, 2005; DeVaney, Anong, & Whirl, 2007). Saving motives also show cultural differences. For example, compared to Americans (all races), Chinese are more likely to report saving for their children (Xiao & Fan, 2002).

Emergency Savings

Transaction accounts are usually considered to be emergency funds for families, with demographic differences being found in prevalence of these accounts. In 2007, all families in the top 20% income category have transaction accounts while only 74.9% of the bottom 20% income families have this source of economic well-being. Age shows an inverse pattern, with the preretirement age group (55–64) having the highest holding rate of transaction accounts with 96.4%. In contrast, the youngest group (age under 35) has the lowest holding rate with 87.3%. Couple families, with or without children, have higher than average holding rates with 95.5% and 94.8%, respectively. Singles with children or singles under 55 without children have lower holding rates equaling 84.8% and 84.3% respectively. White headed families are more likely than nonwhite families to have transaction accounts equaling 95.5% vs. 83.9% (Bucks et al., 2009).

When families asked what was the desirable saving for emergencies, \$5,000 is the median amount for all families, which is also the amount reported by families at the 40–60% income group. For families at bottom 20% income, the median amount is \$2,000, while for families at top 10% income, the median is \$20,000 (Bucks et al., 2009, Table 3.1).

Amounts in transaction accounts are different by demographic groups, with families in the bottom 20% income category having a median value of \$800 while families in the top 10% income category possessing a medium value for these accounts of \$36,700. Age shows another inverse U-pattern with the newly retired age group (65–74) having the highest median value of \$7,700, while the youngest group (under 35) had the lowest value of \$2,400. Couple families without or with children have higher values of \$6,000 and \$5,000, respectively. Singles with or without children (under 55 and 55 or older) have lower median values of \$2,400, \$2,000, and \$2,500, respectively. White families have higher median values than nonwhite families with respective values of \$5,100 vs. \$2,000 (Table 6) (Bucks et al., 2009).

A number of studies examined factors associated with family emergency fund holdings and the effects of emergency fund holdings on family financial well-being (Harness, Chatterjee, & Finke, 2008). Emergency funds are defined as savings available to cover household expenses in the event of significant income disruption (Johnson & Widdows, 1985). Based on the degree of liquidity, emergency funds are categorized as quick, intermediate, and comprehensive funds. Varying across studies, an adequate emergency fund level is defined as a resource intended to cover 3–6 months expenses of a family. Emergency fund-related ratios have been used to study the financial well-being of older women (Hong & Swanson, 1995) and newly married households (Godwin, 1996). Studies also compared emergency fund holdings among households in two time periods (Chang & Huston, 1995) and with different emergency fund guidelines (Bhargava & Lown, 2006). Research also examines emergency fund holding among Asian American households (Hong & Kao, 1997) and among households with various employment statuses (Rodríguez-Flores & DeVaney, 2007) and family types (Huston & Chang, 1997). The amounts of emergency funds saved by households are more a function of their ability to save than their actual need (Bi & Montalto, 2004). Based on expected utility theory, households should have different ratios of emergency funds based on income uncertainties (Chang, Hanna, & Fan, 1997). Emergency fund levels also may be associated with financial behavior. A study finds that the perceived emergency fund level of consumers is associated with several financial behaviors such as saving regularly, paying credit card bills in full, and having a written financial plan (Joo & Grable, 2006).

Retirement Savings

Holding and amounts of retirement accounts differ by socioeconomic groups. Only 10.7% of families in the bottom 20% hold retirement accounts, while 89.6% of top 10% income families do so. Age shows another inverse U-pattern in which the middle age group (45–54) has the

highest holding rate of 64.7%, while, among pre-retirement age categories, the youngest group (under 35) has the lowest holding rate, only 41.6%. Couples with or without children has higher holding rates of 62.5% and 61.8%, respectively. Singles with children and singles aged 55 or older and do not have children have lower rates of 36.1% and 36.2%, respectively. White families (58.2%) are more likely than nonwhite families (39.1%) to hold retirement accounts (Bucks et al., 2009). For retirement accounts, families in the bottom 20% income levels have a media value of \$6,500 while top 10% income families have that of \$200,000. Preretirement age group (55–64) has retirement accounts of the highest median value (\$98,000), while the youngest group (under 35) has retirement accounts of the lowest value (\$10,000). Couples without or with children have higher retirement account values of \$55,100 and \$52,000, respectively. Singles with children and singles under 55 without children have lower values of \$30,000 and \$20,000, respectively. White families have retirement accounts of a higher median value (\$52,700) than nonwhite families (\$25,400) (Bucks et al., Table 6). In 2007, the fraction of eligible family heads declining to participate in work-related retirement plan is 16.2%. Income is strongly related to nonparticipation, with the nonparticipation rate among bottom 20% income families being 54.3% while that of the top 10% families being only 6.5% (Bucks et al.).

Major retirement sources are social security, employer sponsored defined benefits, defined contribution retirement plans (401(k) type plans), and private savings (Hanna & Chen, 2008). In recent years, retirement income adequacy has become a major issue because of the uncertainty of the social security system and the trends moving from defined benefit plans to defined contribution plans. The trend started because of the Employee Retirement Income and Security Act of 1974. In 1978, a section 401(k) was added to the Internal Revenue Code. Then in 1981 a clarification allowed employers to exclude employer and employee 401(k) contributions from taxable income (Campbell et al., 2010). In 1975, DB plan participants outnumbered DC plan participants by 2.4–1 while by

2007, DC plan participants outnumbered DB plan participants by 3.4 by 1 (US Department of Labor and Employee Benefit Security Administration, 2010).

In the last decades, behavioral economists find evidence that workers cannot behave rationally to participate in, contribute to and manage their retirement plans effectively. For example, plan participation, contribution rates, and asset allocation outcomes are heavily influenced by employer defaults (Carroll, Choi, Laibson, Metrick, & Madrian, 2009; Choi, Laibson, & Madrian, 2005; Choi, Laibson, Madrian, & Metrick, 2004a; Madrian & Shea, 2001; Thaler & Benartzi, 2004); participants chase past returns in both their asset allocation and contribution rate choices (Benartzi, 2001; Choi, Laibson, Madrian, & Metrick, 2004b; Choi, Laibson, Madrian, & Metrick, 2009); they fail to rebalance (Ameriks & Zeldes, 2004; Mitchell, Mottola, Utkus, & Yamaguchi, 2006); and their asset allocation choices are sensitive to the structure of the investment menu (Benartzi & Thaler, 2001; Brown, Liang, & Weisbenner, 2007). These findings suggest that there are cognitive limitations of workers when they save for retirements.

These concerns motivated several key provisions in the Pension Protection Act of 2006. This law allows employers to structure their saving plans to incorporate automatic enrollment, automatic contribution escalation, and a diversified default asset allocation (Campbell et al., 2010). New evidence shows that sponsors offering automatic enrollment and target date funds as default investment options for workers are increasing. Researchers suggest further government regulation opportunities such as promoting access, promoting annuitization of retirement wealth, and assisting workers' investment decisions (Campbell et al.).

A number of studies examine retirement saving adequacy. Based on different assumptions for major parameters such as rate of return on investment and consumption needs at retirements, estimated adequacy rates vary. The most pessimistic estimate is that only 31% of households have a high enough savings rate, assuming a retirement at age 62 (Moore & Mitchell, 1997). The most

optimistic estimate is that 80% of households would achieve an optional consumption level in a retirement (Scholz, Seshadri, & Khitatrakun, 2006). Other estimates are in between, from 52% (Yuh, Hanna, & Montalto, 1998; Yuh, Montalto, & Hanna, 1998), 56% (Ameriks, 2000, 2001; Yao, Hanna, & Montalto, 2003), 57% (Hanna, Garman, & Yao, 2003), to 65% (Butrica, Iams, & Smith, 2003).

Financial Satisfaction

Financial satisfaction is a subjective measure of economic well-being. Many studies have examined the relationship between income and financial satisfaction. For instance, Hsieh (2004) uses data from General Social Surveys to observe the association between income and the financial satisfaction of American elders and finds that different definitions of income have different effects on financial satisfaction. Vera-Toscano, Ateca-Amestoy, and Serrano-del-Rosal (2006), using data from a national survey in Spain, finds that not only income but also income expectation affects financial satisfaction. Sighieri, Desantis, and Tanturri (2006), using data from nine European countries, found that the relationship between income and financial satisfaction is positive up to a point. Other variables in the environment, such as differing household characteristics, explained an additional 30% of the variance regarding financial satisfaction.

Diener and Biswas-Diener (2002) review studies on the relationship between income and subjective well-being and conclude that there are at most small correlations between income and subjective well-being within nations. A related conclusion is that, unless they are rich, people who value material goals are less happy than those who do not. Diener and Biswas-Diener also suggest that income may have either a direct influence or an indirect influence, through financial satisfaction, on subjective well-being. Arthaud-Day and Near (2005) reach similar conclusions in a comprehensive review of the relationship between various types of incomes and subjective well-being.

Financial satisfaction may contribute to subjective well-being and overall well-being. Pavot and Diener (1993) conclude that life satisfaction is the self-evaluation of a person's life and that it should be related to domain satisfactions. This finding correlates with the findings of a national survey of English citizens, conducted by Bowling and Windsor (2001), which indicates that financial satisfaction contributes to life satisfaction. Financial satisfaction is also associated with overall satisfaction of quality of life according to a survey among a sample of US Midwest consumers (Mugenda, Hira, & Fanslow, 1990).

Summary and Future Research

Summary of Major Findings

The following are summaries based on the literature reviewed in previous sections:

1. Using family financial net worth as an indicator, family economic well-being has been increased since 1980s until mid-1990s and then decreased since mid-1990s.
2. Income is a commonly used indicator for economic well-being. Compared to white and Asian Americans, African and Hispanic Americans have had below average incomes for the last 40 years.
3. Living in poverty is an indicator of economic ill-being. In 2009, the official poverty rate in the United States was 14.3% and 43.6 million people were in poverty. The poverty rate in 2009 was the highest since 2000. Female, black, and Hispanic headed households are more likely to live in poverty.
4. Determinants of earnings are less associated with schooling and cognitive ability but are more related to other factors such as personalities and personal habits.
5. Income inequality can be considered as an indicator of economic ill-being at collective level. Research indicates that inequality in wages, earnings, and total family incomes in the United States has increased markedly since 1980. The level of inequality today, for both market income and disposable income, is greater than at any point in the past 40 years or longer.
6. Research on intergenerational transfer indicates earning ability transfers among generations. Most research shows positive associations of earnings between fathers and sons.
7. Expenditures are a better measure of economic well-being since it shows the purchasing power of a family. The top expenditure categories among American families are housing, transportation, and food. Research indicates that life cycle consumptions for total, durable, and nondurable goods expenditures are in a reverse U-shape.
8. Differences in income, family type, and race/ethnicity regarding housing, transportation, food, and health care expenditures are significant. Smart spending behavior increases family economic well-being.
9. There is mixed evidence for consumer confidence as an effective predictor of consumer expenditures.
10. Consumer credit can enhance family economic well-being by reducing credit constraints and smoothing life-cycle consumption at the early life-cycle stage. Consumer credit access has been broadened in the last two decades both because of government deregulation of financial markets and business innovations of financial products. On the other hand, overuse, abuse, or misuse of consumer credits cause bankruptcy and foreclosures that hurt family economic well-being.
11. Income, family type and racial/ethnic differences are found in both holding and the amounts of mortgages, installment loans (student, car, or purchase loans), and credit card debts.
12. Low-income consumers are more likely to use subprime products such as pay day loans.
13. Major causes of individual bankruptcy are heavy credit card, mortgage, and other debt burdens. Other possible causes are unemployment, divorce, and major medical expenses. The new bankruptcy legislation reduced the bankruptcy filing temporarily,

but the impact of the new law on family economic well-being is unclear.

14. Owning assets is an indicator of family well-being. In the last three decades, holdings and amounts of a variety of financial assets have increased among American families. More families hold stocks and other investments than before.
15. The saving motives of American families are diverse, demonstrating a hierarchical pattern in which low resource families save mainly for daily expenses, middle-level resource families for emergencies, and high resource families for retirement and children's education.
16. Research indicates that family emergency funds are inadequate and emergency fund levels differ in income, family type, and racial/ethnic groups.
17. Research on retirement saving adequacy is diverse with a wide range of estimates. On average, about half households are not saving enough for a comfortable retirement.
18. Financial satisfaction is a subjective measure of economic well-being. Financial well-being is associated with income and also contributes to life satisfaction, a subjective measure of well-being.

Future Research Directions

There is a need to create a conceptual framework of family economic well-being. In the current literature, existent theories primarily describe what actual behaviors are but not what optimal behaviors that improve economic well-being are. To promote family economic well-being, we need to create a conceptual framework to describe factors and associations of these factors that are associated with optimal or desirable statuses of family economic resources or family economic well-being but not only family economic status. The framework should also clearly specify what roles income, debt, expense, and asset have in improving and sustaining family economic well-being. We need to examine empirically the impact of several new laws and regulations on family

economic well-being. In recent years, several new laws and regulations in the area of bankruptcy, credit cards, health care, and financial product regulation have been enacted and have been or will be implemented. Future research should address following broad research questions: Does the new bankruptcy law discourage families with financial difficulties to file bankruptcy that would improve or hurt their family economic well-being in the long term? Is the new credit card law effective to help consumers take control of their credit card debts? Does the new health care law ensure broader access to health care services that has important consequences on family economic well-being? Can the new financial regulation law effectively protect consumers from marketing frauds and abuses in financial services?

Research on several key family economic issues and their associations with family economic well-being among American families (i.e., mainly middle-income families) should be encouraged in the future. Key issues include saving for a comfortable retirement, saving for children's education, and borrowing to purchase a home, car, education for children or other expensive durable goods. Ensuring family economic well-being also involves managing risks in life, job, health, finance, and other challenging aspects of the life course.

Research from a comprehensive perspective regarding the economic well-being of low-income consumers should be conducted. In the past two decades, public policies have been enacted to encourage low-income families to accumulate assets by providing assistance through special social programs. The effectiveness and sustainability of these programs need to be further evaluated.

Researchers need to explore how to increase the financial capability of families through formal and informal financial education. Financial capability refers to adequate financial knowledge and skills to purchase and use financial products to achieve economic well-being. In recent years, public and private institutions launched several major programs of financial education for youth, young adults and workers (Fox & Bartholomae, 2008).

These programs are effective at increasing financial knowledge and encouraging desirable financial behaviors (Xiao et al., 2010). Action-oriented financial education programs are encouraged (Xiao, O'Neill, et al., 2004) that not only teach financial knowledge but also encourage students to engage in and experience desirable financial practices. Further evaluation research on effectiveness of these financial education programs and their impacts on family economic well-being should be conducted. Better educated and informed consumers should make more effective financial decisions when markets are full with shrouded information (Gabaix & Laibson, 2006).

Research on family economic well-being should be improved with solid methodologies. For example, the SCF, a triennial survey sponsored by the Federal Reserve Board, is a data set used by many family economists. The data set is complicated to use with several methodological issues. These issues should be considered carefully to take full advantage of the rich data set and produce valid research findings (Lindamood, Hanna, & Bi, 2007).

In the last three decades, American families experienced gains and losses in terms of economic resources. Because of financial deregulation and innovations started in the 1980s, families have owned more financial assets and gained greater access to credit to smooth current consumption. However, because of the crash of financial system in 2007, the overall new effect is the decrease of family economic well-being evidenced by mass job losses, spending cuts, foreclosures, and bankruptcies. In the future decade, American families are still facing challenges in terms of economic security, with perhaps the most difficult hurdle being that the economy may take a longer time to recover than has been true in the past. This means that many families may not have adequate resources to maintain their current living standard. Moreover, the uncertain future of social security system and the trend toward moving from traditional retirement pensions to contributions into 401(k) type retirement accounts means that American workers need rethink the preparation for retirement. That is, workers must

take care of their retirement savings themselves early in their career to an extent that demands knowledge and skills for long term investment management. Rising costs in higher education is another factor for American families to worry about their children's education in the long term. Expensive long-term care is yet another factor for families with elder parents should be concerned about in the future. In sum, many economic challenges are likely to confront American families in the future. To achieve and maintain economic well-being, American families need to beware of these challenges and plan early to acquire and manage their economic resources well. Researchers should conduct relevant, meaningful research for family policy makers, family service professionals, and individual families to help improve family economic well-being.

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Sampson Lee Blair

Introduction

The performance of household labor has generally been regarded as an undesired, yet nonetheless necessary, activity within most households. On any given day in a typical household, meals must be prepared, laundry must be washed, floors and bathrooms need to be cleaned, and trash has to be carried out to the curb for pickup. Simply, no household can survive for long without having someone step in and perform the necessary chores. Of course, if the chores are assumed to be onerous and unpleasant, most individuals might be reluctant to take on the responsibility of performing them. Herein lies the dilemma within most households: who will do the chores?

In the United States, and around the globe, a considerable amount of research has been directed toward the ways household members go about assigning, allocating, or sharing particular chores. For the most part, this division of housework occurs among adult couples, although certainly children, and particularly older offspring, also enter into the allocation processes. In terms of couples' division of chores, the general pattern noted by researchers has been one of relative intransigence of gender inequality, wherein women continue to perform

considerably more household labor than men. Regardless of the particular characteristics of the households or individuals examined, the gender-based division of household labor has changed relatively little over the past several decades. For example, Coverman and Sheley (1986), in an examination of men's contributions of household labor from 1965 to 1975, conclude that there were no significant changes at all over that time. They also posited that despite the increase in paid labor force participation rates among women, the allocation of time to household chores by men did not increase. There was generally a lack of male response to the added work burdens of females. This trend of high variation in female labor and allocation of time to tasks, while the contributions of time devoted to household labor time by males is lower and varies only slightly, appears to have continued into the 1980s (see Gershuny & Robinson, 1988). More recently, researchers have noted that, while the overall time spent by women in household labor has declined, at the same time, men's contributions have increased slightly (e.g., Bianchi, Milkie, Sayer, & Robinson, 2000). In sum, while the relative shares of housework performed by men and women have changed, it is mostly due to women decreasing their time on household labor, rather men increasing their contribution (See Sayer, 2005 for a review of this).

In addition to the total amounts of household labor, several studies have also concluded that males and females tend to "specialize" in certain chores. Berk (1985) reported that wives assume the most responsibility for what are perceived to

S.L. Blair, PhD (✉)
Department of Sociology, The State University
of New York, 430 Park Hall, Buffalo,
NY 14260-4140, USA
e-mail: slblair@buffalo.edu

be “traditional” female tasks. Wives, by their own reports, perform over 96% of making beds, and 94% of diapering of children. Husbands report that they spend the majority of their time on household chores defined as masculine tasks. Husbands do over 86% of the household repairs, 80% of the disciplining of children, 75% of the grass cutting, and 77% of the snow shoveling. In an examination of the segregation of household chores, Blair and Lichter (1991) find that couples tend to exhibit a high degree of specialization, such that males would have to reallocate over 60% of their family work time before sex-based equality in the division of household labor could be achieved.

The nature of the gender-linked tasks performed by women and men is also quite different. Based on existing patterns of chore allocation, certain tasks, such as cooking, cleaning, or child-care tasks tend to be performed primarily by women. These particular tasks, though, do not have either a well-defined beginning or end. Tasks such as automotive care, yard work, or house repairs, on the other hand, tend to be performed primarily by males. These particular tasks, however, are qualitatively distinct. Indeed, “male tasks” tend to have the following qualities: (1) a well-defined beginning and end, (2) personal discretion as to when the task should be performed (lack of a solid time frame), and (3) a leisure component (Meissner, 1977). Females, however, spend the majority of their time in tasks which contain the opposite qualities. Washing dishes, cooking, and child care are tasks which must be performed daily, at specific times, and do not allow for much discretion as to when the tasks should be done. Hence, the qualities of women’s typical chores are in sharp contrast to those chores commonly performed by males, such that women’s chores tend to be routinized, repetitive, boring, and dirty (see also Lennon & Rosenfield, 1994).

Researchers have also noted that the household labor demands placed on couples and families shift over time and over the course of the family’s development. Rexroat and Shehan (1987), who approach the study of division of labor from a gender role perspective, posit that the changes in the responsibilities of the family members over

time also affect the degree to which members accept or reject traditional gender roles. They find that husbands were more likely to share tasks or take on additional chores at points in the family life cycle when there were fewer demands placed upon their time, specifically during the first few years of marriage and after they retired from the paid labor force (see Pittman & Blanchard, 1996). Yet even during these periods, women still bear most of the responsibility for the various household tasks. Even with the presence of young children, which increases the overall need for labor, husbands’ contributions actually decrease as a proportion of the total labor within the household (Poortman & Van der Lippe, 2009). In fact, Rexroat and Shehan (1987) state that “. . . up to the retirement stage, women who work full-time contribute 75–85% of the time that couples allocate to household work each week” (p. 747).

Hence, the division of household labor can be viewed as having three relatively static qualities. First, males and females perform quantitatively different amounts of labor. Specifically, females perform approximately twice as much household labor as males. Second, males and females perform qualitatively different types of labor. Household labor has been shown to represent both “feminine” and “masculine” spheres or domains of chores. And third, these first two qualities of the division of household labor have been shown to have remained relatively consistent or intransigent to change over the past several decades. Yet the questions of how and why household labor is differentially allocated to women and men remain.

Part of the dilemma in attempting to discern patterns of chore allocation lies in the need to firmly define what precisely is household labor. While researchers have utilized a variety of measures, few actually provide a basic definition of housework itself. Shelton and John (1996) posit that household labor refers to any unpaid work which contributes to the well-being of household members and helps to maintain the home itself. While this definition can obviously include such labor as the care of small children or tending to the emotional needs of family members, most researchers have focused more precisely on physical labor directed toward attending to the

instrumental needs of families and couples (Coltrane, 2000). Obviously, this approach overlooks the considerable amounts of time which are exerted attending to other forms of labor in the home, and considers only a limited range of chores which have more traditionally been labeled as household chores.

Researchers have used a variety of assessment techniques in the measurement and analysis of the division of household labor. Numerous studies have utilized large, nationally representative surveys, such as the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH). Such surveys typically provide a clear set of chores, and ask respondents to indicate how much time they or their partner spends performing a given task in the home. Research using survey techniques in the United States have often concluded that women spend approximately twice as much time performing household chores, as compared to men (e.g., Coltrane, 2000; Greenstein, 2000). Other researchers have approached the study of the division of household labor by using time diaries, wherein respondents are asked to maintain a detailed account of their activities over a period of time (e.g., a day, a week)(see Harvey, 1993). No matter whether surveys, time diaries, or other methods are used, there are often questions concerning the reliability and validity of responses. Some researchers focus on measures of how many hours respondents spend on particular tasks (e.g., Greenstein, 1996), while others ask respondents to indicate who spends the most time in a particular chore (e.g., Huber & Spitze, 1983). Other researchers have even measured of the division of household labor by assessing the segregation of chores (e.g., Blair & Lichter, 1991). The variety of measures and methodological techniques, understandably, can make the analysis of the division of housework rather complicated.

Explaining the Division of Household Labor

Given the wide range of disciplines represented in recent research on the division of household labor, it is understandable that the range of theoretical

perspectives applied to it is also extensive. Generally, theories of the division of household labor can be classified into three basic categories: (1) gender role/socialization, (2) power or relative resources, and (3) time availability (see Coltrane, 2000; Kroska, 2004). Variations of these exist, and with the inclusion of recently proposed theories, the efficacy of each is somewhat unclear due to the lack of consensus across, as well as within, theoretical perspectives. Changes in how household labor and the allocation of chores are assessed have brought about recognition for the need to provide more applicable theoretical perspectives in this field of study.

Gender role/socialization (or sex role) explanations of the division of household labor view the behaviors and attitudes of adults living within the household as the direct result of their socialization experiences throughout their lives. Simply, they have been exposed to, taught, and subsequently internalized gender-appropriate values and behaviors. Within this perspective, women who are exposed to and internalized traditional values and attitudes presumably are more likely than other women to believe that chores within the home are primarily their responsibility. Likewise, men who have internalized more traditional gender role expectations assume the role of primary earner for the household, and do not feel inclined to include household tasks on their daily agenda of required duties. Women and men who have internalized nontraditional gender role attitudes are expected to maintain a more egalitarian division of labor within their family. Hiller (1984) recognizes the importance of socialization as a determinant of adult behaviors within the family, stating “The more deeply one or both partners has internalized a traditional sex role, the more likely the wife will be solely responsible for family work” (p. 1005).

Within the gender ideology/socialization perspective is the assumption that individuals perform particular chores in an effort to demonstrate or affirm their gendered self. In essence, the performance of household labor allows them the opportunity to conform to what they perceive is expected of themselves in regard to gender identity (Ferree, 1991). Researchers have noted that

the gender attitudes of partners do, in fact, significantly affect the allocation of chores in the home. Huber and Spitze (1983) find, for example, that husbands' gender attitudes are a significant predictor of the allocation of chores. Other studies have noted that the gender attitudes of wives and husbands may interact, and thereby influence the extent to which husbands will take on tasks which were traditionally regarded as "feminine" (Greenstein, 1996). Some researchers, however, find that gender ideology has only a weak effect, if any, on the allocation of chores (Sanchez & Thomson, 1997).

Central to the issue of gender role/socialization explanations is the source of the role types to which individuals are exposed during the process of socialization. Stafford, Backman, and DiBona (1977) point out that the sources of gender role ideologies are not clearly known: "The origins of this nonconscious ideology are obscure but presumably begin with imitation of parental marital roles with reinforcement by peers, schools, and mass media" (p. 46). While this would seem a logical explanation of the sources of gender role ideologies, other researchers have arrived at very different conclusions. Hardesty and Bokemeier (1989) propose that the origins of gender role ideologies are found within the economy of American society, offering a Marxist-feminist perspective instead (see also Hartmann, 1981). They argue that the division of labor within the household results from the ideologies promoted by the division of labor outside the home, one where males have maintained a clear advantage over females in access to better paying, more prestigious, and more powerful jobs. Females are seen as having to settle for lower paying positions in the occupational structure, and have little chance of advancement or promotion. Hardesty and Bokemeier (1989) state: "...this relation of dominance and dependence promotes a cultural norm that operates to reduce the wife's power in the marriage, permits the exploitation of her household labor, and justifies the inequitable distribution of household labor" (p. 256).

While gender role/socialization theories are used in approximately one-third of all studies on the division of household labor, they are by no

means uniform or exhaustive. Most studies have been content to use single measures of gender-role ideologies or, even more problematic, to use proxies such as income or educational attainment as measures of ideologies (see Coltrane, 2000; Greenstein, 1996; Kroska, 2004). Given the dilemmas frequently involved in attempting to link ideologies directly to behavior, however, the multitude of approaches in assessing gender ideologies is often fraught with problems. However, recent research suggests that attitudes concerning the actual performance of housework (in terms of enjoyment of chore performance and perceptions of gender appropriateness) do, in fact, influence both men's and women's participation in the performance of household labor (Poortman & Van der Lippe, 2009).

Gender role theories typically are not offered as a sole explanation, but rather are often coupled with what is known as power theory (also sometimes referred to as relative resource theory). Within this perspective, females with the most marital power do the least housework and tasks are less likely to be allotted along traditional gender-role lines. Power is usually proxied by the relative status of each spouse in regards to their occupations, incomes, attachments to the marriage, or other related aspects which could be used as leverage to coerce or force the other spouse to do as they desire. In studies of household labor, this implies that the spouse wielding the most power may require, either explicitly or implicitly, that the other spouse do the less enjoyable tasks and/or the majority of household work (Blood & Wolfe, 1960). When referred to as resource theory, this theoretical perspective emphasizes the actual resources held by either spouse, and then proposes how these resources can be used to hold and maintain power within the relationship. Hiller (1984), who offers this perspective under the title of relative resources, states that "Power has typically been conceptualized as dominance in decision making, and resources have most often been considered to be education, occupation, and income" (p. 1006).

Power or resources may also be derived from less obvious sources. For instance, under this theoretical perspective, a husband with a college

education will maintain greater power in the marriage, even if each spouse earns an equal income. In such an example, power theory would posit that the husband has greater power since his higher education affords him more opportunities outside the marriage. These opportunities could include such things as seeking divorce, explicitly preferring another woman to his current spouse, choosing another job, moving the family to another area solely as a result of his choice, and so forth. As such, he would be viewed as having less attachment to the marital union, and would therefore hold an enhanced advantage over the wife, who would be seen as having a greater attachment to the marriage. Although attachment to the union has been presented in some theoretical arguments, it has not been included in the testing of power theories (Hiller, 1984). Power theory implies that the spouse with the greater power will usually dictate who will do what and when. Huber and Spitze (1983) concur, stating that "Housework ... may generally be described as routine domestic service performed by a less powerful for a more powerful person" (p. 78).

Earnings and income have provided the basic criteria for determining marital power in the majority of theories in the study of household labor. A standard strategy is to use the relative income of each spouse as a measure of their respective and relative power in their relationship. The influence of income on the allocation of chores has been demonstrated by researchers (see Kroska, 2004), with most studies indicating that a smaller difference between men's and women's earnings generally yields a greater sharing of household chores. Maret and Finlay (1984) propose that wives' income is indeed crucial in determining her power within the family, but they also argue that other factors must be considered, such as the types of occupations, educational attainments, and attitudinal stances of each spouse. Maret and Finlay find that the income levels of each spouse have the strongest effect on the division of labor within the home. They state that "...as husband's income increases, controlling for wife's income and other factors, wife's home responsibilities increase; but as wife's income increases, controlling for husband's income and

other factors, the opposite effect is seen" (Maret & Finlay, 1984, p. 362). However, this is not always the case, as other studies have suggested that partners' incomes do not yield a substantial effect upon the division of household chores (e.g., Pleck, 1985).

The notion of personal resources (human capital) affecting the allocation of chores, while logical, has not always been given support by researchers. Greenstein (2000), for example, finds that husbands who are financially dependent upon their wives actually perform fewer hours of household labor, as compared to husbands whose incomes are about the same as those of their wives. Extending the assessment of personal resources (as sources of power) beyond income creates additional quandaries. Hardesty and Bokemeier (1989), in examining the effect of educational attainment on the division of chores, posit that while higher levels of education may be associated with more egalitarian gender role attitudes, educational attainment itself does not necessarily provide leverage or power within the decision-making processes themselves regarding chores.

A third perspective, time availability explanations of the division of household labor, proposes a simple hypothesis: that the spouse with the greatest amount of available time (time not spent in paid labor) will be the one to perform the most work in the home. The central assumption is that the division of household labor results from a rational decision-making process, and is not influenced by other non-time-relevant factors (e.g., gender role attitudes). Here, the couple is viewed as having established a division of household labor through some type of negotiation, yet this assumption carries with it the assertion that if all other factors were equal, then the division of household chores would follow suit. Hence, if a rational basis of chore allocation is used, then wives and husbands who are employed equally outside the home should perform the same amounts of household labor time inside the home. Research using this theoretical approach, though, has shown that such an equal division of labor rarely results, even in instances in which husband and wife work equivalent numbers of hours outside the home (see Blair, 1998; Pleck, 1985).

For example, recent research by Gager and Yabiku (2010) directly contradicts the time availability perspective, finding that time spent on housework is associated with more time spent in other activities, including paid work and sexual frequency. This research explicates a new “multiple spheres” hypothesis (see also Marks, 1977; Hyde, DeLamater, & Hewitt, 1998) that argues that some married couples possess an underlying trait for being high energy, go-getters who work hard and play hard. Thus, rather than viewing time on housework as a zero sum game, this research provides support that individuals meet time demands across the spheres of families and work.

Participation in the paid labor force is usually seen as the primary determinant of available time (Coltrane, 2000; Kamo, 1988; Hiller, 1984), although other sources of time requirements have been offered, such as the time devoted to children and child care (see Kroska, 2004). Despite the fact that this theoretical perspective has been dismissed by many researchers as overlooking essential elements of the marital relationship, its primary advantage is in its simplistic assessment of time allocation. Before other variables can be accounted for, such as the gender role orientation or power balance of the spouses, the absolute amount of time available puts constraints on each spouse’s ability to do household chores. Hence, while this approach by itself does not offer a clear explanation of the division of labor, it provides a proper beginning context in which to apply the other perspectives.

Consequences of the Division of Household Labor

Understandably, given the rather skewed division of household labor found in most families, it is not unexpected to find that these patterns of chore allocation yield some undesirable consequences for both the individuals involved and their relationships. In terms of individuals’ mental and physical well-being, researchers have noted a variety of deleterious effects of the division of household labor, most of which have a decidedly negative impact upon the well-being of women.

Bird and Fremont (1991), for example, find that women who perform longer hours of household labor have poorer overall health, as compared to women who perform fewer hours of housework. The paid labor of wives is also a contributing factor, as Ross, Mirowsky, and Huber (1983) report that wives’ psychological distress is greater among wives who prefer to be employed, but whose husbands do not contribute appreciably to household labor in the home.

Interestingly, it is not only the actual division of household labor which has an impact upon women’s well-being; rather, even the perceptions of equity or fairness in the allocation of chores can have a significant effect. Lennon and Rosenfield (1994) find that women who perceive division of household labor to be unfair tend to experience a significantly lower level of psychological well-being. Similarly, Claffey and Michelson (2009) conclude that perceived unfairness (or inequity) serves to mediate the effect of the division of household labor on employed mothers’ personal distress. Hence, the subjective nature of the division of chores, along with each partners’ perceptions of the allocation of housework, can affect well-being in both direct and indirect manners (Voydanoff & Donnelly, 1999).

The very nature of household labor may even be related to the sense of identity and self-esteem of individuals. Caplan and Schooler (2006) conclude that the performance of more complex household chores by women is associated with increases in intellectual flexibility, increases in self-confidence, and decreases in self-deprecation. Among men, on the other hand, the performance of more complex household chores is associated with decreases in self-confidence. Given the gendered nature of traditional spousal roles, it is assumed that participation in household labor is less necessary for men, and more necessary for women, particularly as it affects self-esteem and general psychological well-being (see Baxter, 2000; Greenstein, 1996). While women’s and men’s roles are not necessarily so neatly divided, Caplan and Schooler (2006) posit that “performing challenging tasks in a domain that is considered to be in some sense inappropriate for members of one’s gender may actually be

detrimental to one's self-confidence" (p. 898). This gender difference in the effects of household labor on well-being has been noted by other researchers. Bird (1999) finds that men tend to have lower levels of depression when their contributions to household labor are smaller, while women's well-being, on the other hand, appears to benefit from a moderate level of household labor performance.

Given the substantial impact of the division of household labor on individuals' well-being, it is hardly surprising that researchers have consistently noted the effects of chore allocation on the relationship quality of both married and cohabiting partners. Coltrane (2000) notes that marital discord is significantly higher among couples when the division of housework is considered to be unequal. As might be expected, the lower levels of husbands' household labor contributions are also shown to be associated with lower levels of marital satisfaction (Rogers & Amato, 2000). The lower levels of marital satisfaction associated with the division of household labor, however, are more often reported by women, rather than men. Kluwer, Heesink, and Van de Vliert (1996), for example, report that marital conflict and arguments revolve primarily around the performance of housework, as compared to paid labor. The extent of couples' conflict about the allocation of chores, though, is solely associated with wives' dissatisfaction, and appears to be tied to both wives' and husbands' respective levels of chore performance (Kluwer et al., 1996).

The perception of fairness in the division of chores plays an integral role in affecting marital satisfaction and marital quality, yet the perception of inequity in the division of household labor seems to bring about change in wives' assessments of marital quality, while husbands' assessment go largely unaffected (Blair, 1998). This pattern is not found in all studies, as some researchers have noted that, among dual-earner couples, both women and men report lower levels of marital quality when they perceive the division of chores to be unfair to themselves (Frisco & Williams, 2003). Seemingly, husbands are content with an unequal or unfair division of household labor, until they themselves feel that they are

performing too much housework, or until their wives become openly dissatisfied. Indeed, Frisco and Williams (2003) find that dissatisfaction with the division of household labor is significantly associated with a higher consideration of divorce among women, but not among men. Additional research investigating the effect of unfairness on divorce documents that the odds of divorce are lower for couples in which the husband perceives unfairness to the wife and the wife does not, as compared to couples in which both perceive fairness in the division of labor (Gager & Sanchez, 2003). This suggests that couples who are on the "same page" when evaluating fairness tend to do better within their marriage itself.

The gendered nature of dissatisfaction with the division of household labor is somewhat tied to the respective gender role attitudes and expectations which women and men bring into their relationships. Botkin, Weeks, and Morris (2000) posit that there has been a steady shift away from traditional expectations concerning women's and men's roles within marriage. Whereas men may have once been regarded as the "provider" and women as the "caretaker," these expectations have declined substantially as a result of increases in women's paid labor roles, increases in women's educational attainment, and other such status changes which have brought about more similarity between men's and women's roles. Over the last several decades, researchers have noted a substantial decline in the amount of time spent in housework by women, whereas men have increased their contributions (e.g., Coltrane, 2000). However, other researchers have also noted that, as women's attitudes become more egalitarian, their perceptions of marital quality tend to decrease (see Amato & Booth, 1995). Mickelson, Claffey, and Williams (2006) find that both men's and women's respective gender ideologies have a moderating effect on the relationship between the division of household labor and perceptions of marital quality, although the relative impact of gender ideology has been shown to be comparatively weak in other studies (e.g., Blair & Johnson, 1992; Greenstein, 1996). The effect of the division of labor on perceptions of marital quality encompasses even more than

simply the sheer amounts of work performed by each spouse. Lavee and Katz (2002) find that the segregation of chores is also a factor, but one which depends upon the respective gender ideologies of each partner. They report that, among women with egalitarian gender attitudes, a greater segregation of individual chores is associated with a lower perception of marital quality. However, this moderating effect of gender ideology is only found among women, and not among men.

Although the empirical results are mixed, some researchers have asserted that there is a connection between the division of household labor and women's experiences in the paid labor force. Using Becker's (1985) theory of allocation of effort, the contention is that the supply of an individual's available effort is limited, and can only be expended in one area at the loss of effort being expended in another area. In terms of the relationship between the division of household labor and participation in paid labor, this perspective posits that individuals who exert considerable effort in one arena (either the home or the workplace) will not be successful in their efforts in the other arena. Some studies have demonstrated that, for women, there is, indeed, such a connection between the performance of household labor and performance in the paid labor force. Hersch and Stratton (1997) find that, among married women, greater participation in the performance of household labor is significantly associated with lower wages in the paid labor force.

The time allocation perspective, however, is based upon a contention that women, on average (due to their greater contributions to household labor), will exert fewer hours to paid labor. Bielby and Bielby (1988) find that this is not necessarily the case, as their results show that women allocate more effort to their paid labor roles than do men (see also McLennan, 2000). Interestingly, they also find that husbands who spend less time in the paid labor force than their wives actually perform *less* household labor. Shelton and Firestone (1989) find that women's lower earnings in the paid labor force are only partially attributable to their greater allocation of time spent on household chores. However, women's paid labor roles can potentially

be affected by the division of household labor in many different ways. Women, more so than men, may feel a greater emotional responsibility for the performance of chores, they may choose particular occupations which allow their greater flexibility in their schedules to attend to household chores, and the traditional expectation that women should have the primary responsibility for chores may negatively impact their chances of promotions or raises in the paid labor force (Shelton & Firestone, 1989). Noonan (2001) concludes that the segregation of chores also influences women's wages in the paid labor force. When greater time is spent in traditionally "feminine" chores (e.g., cooking, cleaning, laundry), a more negative effect of household labor is shown to impact paid labor wages. Of course, given the segregated nature of chore allocation in the average household, women are more likely to be found performing such chores; hence, the hidden costs of household labor will typically impact women's paid labor experiences more substantially than their male counterparts.

Perceptions of Fairness in the Division of Household Labor

As noted previously, researchers have long noted that, despite the changes in women's paid labor roles, the relative domestic roles of men and women have changed little, and particularly so in regard to their participation in household labor. What is most interesting, though, is the seeming indifference of wives to the skewed division of household labor (Blair & Johnson, 1992; Thompson, 1991). In a sample of dual-earner couples, Blair and Johnson (1992) find that approximately 13% of husbands perceive the division of household labor to be unfair, while 29% of wives feel likewise. Using an international sample, Braun, Lewin-Epstein, Stier, and Baumgartner (2008) find that approximately 45% of women perceive the division of labor to be fair to themselves, suggesting that a minority of women regard the allocation of chores to be unfair or unjust (see also Mikula, 1998). Similarly, Baxter (2000) finds that 59% of Australian

women regard the division of household labor to be fair, despite the fact that they perform the overwhelming majority of chores. The apparent contentment of couples with this pattern of inequality is quite odd, given the variety of negative consequences which are brought to bear on both the individuals and their relationship quality (Claffey & Michelson, 2009).

No matter whether couples are married or cohabiting, the respective roles of women and men, by their very nature, represent gendered roles within society (Mikula, Freudenthaler, Brennacher-Kroll, & Brunschko, 1997). As such, the perceptions of fairness concerning the allocation of roles within the home will likely vary between women and men. It is logical to assume, then, that gender (and, more specifically, gender differences) will be a major determinant in each partners' respective perceptions of fairness within those roles (see Benin & Agostinelli, 1988; Blair, 1998). Most studies in this area have suggested that men and women are not merely trying to reduce their workload or increase that of their partner; rather, each partner considers their own workload to have symbolic meaning (Ferree, 1991; Thompson, 1991; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Indeed, just as the division of labor has consequences for partners and their relationships, the perceptions of fairness themselves have a distinct impact, as well (Blair, 1998; Greenstein, 1996).

Much of the research on justice principles and fairness within marriage has focused on the sense of unfairness which arises when partners feel that their relative shares of household labor are unequal. Thompson (1991) has offered an exposition on this matter, proposing that the distributive justice paradigm has particular relevance on the perceptions of fairness maintained by partners. The distributive justice framework pertains to (1) the distribution of outcomes, (2) the choice of comparison referents, and (3) the justifications offered therein. Each of these factors should play a major role in determining the extent to which partners feel that their circumstances are unfair.

The outcome values of this perspective refer to the returns that partners seek from a particular situation or from their relationship. These include such returns as the sense of family unity which

might arise from the women providing more care to individual family members. This can be rather complicated, as Thompson (1991) posits that women may perceive household labor as a form of family care, and thereby regard housework as a way of expressing love toward their family. Comparison referents refer to the standards by which partners evaluate their own outcomes. If, for example, women perceive that their partners' contributions to household labor are less than their own, then they are likely to judge their circumstance as unfair. Justifications refer to the standards by which partners evaluate whether the processes that brought about their current outcomes are appropriate. Women may, for example, perceive that the division of household labor is unfair, yet believe that it is acceptable, given that their partners contribute greater earnings to the family (i.e., higher incomes).

Several researchers have demonstrated significant gender differences in how men and women evaluate fairness. More specifically, gender variation is found in the valued outcomes, justifications, and comparison referents and justice principles used in making these fairness evaluations (Gager & Hohmann-Marriott, 2006; Gager, 2008). For example, Gager and Hohmann-Marriott conclude that wives are more likely to compare themselves with their husbands and to take into account the hours they spend in paid labor and household labor, whereas husbands are more likely to compare themselves with other husbands, and are more likely to only consider time spent on housework.

While the overall amount of chores certainly influences perceptions of fairness in the division of household labor, Baxter (2000) finds that women's perceptions of fairness also depend significantly upon the types of chores which their male partners perform. Within a distributive justice framework, this suggests that it is *what* partners do, and not necessarily *how much* which serves to shape particular perceptions of fairness in the allocation of chores. The demonstration of concern by males in their performance of particular chores (e.g., washing dishes, doing laundry) may represent a symbolic value to females which leads them to displace the fact that males are still

performing fewer hours of chores (Blair & Johnson, 1992). Additionally, the perceptions of fairness in the allocation of chores by women may be tempered by whether they enjoy performing chores in the home (Grote, Naylor, & Clark, 2002). The comparative assessments of who performs housework may also be more complicated than they appear, as partners may not necessarily compare their performance to one another, but also to other same-sex individuals with whom they are familiar (Gager, 1998; Grote et al., 2002). Gager (1998) concludes that “most women did not have to look far to find a female comparison referent in similar unfair circumstances” (p. 13).

Just as the division of household labor has consequences for individuals and their relationships, so too, do the perceptions of fairness within the division of chores. Researchers have demonstrated that women’s perceptions of fairness may mediate the impact of the division of household labor on psychological distress (e.g., Voydanoff & Donnelly, 1999). Using a sample from Israel, Lavee and Katz (2002) find that perceptions of fairness in the division of housework affect the marital quality of women, but not men (see also Claffey & Michelson, 2009). Frisco and Williams (2003) find that perceptions of unfairness in the division of chores not only decrease both wives’ and husbands’ sense of marital quality, but also significantly increase wives’ consideration of divorce. The effects of perceptions of fairness, therefore, appear to be distinct for each sex, suggesting that both the actual labor and the perceptions of fairness within the chore allocations of women and men can bring about differential personal and relationship consequences.

International Division of Household Labor

Although much of the research literature on the division of household labor utilizes data drawn from samples in the United States, it is important to recognize that the study of the allocation of household chores has been performed in numerous countries around the globe. In such studies, many of the same theoretical perspectives are

used (e.g., power/relative resources, socialization/gender ideology, time availability), and much of the analyses focuses on the core issue of women’s and men’s respective roles within the context of marriage and family life. Of course, the very nature of gender and gender roles depends greatly upon the culture of a particular country. These culture-specific (and country-specific) studies, then, can provide yet another dimension of understanding both how and why the division of household labor occurs (Batalova & Cohen, 2002; Davis & Greenstein, 2004).

Among Scandinavian countries, for example, Fuwa and Cohen (2006) contend that more egalitarian gender roles in the home can be attributed to the greater government implementation of affirmative action policies concerning women’s employment. While Scandinavian countries are typically regarded as woman-friendly welfare states, Kitterod and Pettersen (2006) find that Norwegian fathers tend to increase their contributions to household labor most often when the mother is employed for relatively few hours outside the home. When Norwegian mothers are employed full-time, fathers’ contributions do not significantly increase. In a similar set of results, Dribe and Stanfors (2009) find that Swedish fathers do not increase their household labor performance with the birth of a child; rather, the traditional division of chores between mothers and fathers appears to reinforce traditional gender role expectations. In contrast, Thomas and Hildingsson (2009) find that Swedish fathers’ contributions do increase in terms of both household labor and child care, but primarily as a consequence of wives’ return to full-time paid employment. The presence of more traditional gender expectations can be seen in recent surveys, which show that Swedish women perform over 15 h per week of housework, as compared to only about 5 h per week being performed by men (Evertsson & Neremo, 2004).

Among European nations, there has been considerable social and political change over the past two decades, much of which has resulted in change in men’s and women’s respective labor roles, both inside and outside the home. In Germany, the reunification of the former East and

West did not necessarily bring about a uniform set of gender role expectations, as Cooke (2007) finds that West German husbands perform about 12 h per week of housework, while East German husbands perform over 16 h per week. Interestingly, there is no substantial difference in wives' household labor contributions from either former side of Germany (both contribute approximately 26 h per week). This disparity between the household labor contributions of German men and women is not without consequences, however, as researchers have also posited that the greater housework time spent by German wives significantly detracts from their ability to obtain and hold onto better paying jobs outside the home (e.g., Geist, 2005).

Throughout most European nations, the combination of increased female labor force participation rates and the modernization of household appliances has led to a substantial decline in both men's and women's time spent in household labor. Despite these changes, though, the difference between wives' and husbands' contributions remains fairly unchanged. In the Netherlands, for example, only 19.9% of women state that they perceive the division of chores to be equally shared between themselves and their spouse (Wunderink & Niehoff, 1997). More egalitarian gender role ideologies among spouses do appear to lead to a more equal division of household labor, yet it also seems to increase the amount of discontent among Dutch wives over the allocation of chores (Buunk, Kluwer, Schuurman, & Siero, 2000). Given the relative lack of assistance from husbands, many Dutch households choose to "outsource" (i.e., hire domestic help) chores, and thereby "replace" many of the chore contributions which may have been performed by husbands (Van der Lippe, Tudens, & De Ruijter, 2004). In Switzerland, the relative earnings of spouses is shown to yield little influence on the division of household labor, although the respective gender role ideologies do have a slight effect on husbands' contributions (Charles & Hopflinger, 1992). The steady movement toward more egalitarian attitudes concerning the division of household labor is not found everywhere, as Bjarnason and Hjalmsdottir (2008) find that both female and

male adolescents from Iceland appear to prefer a more traditional allocation of chores by sex.

In Russia, a similar pattern of chore allocation is also found. In an examination of residents from Pskov, Karakhanova (2002) reports that Russian women spent approximately 31 h per week on household chores, while Russian men spent slightly better than 24 h per week. When considering only those men and women who worked outside the home, however, the weekly contributions of women were almost 27 h, as compared to only 16 h per week for men. The inequity of this division of housework is not without consequences among Russian couples. Cubbins and Vannoy (2004), using a sample of couples from Moscow, demonstrate that the allocation of chores substantially influences wives' and, to a lesser extent, husbands' marital discontent. Hence, although the cultural context of families certainly varies around the globe, it nonetheless appears that the division of household labor is commonly a source of disagreement and contention among couples.

In many Middle Eastern countries, there is a continuing pattern of patriarchal authority within families, which results in a rather skewed division of household labor. In an examination of several communities around Beirut (Lebanon), Habib, Nuwayhid, and Yeretizian (2006) find that Lebanese women perform the vast majority of both household labor and care giving tasks within families. Interestingly, women who are employed outside the home do appear to perform significantly fewer chores in the home, as compared to unemployed women. As is the case in many countries, though, a greater level of performance of household labor by Lebanese husbands has been shown to reduce wives' psychological distress, marital dissatisfaction, and overall unhappiness (Khawaja & Habib, 2007). The relative influence of women's employment outside the home, such that it tends to result in a more equal division of household chores, is also found in studies of Israeli couples. Stier and Lewin-Epstein (2000), for example, find that while part-time employment of wives does not appreciably affect the allocation of chores in the home, full-time employment of wives brings about more

gender equity. Although wives' employment is clearly associated with a more balanced division of labor among Israeli couples, other research concludes that both more egalitarian gender ideologies and higher wives' educational attainment are pertinent factors in bringing about a greater sharing of chores in the home (Lewin-Epstein, Stier, & Braun, 2006).

Among Asian countries, there is a considerably diverse range of gender roles within families. Understandably, these variations also bring about a varied division of household labor. In Japan, for example, women have long been expected to bear responsibility for both care giving and household labor within the family. Strober and Chan (1998) surveyed a sample of graduates from a Japanese university approximately 10 years after their graduation, and found that only 12% of the women and 8% of the men reported that they had an egalitarian allocation of chores in their home. In an examination of dual-earner Japanese couples, Iwama (2005) finds that although wives do perform more household labor than husbands, both the time constraints (related to employment) and spouses' gender ideologies affect the allocation of chores. In particular, when Japanese wives are employed in professions, their husbands tend to perform more labor.

In China, the roles of women are even more complex, given the nature of the culture. Chinese women, as compared to those from other Asian countries, are actively encouraged to work outside the home, yet their roles within the family reflect a very traditional set of gender role expectations (see Chen, 2005). Zuo and Bian (2001), in an examination of urban Chinese couples, find that wives perform a substantially greater share of household labor. Interestingly, however, Chinese wives do not tend to perceive the allocation of chores to be unfair; rather, the performance of most chores is viewed as the appropriate fulfillment of a culturally prescribed gender role. Pimentel (2006), though, notes that Chinese wives' expectations for more egalitarianism within marriage tend to be greater among younger women. Among younger couples, Chinese husbands appear to be performing more housework than their older counterparts, suggesting that generational change

may slowly be occurring. Like wives in many other countries, the perceptions of marital quality by younger Chinese wives are shown to be significantly associated with the division of household labor. Although China has become modernized quite rapidly in terms of its economy, there are still strong patriarchal elements within its culture that serve to create a contradiction of sorts for wives, where they are welcomed as equals in the workplace, yet are expected to maintain very traditional roles inside the home.

In Australia, the relative gender roles of wives and husbands are very Westernized and exhibit relational behaviors that are similar to those of American couples. In an examination of married and cohabiting couples, Baxter, Hewitt, and Haynes (2008) find that Australian women perform approximately three times the amount of housework, as compared to men. Within this sample, the birth of a child appears to bring about the greatest shift in the allocation of chores, with women's contributions increasing substantially after childbirth, while the contributions of men remain relatively constant. The persistence of the gendered division of household labor in Australian culture is quite perplexing, given that the vast majority of women are employed outside the home and have approximately the same levels of educational attainment as men. Much of this persistence, though, may be attributed to gender socialization. In an examination of adolescents' expectations for marital roles, Popock (2005) finds that almost a third of Australian males expect their eventual wives to perform all of the housework, while a small minority openly expect to share chores equally. As is the case in many societies around the globe, change in the division of household labor and the respective gender roles of wives and husbands is something which changes very slowly over time.

Children and Household Labor

Investigations of household labor have typically focused on the contributions and division of labor among the adult members of the household. One overlooked group of contributors to household

chores, however, is children. Children have been shown to consistently perform chores within the home (Blair, 1992a; Cogle & Tasker, 1982), and these chores do represent a significant portion of the total amount of household labor performed by all persons in the home (Gager, Cooney, & Call, 1999; Peters & Haldeman, 1987). The vast majority of children in American households perform some type of housework as a part of their daily routine. White and Brinkerhoff (1981) found that approximately 86% of boys and 81% of girls between the ages of 2 and 17 were regularly required to do chores in the home. All of the chores were of a decidedly domestic nature, such as cleaning bathrooms, doing laundry, cleaning dishes, mowing lawns, and so forth. Cogle and Tasker (1982) report similar results, with 88% of the children in their sample, aged 6–17, performing at least one household chore on a regular basis. Here again, children spend the majority of the housework time in cleaning or maintenance tasks, such as housecleaning, food preparation, or dishwashing (Cogle & Tasker, 1982). Bianchi and Robinson (1997), using a sample of children under 12 years of age, find that approximately 40% of children report performing household labor, and among those who do, they perform almost 1 h per day of chores.

The overall amount of time spent by children in household chores varies considerably from one study to the next. White and Brinkerhoff (1981) reported that the median number of hours spent per week on housework was four. Cogle and Tasker (1982) reported an average of 3.5 h per week. Meanwhile, Sanik (1981) reported that children in 1977 performed an average of 8.4 h per week of housework, up from a figure of 6.3 for children in 1967. More recently, Gager, Sanchez, and DeMaris (2009) have reported that children contribute approximately 7.3 h of housework per week. Yet no matter which figure is considered, it is apparent that children perform a sizable amount of labor within the home, and this participation is deserving of greater investigation. In regard to the rationale for their performance of household chores, two primary arguments have been made. Both contain within them the necessary assumption that children are assigned to

tasks or are, at the very minimum, supervised in their household duties by their parents. Quite simply, children are not looked upon as performing housework for altruistic or individual reasons beyond the desire to comply with the parents or to satisfy them in a direct fashion.

The first explanation, from socialization literature, emphasizes the commitment of the parents to the growth and development of their children. This particular explanation is largely related to the general concept of children and childhood in the United States. As Zelizer (1985) describes, there has been a significant shift in the view taken towards children over the past century. Children have moved from being seen as “economically useful” to “emotionally priceless.” In the past, children were looked upon as a viable resource to the family, particularly as a labor source, both inside and outside the home. Prior to the turn of the twentieth century, it was not uncommon for rural children to be used extensively as workers on the family farm, and for urban children to be employed in a job outside the home.

However, with the introduction of child labor laws and a changing conception of the value of children which also arose due to the changing definition of the housewife role during the 1930s and 1940s, children were sentimentalized to a large extent (Zelizer, 1985). As Zelizer points out, this change can be seen as exhibited in the proliferation of media images of children and such social changes as the creation and increase in child life insurance. With this change in the definition and value of children, parents were, as of approximately 1930, still just as likely to regard children as a source of labor in the home, yet the rationale and justification was quite different. At this point, given the “priceless child” imagery, it became more likely that parents would look upon children’s assistance with the chores in the home as being an essential part of their development. Housework performed by children thus became more of an instructional or educational tool for parents (Zelizer, 1985, p. 98). Through this first explanation of the usage of children for household labor purposes, then, the primary motivation would be to enhance the development of personal qualities in children, such as a sense

of responsibility, self-worth, or autonomy. Or more simply, parental commitment to the socialization of their children would serve as the primary motivator to use children in the home as a labor source.

Several researchers have indeed found this type of justification by parents whose children perform housework to be not uncommon. White and Brinkerhoff (1987), in a query of parents as to why their children work in the home, obtained such responses as: "Work gives them a sense of responsibility. Makes them appreciate what they have. I think it helps them grow into responsible adults" (p. 209). In fact, parents replied with a developmental reason in approximately 72% of the cases surveyed. This would seem to indicate that perhaps parents see children's household duties as being beneficial to the maturation of their child, especially in shaping character and moral development.

The competing explanation for children's contribution to household labor approaches the issue from its more pragmatic dimensions. This approach centers around those family/structural variables which might alter the demand for household labor. Specifically, the second explanation for the use of children proposes that they are used as a source of labor in the home when the household labor requirements exceed the available or preferred time of the adult members of the home. Or to state this more simply, children will tend to be used when the time available to parents becomes constrained or limited.

This approach to understanding children's labor usage has attracted the majority of the limited research in this area (e.g., Gager et al., 1999). Nonetheless, many of the more obvious factors which might somehow limit or alter the time available to parents do appear to have a significant impact upon the use of children. As well, parents are also likely to realize the potential of children in this regard. White and Brinkerhoff (1987) report that approximately 23% of parents surveyed stated that their children assisted them around the home because they (the parents) needed the help.

A wide variety of such factors have been shown to influence the overall use of children as

a labor source in the home. The employment status of the mother is by far the most extensively researched, yet it has yielded mixed results. Several studies have shown that there is a significant increase in children's labor in the home when the mother works outside the home (Blair, 1992a, 1992b; Gager et al., 2009). Other studies show more ambiguous findings. Cogle and Tasker (1982) find that children whose mothers are employed only part-time in the paid labor force may actually perform the least chores, while children of traditional housewives perform slightly more, with children of mothers employed full-time in the paid labor force performing the greatest overall amounts of housework. However, there remains an obvious link between the time constraints placed upon the adult female, who traditionally performs the greatest share of all housework (Blair & Lichter, 1991), and the amount of labor time performed by the children. Indeed, Hedges and Barnett (1972) conclude that "when a mother takes a job, a portion of her chores are shifted to her children rather than to her husband" (p. 11). Hence, children may represent a greater resource for mothers rather than for fathers. Cunningham (2001) concludes that the employment of mothers does, in fact, lead to greater chore participation by children. Peters and Haldeman (1987) find that the employment of the adults in the home actually has no significant relation to the amount of labor spent by children on specific tasks. They do find, however, that employment of adults in the family does lead to an increase in the children's share of the total work load in the household. This would seem to indicate that parents do not, in fact, use children as a resource, but rather, that if adults should not have enough time to perform their usual chores they will simply not perform them.

Children's participation in household labor also increases with the size of the family (Gager et al., 1999). White and Brinkerhoff (1987) report this finding, yet also note that the distribution of household chores is not entirely equitable. Specifically, they find that the older children are, the more work they will be assigned, and that this is more evident among girls than boys. Cogle and Tasker (1982) also find that older children are

more likely to perform household labor and that girls are also likely to perform greater overall amounts of labor than boys.

Even the social environment of the family has been linked with children's participation in household labor. Lawrence and Wozniak (1987) find that rural children are still used as a labor source in the family, and that even the season of the year has a significant impact upon the level of their usage. Further, White and Brinkerhoff (1981) find that the rural/urban status of families does affect children's participation rates, such that rural children exhibit higher levels of involvement in housework. This, perhaps, may be related to the types of work which the children actually perform, given that it will vary considerably from a rural environment to an urban one.

As might be expected, some studies have shown that there is a substantial extent of gender-typing in the allocation of chores to children. For example, Zill and Peterson (1982) report that girls tend to perform those tasks typically associated with mothers' household labor. White and Brinkerhoff (1981) report that girls and boys differ in regards to both total inputs and types of household chores performed. Among children aged 14–17, girls perform approximately 5.7 h per week, while boys averaged 3.6 h. While this indicates some differentiation by sex, children also differed in terms of the types of chores performed. Girls are considerably more likely to clean the house, work in the kitchen, and babysit their younger siblings. Boys, on the other hand, are more likely to perform outside chores (e.g., mowing, raking leaves) and to take out the garbage (Blair, 1992b). Overall, teenage girls' chore responsibilities are consistently greater than those of teenage boys (Blair, 1992b; Gager et al., 1999).

The degree of segregation of tasks by sex among children thus seems quite similar to that found among adults (see Blair & Lichter, 1991; Blair, 1992b). That is, females (1) are more likely to perform greater total amounts of labor and (2) perform qualitatively different types of chores. These conclusions have been supported by several researchers. Lawrence and Wozniak (1987) find that girls perform significantly more labor than boys, with girls averaging 77 min per day in

total household work, as compared to an average of 55 min per day among boys. Girls were also found to spend more time overall than boys in the areas of shopping, house cleaning, food preparation, dishwashing, clothing care, and clothing construction. In fact, the only labor area in which boys outperformed girls was in the maintenance of the home and yard (Lawrence & Wozniak, 1987). Cogle and Tasker (1982) provide further support for these findings, reporting that girls were twice as likely to wash dishes and four times as likely to perform clothing-related chores (e.g., washing, ironing) (see also Cunningham, 2001).

Finally, Cogle and Tasker (1982) report that the extent of sex-typing of children's household chores tends to increase with the age of the child. They find that young children (aged 6–11) were less likely to occupy sex-typed task assignments than were older children. In particular, Cogle and Tasker find this trend to be stronger among girls than boys. In support of these conclusions, White and Brinkerhoff (1981) find that between the ages of 6 and 9, 33% of boys and 61% of girls assist their parents in meal preparation; however, between the ages of 14 and 17, only 22% of boys perform kitchen-oriented chores, while the same percentage for girls increases to 72%. Clearly, the age of children has a strong effect on the extent of sex-typing in their household chores.

Duncan and Duncan (1978) find that mothers are less likely than fathers to sex-type children's tasks. This may be related to the fact that adult females perform the majority of household labor. That is, mothers may be less likely to sex-type chores because they would then be left with fewer potential sources of labor (in the form of their children) if they chose to specialize children's chores. Cunningham (2001) posits that there is indeed a relationship between adults' sex role attitudes and their subsequent assignment of chores to children (see also Anderson & Robson, 2006). Lackey (1989) finds that males, more than females, prefer to assign their children to traditional, sex-typed chores.

The division of labor among children may also be associated with the relative compensation of boys and girls. White and Brinkerhoff (1981) find that boys more often receive money for

performing chores outside the home. Girls, on the other hand, typically perform chores in the home without receiving an equivalent level of monetary returns for their efforts. Goodnow (1988) proposes that this difference may serve to further socialize children into accepting a given sex-based role in society. Goodnow (1988) states: "Mothers do not get paid in money, and their daughters seem to be socialized into a similar pattern of work that is 'for love'" (p. 15).

Further, it is shown that there is a relative consistency between adult sex role attitudes and their interactions with their children, thus indicating the possibility of intergenerational continuity of the division of household labor. In fact, Thrall (1978) concludes that children's exposure to the sex-based division of labor among their parents is significantly linked to their own preferences for a division of household labor in adulthood (see also Cunningham, 2001). In an examination of young adult males, Anderson and Robson (2006) find time spent performing specific chores in childhood has a significant impact upon the preference for chores and gender role attitudes in adulthood, thereby continuing childhood chores patterns into the adult years.

Variations in the Division of Household Labor among Types of Couples

The vast majority of research on the division of household labor has focused on married couples. Of course, housework needs to be done in all varieties of households, and the patterns by which the chores are allocated can be as diverse and different as the types of households themselves. One type of household which has received the attention of researchers interested in the division of household labor is that of cohabiting couples. In the United States, as is the case in many other countries, rates of cohabitation have risen dramatically over the past few decades. Most current evidence indicates that cohabiting partners and married partners share many qualities, yet are, nonetheless, quite distinct. Although they live together, share resources, and raise children in

essentially the same manners, their perspectives on the meanings of their unions can be rather unique. Cohabitors obviously have chosen not to marry, but may do so for many different reasons. Some cohabitors may regard their union type as a better alternative to marriage, while other cohabitors may be living together as a means of "testing" their relationship before choosing to marry. Other cohabitors may live together for the sake of financial or sexual convenience. It is understandable, then, that cohabitors may be expected to display different patterns in their respective allocation of household chores (see also Smock, Manning, & Porter, 2005).

In an examination of Australian cohabiting and married partners, Baxter (2005) finds that while women in both types of unions perform significantly more household labor than their male partners, married couples tend to display the most traditional patterns of chore allocation. Married women perform an average of 25 h per week of household labor, while married men perform slightly less than 9 h per week. Among cohabitors, women perform an average of 19 h per week, while their male partners contribute only 8.5 h. Interestingly, cohabiting men do appear to concentrate more of their weekly household labor time in "indoor" activities, as compared to married men. As well, married couples who cohabited prior to marriage tend to display a more egalitarian, or equitable, allocation of chores, as compared to those married couples who did not previously cohabit.

These findings have been reported by other researchers, as well. Davis, Greenstein, and Marks (2007), using data from 28 different countries, also find that cohabiting men tend to perform more household labor than their married counterparts. Likewise, cohabiting women tend to perform fewer hours of housework than do married women. Although it seems plausible to assume that cohabiting and married couples have substantially different orientations to gender roles and gender expectations, this is not necessarily the case. Cubbins and Vannoy (2004), in an examination of married and cohabiting Russian couples, find that gender attitudes have no significant impact on the allocation of household chores.

Shelton and John (1993), though, posit that the smaller difference in the housework contributions of cohabitators does not necessarily indicate that cohabitation is a substantially more egalitarian union. Instead, they point out that the differences between cohabiting men's and married men's household labor contributions are relatively small (i.e., men's housework contributions do not vary by union type). Among women, those who are married perform substantially more housework than do cohabiting women, thereby suggesting that it is marriage itself which brings about a greater household labor workload for women.

The respective roles of cohabiting partners and married partners have been shown to differ in regard to their employment outside the home, as cohabiting women spend significantly more hours in the paid labor force and make greater contributions to household income, as compared to married women (Shelton & John, 1993). Given the tenet of power/relative resource theory, it would therefore seem that cohabiting women wield greater authority within their relationships, and are perhaps in a better position to negotiate the division of household labor with their partners. Of course, cohabiting couples' desire to stay out of traditional marriage also implies that their gender attitudes may also play a role in their division of household chores. South and Spitz (1994) posit that the performance of household labor represents one of the primary ways by which gender roles are embodied and maintained within households. The traditional nature and expectations within marriage, then, appear to prompt an adherence to more conservative and traditional roles for married women, in particular. Gupta (1999), in an examination of the effect of marital transitions on the division of household labor, finds that men's time spent performing housework declines significantly when they enter into a cohabiting relationship, while women's household labor time increases substantially. The same pattern is evident when individuals become married, such that men reduce their household labor contributions, while women increase theirs dramatically. Most telling, however, is that women substantially reduce their household labor

performance when they leave either type of union. In essence, becoming a partner, whether cohabiting or married, seems to prompt women, in particular, to conform to more traditional gender role expectations in regard to the performance of household labor.

Another variation of couple type which has received attention from researchers interested in the division of household labor is that of older couples. Aging and older couples do present a unique form of household for the study of chore allocation patterns. Among older couples, for example, their perceptions of appropriate gender roles and gendered behaviors may be more representative of those which were more popular in the larger culture several decades earlier. Older couples are more likely to have completed childbearing and childrearing, and are commonly living in a home with just themselves. For many older individuals, they may have already reached retirement, and may even have health concerns which inhibit their ability to perform household chores. Simply, older couples' unique attributes would seem to bring about a distinct division of household chores, as compared to the larger population.

Interestingly, research on older couples' division of labor does not provide a clear and consistent understanding of their chore allocation processes. In regard to retirement, for example, some researchers have concluded that older men do not appreciably change their chore performance after retiring (e.g., Keith & Schafer, 1986), while others have found that older men tend to increase their household labor contributions following their retirement from the paid labor force (e.g., Rexroat & Shehan, 1987). Researchers have demonstrated that older women may tend to decrease their chore performance following retirement (e.g., Dorfman & Heckert, 1988), while others report that older women actually increase their time spent in household labor following their retirement (Szinovacz, 2000).

The dynamics of older couples' relationships have some similarities to those of younger couples, yet are also distinct in many ways. For example, older wives' subjective views about the allocation of chores have been shown to be just as influential as those of younger wives (Coltrane,

2000). Keith and Schafer (1986), however, find that older wives report greater spousal disagreements and also higher rates of depression when their husbands participate more in the performance of household labor. The researchers posit that among older wives, the increased participation of chores by husbands may represent the violation of gendered territory, particularly if older husbands begin to perform chores which were previously the exclusive responsibility of the wives. While this conclusion does not necessarily apply to all older couples (see Szinovacz, 2000), it does suggest that the division of household labor among older couples requires a slightly different perspective and interpretation, given their unique characteristics.

The overwhelming majority of research on the division of household labor has focused on heterosexual couples, and has commonly pursued the notion of a sex-based division of chores. This approach overlooks the presence of gay and lesbian couples, who, of course, have to somehow allocate household tasks within their own homes. Over the past decade, a growing number of studies have sought to examine the division of chores within gay and lesbian households. In a direct comparison of gay and lesbian couples, Kurdek (2007) reports that there are no differences in the relative amounts of household labor performed, although lesbian partners do report a higher level of task sharing, as compared to gay partners. Among gay couples, partners tend to specialize in the performance of particular tasks to a greater extent. Couples within the sample also reported that dissatisfaction with the division of household chores did significantly detract from their perceptions of relationship quality, which is directly comparable to the same associations found among heterosexual couples.

Lesbian couples have attracted a greater amount of research on their division of household labor, with much of it focusing upon how the arrival or presence of children affects their allocation of chores (e.g., Goldberg & Perry-Jenkins, 2007). One often-made assumption is that the introduction of a child into a lesbian household may bring a shift toward more traditional roles, resulting in one partner becoming the “mother”

(whether by birth or adoption) and thereby taking on the traditionally larger share of household chores. This assumption does not find much support, however, as the overwhelming majority of lesbian couples report an equitable sharing of chores within the home, both during and after the transition into parenthood (Reimann, 1997).

Overall, it would appear that while the division of labor among gay and lesbian couples may not be completely equitable, they do appear to desire and attain a greater balance in terms of chore allocation, as compared to heterosexual couples. Additionally, just like heterosexual couples, gay and lesbian partners also appear to become more specialized in particular chore performance (i.e., chore segregation) as their relationship continues over time (Kurdek, 2007). Hence, while the division of chores is not based on the sex of the partners, gay and lesbian couples seem to exhibit many of the same characteristics of chore allocation as do heterosexual couples, particularly in regard to how the division of household labor affects their relationships and the quality thereof. For example, Moore (2008), in an examination of Black lesbian stepfamilies, found that the biological mother tended to take on a greater share of the household chores. However, this greater workload was regarded as a means of securing greater power within the lesbian couples' relationships. This is quite contrary to prevailing assumptions concerning the division of household chores among heterosexual couples, and clearly indicates the need for both closer study of the division of labor among gay and lesbian couples, as well as a re-evaluation of the existing concepts, theories, and measures used by researchers in the study of the allocation of chores.

Conclusion

While the last several decades have revealed decreases in women's overall performance of household labor, and also shown slight increases in men's performance of housework, women still bear the burden for performing the majority of chores in the home. Researchers have shown the patterns of chore allocation to be influenced by

gender role attitudes, employment, earnings, the presence of children, the stage of the family life cycle, sexual orientation, and a variety of behavioral, attitudinal, and contextual characteristics. These patterns of chore allocation, however, have been shown to have substantial consequences for the well-being of both women and men, as well as for the quality of their relationships. The variety of theoretical perspectives used in the examination of household labor has increased somewhat, yet researchers still tend to focus on a select few in order to explain why the sex-based division of household labor remains relatively intransigent. This continuing pattern, particularly when considered in conjunction with the similarity between adults' division of housework and those same patterns shown in the chores performed by children, underscores the need to give greater consideration to the question of why these intergenerational patterns of household chore allocation persist. Given that the theoretical perspectives and methodological techniques used in the study of the division of household labor come from several different disciplines, an interdisciplinary approach may perhaps yield a greater understanding of why the sex-based division of chores continues with so little change.

The past several decades have witnessed a peculiar pattern in how researchers are approaching the study of the division of household chores. During the 1980s, many researchers relied heavily upon small, nonrepresentative samples, and examined the allocation of chores from a largely qualitative approach. In the late 1980s and into the 1990s, researchers took advantage of nationally representative samples, such as the NSFH, and the study of the division of household labor was approached primarily from a quantitative perspective. Since the turn of the century, the past decade has seen researchers in this area once again turning to smaller, more qualitative studies of the division of chores. This seemingly cyclical pattern suggests that there is an "ebb and flow" to both methodological and theoretical approaches to examining the division of household labor. This is evident in other areas of family study and, to a great extent, is to be expected within most science disciplines.

Researchers who examine the division of household labor in the future need to be aware of

the increasingly varied structures and behaviors within families. Just as the past several decades have yielded changes in researchers' approaches to understanding and explaining the allocation of household chores, the families themselves continue to change, as well. The number of stepfamilies, for example, continues to increase, bringing about more complex familial relationships. Our theoretical and conceptual approaches to explaining how parents influence the household chore performance of children need to recognize the complex nature of parenthood itself (e.g., resident/nonresident, biological/step), as well as the influence of the variety of extended kin within such families. Likewise, the percentage of single mother households continues to rise in the United States, necessitating that researchers deal with not only parental socialization influences upon children, but also how single mothers perform the housework themselves, or perhaps turns to others (e.g., friends, relatives, neighbors). Cohabitation is very much increasing in prominence, and this change certainly requires that researchers develop more appropriate conceptual models which can address the substantial attitudinal and behavioral differences across the various types of cohabitators themselves (e.g., younger vs. older couples; cohabitators with children vs. childless cohabitators). Over the coming years, it is the varied forms and behaviors of families which will present the greatest challenge to researchers interested in examining the allocation of chores. Ultimately, the "traditional" conceptual, theoretical, and methodological approaches which have been consistently applied by family researchers over the years will need to be reformulated in order to better understand and explain the division of household labor among an increasingly varied population of families.

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Marie Cornwall

In the first *Handbook of Marriage and the Family* by Harold Christensen (1964), “religion” or “religion and family” is indexed only six times, though admittedly, these were early days for the study of religion and family. Herberg’s (1955) *Protestant, Catholic, and Jew* had been available for less than a decade and Lenski’s (1961) *The Religious Factor* had only recently been published. Thomas Luckmann had not yet published *The Invisible Religion: The Problem of Religion in Modern Society* (1967) and Berger had not published *The Sacred Canopy* (1967).

The first edition of this version of the *Handbook* (Sussman & Steinmetz, 1987) included a full chapter on family and religion (Marciano, 1987). Although little research was available at this time (see the exception, D’Antonio & Aldous, 1983), Marciano laid down the foundations, specifying issues that required the attention of religion and family scholars: secularization, individualism, and the transmission of religion across generations, women and the ministry, as well as sexuality. Two decades later, scholarly interest in religion and family linkages had grown; the chapter included in the second edition of the *Handbook* began with secularization and then explored the impact of religion on premarital sex and cohabitation, age at marriage, fertility and contraception, abortion,

gender roles, childrearing, marital quality, and divorce (Wittberg, 1999). Even so, the field was still in its infancy (Heaton & Cornwall, 1989; Thomas, 1988; Thomas & Cornwall, 1990).

At the beginning of the second decade of the twentieth century, however, the scholarship on religion and family is now well established. Since the new century began several handbooks have been published by sociology of religion scholars (Beckford & Demerath, 2007; Clarke, 2009; Dillon, 2003; Ebaugh, 2005; Fenn, 2001), each with a chapter on some aspect of family, such as (1) the paradox of gender relations among Pentecostals (Martin, 2001), (2) religious socialization (Bartkowski, 2007; Sherkat, 2003), (3) the interdependence of religion/family vitality (Wilcox, 2005), (4) life course, cohort, and generational change in American spirituality and religion (Dillon, 2007; Roof, 2009), or (5) the accommodation of congregations to new family forms (Edgell, 2003, 2009). The family and religion factor has also been explored in edited volumes and handbooks on marriage and the family with chapters on (1) religion and family change in diverse cultural contexts (Houseknecht & Pankhurst, 2000a), (2) Muslim families in the United States (Sherif-Trask, 2004), (3) religion and family practices in diverse communities (Dollahite, Marks, & Goodman, 2004), (4) religion, romantic love, and the family (Turner, 2007), family values in American life (Tipton & Witte, 2005), as well as (5) a summary of the current religion and family research (Chatters & Taylor, 2005). Among the many handbooks

M. Cornwall, PhD (✉)
Department of Sociology, College of Family, Home,
and Social Science, Brigham Young University,
Provo, UT 84602, USA
e-mail: marie_cornwall@byu.edu

published in the last decade, only Demo, Allen, and Fine neglected religion in their *Handbook of Family Diversity* (2000). Spiritual development also has been added to the study of marriage and parenting (Mahoney & Tarakeshwar, 2005), to childhood and adolescent development (Boyatzis, 2005; Boyatzis, Dollahite, & Marks, 2006), and to the study of emerging adults (Dillon, 2007; Levenson, Aldwin, & D’Mello, 2005).

Attempting a summary of the full spectrum of studies of religion and family in the current literature is a herculean feat. The research covers a full range of analysis from *institutional changes* (e.g., linkages between the institutions of religion and family) to *organizational relations and effects* (e.g., denominational studies, congregations, and social movements) to *micro-level analyses* of religion’s influence on family behavior (e.g., child and youth socialization, marriage, divorce, infidelity, fertility, and sexuality). In adopting a multi-level approach, what follows is not only an effort to describe the essentials of the current literature on religion and family. Instead, the purpose is also to highlight the need for a multi-level analysis of religion and family that takes into account institutional and organizational change and a more theoretically focused consideration of the associations involving religious affiliation, participation, and practice with family behaviors. The chapter concludes with a discussion of four nagging problems in the study of religion and family: (1) the adequacy of current methodologies used to assess religion and family practice (e.g., the continuing predominance of cross-sectional studies and global measures of religiosity), (2) attention to the size of statistical effects, (3) assertions of causality based on measures of association with little regard to the possibility of reverse causality or third variable effects, and (4) theorizing about causal mechanisms with little regard for the tendencies toward what Chaves has labeled “the religious congruency fallacy” (2010).

Religion and Family Linkages

In a recent summary of religion’s influence on family life, Chatters and Taylor (2005) recount current thinking about the linkage between religion and

family. Religion is a source of social control, proscribing unacceptable behaviors and promoting practices that are conducive to family solidarity and marital communication. Religion provides a framework of beliefs and practices that reinforce family life and family identities and a meaning system that sustains care work. Through religious commitment, a system of support via belief systems and religious associations provides a source of positive hope, optimism, and empowerment. Others note that both religion and family are important locations for acquiring values, maintaining companionship and support, and finding meaning. Religious rituals mark family events, create solidarity among family members, and establishes individual identities within religious traditions and families (Christiano, 2000). The intergenerational transmission of religious beliefs primarily occurs within families (Bartkowski, 2007; Sherkat, 2003) and marriages benefit from the resources and support of religious communities and their teachings (Dollahite et al., 2004). Moreover, the local congregation is an important source of understandings about “what is good, moral, and appropriate in family life” (Edgell, 2006). Much of this literature assumes that religion is a stable institutional force that provides individuals with useful social and psychological resources.

Identifying the mechanisms by which these social and psychological resources function, Mahoney, Pargament, Tarakeshwar, and Swank (2001) suggested that religion’s impact on family life operates via social and psychological processes that are either independent of religious content (*functional elements*) or embedded within religious content—beliefs and practices (*substantive elements*). But they also note that religion may be maladaptive because religiously prescribed beliefs, practices, and roles can be harmful. They call for a conceptual framework that understands religion as “a rich set of theologically grounded beliefs or practices that may help or harm family functioning in unique ways, and religion as a source of generic psychosocial functions that lead to positive or negative outcomes” (p. 586).

As a follow-up to Mahoney et al. (2001), studies now explore the effects of parental, marital, and

familial sanctification (Baker, Sanchez, Nock, & Wright, 2009; Goodman & Dollahite, 2006). In a series of small N studies, Mahoney, Pargament, Murray-Swank, and Murray-Swank (2003) conclude that many couples believe God is active in their lives and that the sanctification of parenting is associated with more positive parental practices (e.g., less verbal aggression and corporal punishment). Bartkowski, Xu, and Levin (2007) examined the sanctification thesis using data from the 2000 wave of the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study. They reported that parental religiosity, religious homogamy, and the family religious environment (indicators of family sanctification) were associated with the development of pro-social behavior in children. However, when religion was a source of conflict in the home, a child's development could be undermined and, in some situations, family functioning may be harmed. Examples of such harm include when faith creates a divide between adolescents and parents (Stokes & Regnerus, 2008), when pain and loss of self comes after divorce (Jenkins, 2010), when individuals violate sacred trusts, and when chronic conflict occurs as a result of disagreements about religious precepts (Mahoney et al., 2003).

There is growing evidence of the maladaptive potential of religion: fundamentalist driven terrorism, the potential for domestic abuse (Ellison & Anderson, 2001; Lehrer, Lehrer, & Krauss, 2009; Nason-Clark, 1997), or the failures of institutionalized religion to control the sexual behaviors of individuals in authority (e. g. Chaves & Garland, 2009) and respond to domestic violence (Kroeger, Nason-Clark, & Fisher-Townsend, 2008). But research on religion and family has been primarily focused on the adaptive functions and positive outcomes of religion rather than these negative aspects.

Scholars who study micro-level effects of religion on family life tend toward an understanding of religion and religious institutions as stable social phenomenon, ignoring the macro-level changes that affect both religion and the family (Coleman, 1993; Houseknecht & Pankhurst, 2000b). For example, D'Antonio, Newman, and Wright (1982), conceptualized two social mechanisms by which religion influenced family life: *control* and *social*

support. Control involves such issues as the regulation of fertility, cohabitation, as well as premarital and extramarital sex. Social support takes the form of familial love, family solidarity, self-esteem, marital stability, marital satisfaction, and family values/meanings. In fact, religious institutions themselves have changed substantially. Examples include the fact that the majority of Protestant denominations now ordain women as priests (Chaves, 1997), gender role attitudes in the United States have changed dramatically across *all* denominations since 1970, and some religious congregations welcome gay and lesbian congregants. To more fully theorize the causal linkages between religion and family, scholars need to pay more attention to what is known about institutional level change.

Religion, Family, and Institutional Change

The dominant paradigms in the study of religion (secularization) and family (modernization) draw upon functionalist and institutionalist accounts of differentiation and complexity (Durkheim). These paradigms explore themes of rationality and "disenchantment" in reference to modern life (Weber). Important emphasis has been placed on the transition from kinship-based (*Gemeinschaft*) relationships to market-based relationships and the emergence of the state and civil society (*Gesellschaft*) (Tönnies).

Secularization

Secularization has been variously conceptualized as the privatization of religion (Berger, 1967), the decline of individual piety and religiosity (Shiner, 1967; Swatos & Christiano, 1999), or religion's loss of regulatory power over other societal subsystems (Chaves, 1994). It is most typically conceptualized as occurring at three distinct levels—institutional, organizational, and individual (Dobbelaere, 2002). For example, Dobbelaere (2009) defines secularization as a process "by which overarching and transcendent religious systems of old are confined in modern

functionally differentiated societies to a subsystem alongside other subsystems, losing in this process their overarching claims over these other subsystems” (p. 600). Those who subscribe to the secularization thesis focus on the separation of religion from other institutions and the loss of hegemony as other institutional arrangements emerge—education, labor markets, civic and political organizations, law, science and technology (Bruce, 1992; Wilson, 1966, 1976). Despite contestations that secularization is a failed theory (Stark, 1999; see also Stark & Bainbridge, 1985), scholars continue to theorize social change in the religious sphere. Challenges to secularization include strictness theory (Iannaccone, 1994; Kelley, 1972) and supply-side or religious economy models (Brewer, Jozefowicz, & Stonebraker, 2006; Chaves & Gorski, 2001; Finke & Stark, 1998; Finke & Stark, 2003; Hill & Olson, 2009; Stark & Finke, 2000). Supply-side or religious economy models are based on the premise that the demand for religion is relatively constant, but that the supply varies. The focus is on religion as a marketplace, with churches and congregations being more vital to the extent that they compete for customers. Religious decline can be explained in part by the development of “lazy monopolies.”

Gorski and Altinordu (2008) most recently called for a strategy that would “invoke [secularization] less and use more analytically specific, and less politically laden, concepts whenever possible.” At the very least, secularization should be treated as an analytical variable—specifically defined and explained by other concepts or social mechanisms. Secularization should not be invoked, they argue, as “both explanans and explanandum” (p. 75). Three biases make theorizing and empirically testing secularization theories difficult (see Gorski & Altinordu, 2008): (1) *modernism* or the tendency to assume the existence of a pre-modern golden age of faith and that contemporary religious observance is the result of modern transformations; (2) *pastoralism* or the tendency to use church attendance, belief in God and life after death, and other “priestly standards” as indicators of true religion; (3) *methodologism*

or the tendency to select research questions on the basis of available data and select methods. That is, because the available data taps measures of individual religiosity much of the research has focused here, but other processes must be examined as well.

Contrary to secularist explanations, there is little *empirical* support for a consistent downward trend of religion in modern society. The growth of fundamentalism around the world is well documented (Marty & Appleby, 1993) and several scholars provide evidence that, despite the decline of some religious groups, religious identities continue to be created and sustained in the modern world (Berman, 2009; Konieczny, 2009; Sands, 2009). The growth of conservative churches (Perrin, Kennedy, & Miller, 1997) and, more recently, the mega church (Ellington, 2007; Thumma & Travis, 2007) and emerging church (Wellman, 2008) phenomena in the United States are indicators of religious vitality. Casanova (1994) provides evidence of the *deprivatization* of religion in some regional contexts (see Achterberg et al., 2009 for more recent evidence in European countries).

The spread of a post-Christian spirituality has accompanied the decline of religious participation in Europe (Houtman & Aupers, 2007). New Age, a religious movement that emphasizes getting in touch with one’s true or deeper self in the long-term process of personal growth, may be replacing traditional forms of religion in Europe and elsewhere (Heelas, 2008). The lack of religious participation and/or affiliation may not mean that people are becoming less religious. Davie (1994) has described religiosity among the English as a “believing without belonging,” whereas, Voas (2009) has coined the term “fuzzy fidelity” to label European religiosity. Other scholars such as Storm (2009), building on the work of Voas (2009), identified four types of “fuzzy fidelity,” the prevalence of which varies by nation. Examples of fuzzy fidelity included that a sizable minority of the Dutch population believe without belonging and that Scandinavians are more likely to belong without believing.

Religious change may be a function of the religious proclivity of individuals or a response to changes at the institutional and organizational levels of society. This may include such examples of changes as period effects as well as age and cohort effects. Thus, assumptions of an era gone by characterized by universal faith and a powerful centralized religious authority which has given way to secular organizations, disinterest, and apostasy of individuals are difficult to test empirically, especially when normative and coercive mechanisms have limited individual opportunity and choice in different ways over time. Even so, available data raise important questions about the impact of family and social change on religious vitality. Wuthnow (2007), for example, argues that delayed marriage, lower fertility, economic uncertainties, the need for greater investment in higher education, the loss of community, globalization, and development of new media may be influencing how the children of the baby boomers view and participate in religion. While the religious participation of married couples did not decline between the baby boomer generation and their children's generation, religious service attendance did decline for single adults and the divorced. If religion is a "family affair" how do congregations accommodate those who do not fit the traditional family model (Edgell, 2006)?

However, there is evidence of increasing numbers of people who claim no religion, both in the United States (Glenn, 1987; Hout & Fischer, 2002) and in Europe (Houtman & Aupers, 2007). Between 1991 and 2010, the proportion of adults claiming no religion more than doubled from 7 to 16% in the United States (Schwadel, 2010). Some of the increase may be due to children being raised with no religion and some may also be accounted for by delayed marriage and parenthood. Most individuals reporting no religious preference hold on to conventional religious beliefs and the unchurched believer contributed most to the increase in numbers with no religion. More significantly, political moderates and liberals were more likely to become religious "nones" in response to the politicization of religion during

the late 1980s and 1990s (Hout & Fischer, 2002).¹ Schwadel's (2010) analysis of cohort and period effects is consistent with the Hout and Fischer research. However, his findings also suggest that the growth in religious "nones" in younger cohorts may result from children being raised with no religious preference, rather than from disaffiliation.

Modernization

Other chapters in this *Handbook* detail more fully the scholarly exchanges about modernization, individualism, and individuation as a social process. The dominant paradigm concerns itself with many of the same social processes reflected in standard secularization theories—functional differentiation and the emergence of alternative subsystems which challenge the power and control of kinship/family systems (e.g., the state, law, education, the market economy). According to the writings of twentieth century family scholars industrialization modified family relationships (Smelser, 1959). With the deepening of capitalism and the expansion of market-based exchange, production shifted away from the household (Clark, 1990). Modernization processes (industrialization and urbanization) encouraged the development of new family forms—nuclear (Murdock, 1949) and conjugal families (Goode, 1963) freed from the restrictions of kin and

¹Much of the available research is focused on Western societies and within the Christian tradition, particularly among various Protestant denominations—most recently Evangelicals have been the primary focus—and Catholics. The vitality of other religious groups such as the Seventh Day Adventists, Pentecostals, and the Latter-day Saints is more difficult to assess simply because their adherents are underrepresented in large scale surveys. Latter-day Saints represent less than 2% of the US population, as do Jews. A variety of religious groups are neglected because of insufficient data. Information about adherents of Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam is also lacking. See Gorski and Altinordu (2008) for a brief and useful accounting of secularization or the lack thereof in the Middle East. See Sherif-Trask (2004) for an analysis of Muslim families in the United States.

extended family. More companionate forms of marital relationships emerged (Burgess, 1963; Burgess & Locke, 1960). As the modern democratic state developed, it began regulating marriage and divorce (Cott, 2000), instituted public education in industrialized countries (Meyer, Ramirez, & Soysal, 1992), and became responsible for protecting the “best interests of the child” (Friedman, 1995). Much of the family literature continues to focus on women’s rapid movement into the labor force after World War II and the rise of mid-twentieth century social movements—particularly the feminist movement—as the beginnings of dramatic changes in family life (Popenoe, 1993). But such assumptions have long since been dispelled as reflecting the experience of middle class white women, historically a small percentage of the population. Black women and working-class immigrant women were being drawn into the industrializing labor force as early as the 1870s (Goldin, 1990). There is growing evidence that much of the social change that occurred in the 1970s and 1980s as women moved into the labor force had less to do with the women’s movement and a great deal more to do with technological and economic change (Goldin, 1990; Thistle, 2006).

The family decline debate exploded in the 1990s (Popenoe, 1993). Demographers documented the markers of family decline: divorce, growing numbers of out of wedlock births, a declining proportion of traditional two-parent family households and the increase in single parent family households, growing numbers of mother’s in the labor force, delayed marriage and fertility, and cohabitation (Moynihan, Smeeding, & Rainwater, 2004). Lesthaeghe and Neidert (2006) described a second demographic transition spreading across Europe and has since argued that similar trends can be found in the United States. Cherlin (2004) now describes the deinstitutionalization of marriage, and in the tradition of Putnam’s *Bowling Alone* (2000), Amato (2007) considers modern marriages as “alone together” partnerships.

Feminists like Stacey (1990) offered evidence of accommodation rather than decline, whereas, Coontz (1992, 1997, 2005) argued that the family

decline literature was built on assumptions of a golden era of family life that never really existed. Family scholars remain highly focused, however, on factors that threaten family life, especially as it relates to premarital sex, cohabitation, divorce, and child outcomes (see, e.g., Treas, 2002). But there are signs that family life remains highly valued, as suggested by the marketized reproductive strategies of adoption, in vitro fertilization, surrogate mothering, and sperm and egg donation (Spar, 2006; Zelizer, 1994). While childless rates may be on the rise, so are the number of in vitro cycles performed each year; the frequency of multiple births is also up, a result of successful in vitro cycles. Surrogacy is now a legitimate strategy for family formation (Markens, 2007).

An emerging paradigm focuses less on family decline and more on the increasingly risk-laden world families now confront. The “third industrialization” presents individuals and families with greater economic insecurities (Townsend, 2002). Institutionalized individualism requires much of the individual in the way of creating the self through participation in highly differentiated institutions—the labor market, the state, complex legal systems that regulate citizenship rights and responsibilities, lengthy training in systems of higher education, and welfare systems. In all of this, the individual must manage his or her own family ties and kin relations (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002).

But the debate about the well-being of traditional family life suffers from some of the same problems as the debate about the decline of religion in modern society: (1) *modernism* or the tendency to assume the existence of a pre-modern golden age when family life and family relations were more valued and fundamental; (2) *nuclear familialism*² or the tendency to define and

²Nuclear familialism ignores the importance of adult sibling relationships, extended family relations, relations between parents and their adult children who may live in another residence but continue to have frequent contact with one another, and the private economic transfers and exchanges between adult children and their parents.

measure family relations based on the nuclear family model, a modern invention itself. This model, in turn, not only constrains the definition of family to husband/wife/child relationships, but also restricts the definition of family to residency in the same household; and (3) *methodologism* or the tendency to select research questions on the basis of data and methods available from large scale demographic surveys. Families are indeed undergoing rapid social change—sufficiently so that Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2004) describe it as a “runaway world.” But the problem is not only the variety and rapidity of change, but also the “difficulty of stabilizing elementary concepts and definitions because, in a runaway world, the basic categories themselves become unclear and unfocused” (p. 499).

Theorizing Religion and Family Linkages

Institutional Forms and Social Change

Scholars of religion and family have been quick to identify linkages between religion and family, generally assuming a mutually supportive relationship. Most obvious, perhaps, Abrahamic religious traditions draw heavily on images of family and family relationships (Turner, 2007). Religion has been the source of prescriptions about family life, sexuality, sexual division of labor, and male authority in the public and private spheres. As institutional forms, religion and family share overlapping responsibilities for the socialization of children, not only within families but within religious communities. Gallagher (2006) found “children themselves [to be] a religious resource whose presence in worship, service, and discourse help to create and maintain a sense of identity, place, and meaning in the lives of worshipping adults” (p. 182). Religious teachings emphasize the expectations that devotees will care for the indigent and the poor. The intergenerational nature of family life—birth, life course transitions, and death—is entwined within religious ritual, binding individuals at the

micro-level, as well as reinforcing institutional processes.³

The family and religion linkage is also apparent in the way some scholars describe modern modes of living. Family scholars find a greater emphasis on companionship and romantic love in the modern context (Amato, 2007; Coontz, 2005), religion scholars note a shift in religious imagery “away from sin, punishment, and damnation, toward a God who is, above all, the source of something like Abraham Maslow’s ‘unconditional positive regard’” (Swidler, 2002:41; see also Bellah, 1996). Both Swidler (2002) and Wuthnow (1998) suggest that the complexity of the new interinstitutional order has presented problems for individuals. In response, individuals have constituted new religious meanings; “... what people seek from religion is less salvation from sinfulness than help in recuperation” (Swidler, 2002:43). Smith and Denton describe a new religious orientation in American adolescents which they label as Moralistic Therapeutic Dism—a feel good, happy, and secure feeling, a sense of being at peace. God helps a person to succeed in life, helps them feel good and get along with others (Smith & Denton, 2005:163–169).

Wuthnow draws an account of American religion in the 1950s as a “spirituality of dwelling.” “A spirituality of home implied warmth and fellowship, indeed, unconditional acceptance, expressed in godly abundance by fellow inhabitants...” (1998:34). But, he suggests, this spirituality of dwelling is soon replaced with a spirituality of seeking, a spirituality more consistent with a mobile and voluntaristic society where individuals are less reliant on place and less intent on permanent investments. They concentrate instead on information flows readily available to help with “particular needs they have at the moment” (p. 7).

³In the summer of 2009, the contrasting public memorials for Michael Jackson (music icon) and Senator Edward M. Kennedy demonstrated the continuing significance of religious ritual in the social construction of family and friendship relations.

Religious Organizations as Agents of Change

Lenski's *Religious Factor* (1961) is a classic in the study of religion and family life. He provided empirical evidence that white Protestants valued kinships ties less than white Catholics (black Protestants valuing of kinship ties was intermediate between white Protestants and Catholics). Middle-class Protestants visited their relatives less often than working-class Protestants and white Protestant church goers were more likely to exhibit an extra-familial orientation—it was the active church goers who valued family ties less and this was associated with their greater involvement in voluntary associations.

Since Lenski's time, research at the denominational and organizational level of analysis has flourished in the social scientific study of religion. Whether the analysis has centered on religious traditions (Hefner, 2009), denominations (Ammerman, 1987; Smith, 1998), congregations (Ammerman, 2005; Becker, 1999; Chaves, 2004; Edgell, 2006; Gilkes, 1998), social movements (Bartkowski, 2004; Cadge & Wildeman, 2008) or counter movements (Bartkowski, 1997; Wilcox, 2004), religion scholars have documented the emergence of organizational niches, new organizational forms, and congregational accommodation to changing family forms (Edgell, 2006). Three paradigms dominate: religion as a marketplace, organizational accommodation, and denominational subcultures.

Religion as marketplace. Religion, particularly religion in the United States and Canada, operates as an open market. Religious groups compete for adherents and for the resources of individuals and families. The competition is among religious groups as well as with other cultural institutions (Finke & Stark, 1992; Iannaccone, 1994; Sherkat & Wilson, 1995; Warner, 1993). Religious pluralism is not, as it turns out, positively associated with religious participation (Chaves & Gorski, 2001), but conceptualizing religion in the modern context as an open market has been useful for understanding other religious dynamics. Religious switching

has become a common practice, especially among Protestants, but even to a certain extent among Catholics, Jews, and Latter-day Saints (Sherkat & Wilson, 1995; Smith & Sikkink, 2003). One consequence for families is that most families and kin networks are now interreligious or interdenominational. Consequently, Americans are much less likely to believe that only people who belong to their particular religious tradition will go to heaven (Wuthnow, 2010). Whether or not an open religious marketplace contributes to the vitality of religious organizations, pluralism and the associated tendency for people to switch religions may have unintended consequences for doctrines built on theological exclusivity.

Organizational accommodation. In a pluralistic religious system, religious traditions, denominations, and congregations position themselves relative to others in the same organizational field. These religious organizations vary both in terms of the existence of a centralized authority and degree of centralized control over organizational resources (Chaves, 1993, 1997). Chaves (1997) demonstrated that the decision to ordain women is best explained by cultural and environmental factors (e.g., pressures from other “like” organizations), the degree of centralization, and the presence or absence of an autonomous women's mission society.

Religious organizations also vary with regards to their position on family values (e.g., cohabitation, divorce, premarital sex, and homosexuality). For example, Roof and McKinney (1987) reported that Catholics had accommodated to the center of the American political debate and that Protestant denominations had variously situated themselves in the debate about family values. Liberal protestants (Episcopalians, the United Church of Christ, and Presbyterians) were more accepting of women's rights and the “new morality” (abortion, extramarital sex, premarital sex, homosexuality, divorce, and marijuana use) than moderate and conservative groups.

Recent research on congregational and denominational accommodation to gay and lesbian activism indicates that accommodation is linked to whether issues are defined as moral or political,

the response of clergy, and the presence of interdenominational coalitions and special interest groups (Adamczyk & Pitt, 2009; Cadge & Wildeman, 2008; van Geest, 2007).

Edgell (2006) studied the integration of religion, family, and work in four US communities. These communities were more heavily Catholic and mainline Protestant than the national average, but nonetheless, findings offer a useful exploration of accommodation to family and employment models. She identifies taken-for-granted “good family” models that serve as powerful family schemas and religious involvement styles. The family-oriented religious involvement style is common among conservative Protestants and Catholics and is associated with more conservative gender role attitudes and work-family arrangements. The self-oriented religious involvement style “displaces family life from the center of religious commitment” and is practiced by people in a wider range of family forms (single and married, with or without children). This style “is rooted in a particular lifestyle and associated with egalitarian beliefs, a distrust of publicly involved religious institutions and leaders, and an understanding of work-family management as a public issue that ought to be facilitated by the state and by business” (p. 150–151). While the family-oriented schema emphasizes obedience and authority in raising children, and draws upon a language of families as “broken” and homosexuals as “sinners,” the self-oriented style draws upon a language of social justice to both critique the gender order and include lesbian and gay members in their congregations. Thus across congregations, she finds different ways of “thinking about the public or private nature of religion and the family” (p. 152).

Denominational subcultures. Roof and McKinney (1987) demonstrated what scholars came to assume were “subcultural” denominational differences. However, Gay, Ellison, and Powers (1996) called this into question by looking more closely at intragroup homogeneity as well as differences in central tendency. They found that Episcopalians, Jews, and the “unaffiliated” were not only more liberal, they were uniformly liberal

on three pro-family issues: gender roles, abortion, and premarital sexuality. Because this uniformity was found net of education levels, affluence, and urban living, they concluded a subculture of liberalism was evident. But more importantly, they found a great deal more heterogeneity among conservative protestant groups and suggested two transformative processes: a selective accommodation to the social and political environment and the possibility of generational change as suggested by younger cohorts of evangelicals with more flexible theological and social values. More recently, however, Smith and Johnson (2010) report that although young Evangelicals are more concerned about the environment than older Evangelicals, there is no evidence that younger Evangelicals hold significantly different views than older Evangelicals on abortion, same-sex marriage, stem cell research, marijuana use, government welfare spending, spending on the nation’s health, or the war in Iraq. In another study, Farrell (2011) finds that compared to older Evangelicals, young Evangelicals *are* more likely to report liberal attitudes regarding same-sex marriage, premarital sex, cohabiting, and pornography, but not abortion. Educational attainment, delayed marriage, and shifts in moral authority among emerging adults account for much of the difference.

Indeed, research has examined subcultural groups *within* several religious traditions and denominations. Such studies have been conducted on women’s market behavior following marriage and childbirth (Glass & Nath, 2006), headship discourse among evangelicals (Bartkowski, 1997), conflicts over gender ideology among evangelical Christian and Catholic women (Hunt, 2009; Ingersoll, 2003), and the response of mainline protestant clergy to homosexuality (Cadge & Wildeman, 2008; McQueeney, 2009). Despite the existence of these sometimes embattled subcultures within denominations, Gallagher’s (2003) study of evangelical Christians demonstrates that “some cultural tools have remarkable staying power” (p. 178) because they are useful. For example, husband’s headship may eventually fade, she predicts, but there are other tools that are available to reinforce and bring stability to

traditional family ideals: partnership, individual gifts, and mutual respect. History and tradition, she argues are available for elaboration in a way that often reinforces rather than reforms.

Religion and Family at the Individual Level

A large literature now exists demonstrating the effects of religious factors on family life including research on timing of first marriage (Eggebeen & Dew, 2009; Xu, Hudspeth, & Bartkowski, 2005), marital stability (Call & Heaton, 1997), gender negotiations in marriage (Bartkowski, 2001), variations in marital infidelity (Burdette, Ellison, Sherkat, & Gore, 2007), child development (Bartkowski et al., 2007), adolescent sexual values and practices (Regnerus, 2007), family processes (Dollahite & Marks, 2009), and cohabitation (Thornton, Axinn, & Xie, 2007). While most micro-level studies of religion and family posit an influence of religion on family life, some studies explore the influence of family life on religion. At the very least, familial practices have been found to reinforce religious identities (Berman, 2009) and the material culture of homes reinforces religious identities and allows for the individual expression of religious selves (Konieczny, 2009). Religious socialization influences the religious choices and practices of youth (Martin, White, & Perlman, 2003). On the one hand, parental influence may channel adolescents into peer networks and adult relationships that reinforce family religious values (Cornwall, 1988; Erickson, 1992; Himmelfarb, 1980). Or, as Iannaccone (1990) posits, religious capital is accumulated during childhood as a result of family religious practices. In devout, stable, and harmonious households, the socialization of children is a primary focus and family religious practice encourages the development of religious capital.

Using pooled data collected from the children of NLSLY79 mothers for the years 1988 and 2004, Petts (2009) examined the religious participation trajectories of youth and young adults, identifying six distinct participation trajectories. While he found evidence of declining participation during adolescence and into young adulthood, 30%

were either *always* nonattenders (7%) or *only occasional* attenders (23%) throughout the study period. The study also highlights the importance of life events in altering trajectories. For example, “individuals following a trajectory of low religious participation (i.e., early declining attenders) are more likely to marry a spouse with no religious affiliation, and therefore may not increase their religious participation after marriage” (p. 567). Moreover, these youth may be relatively invisible to religious organizations and receive little or no encouragement to participate.

In a study of the sexual behavior of teenagers, Regnerus (2007) argues that we may be overestimating the force of denominational identity, emphasizing that teens must also be embedded in a “network of like-minded friends, family, and authorities” (pp. 203–204). Studies of religious participation among college students (Hill, 2009) and “hooking up” in college (Burdette, Ellison, Hill, & Glenn, 2009), demonstrate a complex pattern of religious development involving not only degree of religious socialization, but also whether one attends college and whether the college is religiously affiliated. In their study of the timing of first marriage, Eggebeen and Dew (2009) conclude that “the linkage between choices about forming intimate unions and religious identity, behavior, and belief is more complex, subtle, and probably dynamic than as is often portrayed.... Understanding the role of religion in the lives of young adults will require a careful examination of the form and structure of changing religious beliefs and behavior over this developmental period” (p. 119).

Nagging Problems in the Study of Religion and Family Effects

Micro-level studies predominate in the literature and the same limitations apply to micro-level studies as to the macro-level theories of social change—the lack of good empirical evidence. Four nagging problems must be addressed: (1) the adequacy of current methodologies, (2) attention to the size of statistical effects, (3) assertions of causality, and (4) theorizing the causal mechanisms.

Adequacy of current methodologies. Much of the published research is based on large N, cross-sectional studies utilizing standard measures of religiosity and self-reports of family behaviors. The available panel studies go a long way in providing better data (e.g., Add Health, NLSY79, NLSY97, and the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, for example⁴), but these studies use measures based on “priestly standards of good or true religion,” for example, what Gorski and Altinordu (2008) call *pastoralism*. In large scale surveys, the measures of religiosity are typically limited to affiliation, participation, identity, salience, beliefs, and frequency of prayer. Use of affiliation as a marker of religiosity has over-emphasized the Evangelical experience in the United States. Moreover, too much emphasis has been placed on biblical literalism as a marker of religiousness. Finally, there appears to be a significant amount of “noise” in indicators of religious participation (Hadaway & Marler, 2005; Hadaway, Marler, & Chaves, 1998) as well as the “no religion” category (Baker & Smith, 2009; Voas, 2009). Moreover, at least some of the unchurched believers are unchurched in reaction to the politicizing of the religious sphere (Pew Research Center, 2006). Miller and Hoffmann (1999) have suggested that the alignment of the political and religious have created new social constructions of “liberal” and “conservative.”

What alternative measures might be considered? Starks and Robinson (2009) offer one example in testing the effects of a subcultural identity and moral cosmology (beliefs) on family-related political attitudes (Starks & Robinson, 2009). Subcultural identity theory is based on Berger’s *Sacred Canopy* (1967). Small communities or “sacred umbrellas” allow people “to develop identity spaces associated with their own vocabulary, expectations, and leaders, where like-minded people can engage in meaning construction for the subcommunity” (Starks & Robinson, 2009, p. 652). Family values are maintained and reinforced by membership within

“sacred umbrellas” or religious communities. Moral cosmology theory “assumes that people differ in their beliefs regarding the locus of moral authority and that these differences have consequences for their politics” (p. 651). The moral cosmology index includes an item regarding the belief that the Bible is inerrant, but in addition, respondents respond to a second (I believe in a God who watches over me) and third item (follow faithfully the teachings of [my] church or synagogue). The religiously orthodox rest their political positions on a God-centered moral universe. By comparison, modernists are individualist both in determining their moral codes and their libertarianness. Among self-identified Protestants and Catholics, moral cosmology beliefs and a subcultural identity independently influence family-related political attitudes (views about abortion and homosexual relations). Rather than use measures of a specific set of religious beliefs about God, the divinity of Christ, the devil, heaven, and hell, Starks and Robinson attempt to contrast “the absolute, timeless moral standards and God-directed universe of the orthodox with the contextualized ethics and individually determined fates of modernists” (p. 655).

Similarly, Hall, Koenig, and Meador (2008) challenge current approaches by suggesting more attention to “secularism.” Rather than seek for better measures of religiosity, scholars may want to attempt to conceptualize and measure secular world views. Hall et al., theorize that rather than attempt to measure the advantage of religion for, in this case, health status, scholars might more appropriately focus on “a small, robust health liability associated with a deliberate secular world view” (p. 368). The implication, of course, for family scholars is that rather than study religious families and their world view in isolation, comparative research on religious families and “secular” families are needed as well.

The size of statistical effects. Ziliak and McCloskey (2008) remind scholars that statistical significance is not the standard that should be used in social science research, rather more attention must be given to the size and power of the effect. A meta-analysis of studies examining the effect of religion on marital and family domains

⁴Two recent large scale studies of religion will help to alleviate the paucity of adequate measures. The three-wave National Study of Youth and Religion and the still-in-process Panel Study of American Religion and Ethnicity.

(Mahoney et al., 2001) found the average effect size was small ($rs=0.07-0.20$), but the authors argued the effect sizes were as “impressive as the predictive power of other global risk factors of child or family problems...” (p. 584). In a study of religion and domestic violence, Ellison and Anderson (2001) report “regular attendance at religious services bears a strong and statistically significant inverse association with the perpetration of domestic abuse” (p. 276). Partner report of domestic violence is 49% less likely for men who attend weekly or more; among women, partner report of domestic violence is 35% less likely. These “robust” results remained despite the inclusion of variables measuring social integration and support, alcohol and drug abuse, and psychological problems such as depression and low self-esteem. In a study of religious variations in marital infidelity, Burdette et al. (2007) report “robust” effects of religion (affiliation, involvement, and beliefs), which reduced the odds of infidelity by between 31 and 37% (depending upon affiliation), 66% for persons attending services several times per week, and 28% for those who regard the Bible as the Word of God. Once church attendance and religious beliefs are included in the model, religious affiliation is no longer significant. These studies advance our knowledge of religion and family life to the extent that they demonstrate an association between religious affiliation, attendance, and belief and the dependent variables. However, “robustness” is not constituted theoretically, but statistically. The effects are “robust” because they do not disappear once other factors are entered into the model. Theoretically, what might be considered a robust effect of religiosity on marital satisfaction, domestic violence, or infidelity? Moreover, what might be considered a robust effect of religiosity for at risk groups they identify such as the divorced, those employed full time, men, or different racial groups?

Assertions of causality. Religion and family scholars may be too quick to attribute causality. Take, for example, Mahoney et al.’s (2001) meta-analysis of the marital domain. Substantive (beliefs, teachings, the sanctification of marriage,

mutual engagement in religious activities, cognitive and behavioral resources to cope with marital difficulties and stressors) and functional (religious networks) mechanisms influence marital quality and reduce the likelihood of divorce. More recently they have theorized that the sanctification of family relationships will promote better marriage and parent–child relationships or as a possible source of conflict (Mahoney et al., 2003). Sanctification may indeed be one of the causal mechanisms that links religion and family practices, but is this a causal effect? Given that sanctification is itself a religious process, is sanctification a unique construct, or a consequential dimension of religiosity. What are the alternative processes by which families create unity and a confluence of worldviews amongst family members? What do “secular” families do to constitute positive familial relationships? The question, therefore, is not the effect of more or less sanctification, but the influence of sanctification and other similar, but secular, processes.

Most scholars readily admit the likelihood of reverse causality. Such admissions appear in the limitations section of published research, but few are willing to consider third variable or even unmeasured effects. One might posit, for example, that couples in homogenous marriages come from similar cultural backgrounds that facilitate greater marital functioning. In the modern context individuals self select into *both* religious participation *and* marriage. What are the mechanisms that account for this self-selection? Moreover, not enough has been done to test the assumption that religious congruity has a fundamentally distinct effect on the marital domain that is different from congruity derived from participation in political or voluntary organizations, or family-based recreational activities. Family identities may be created and reinforced via religion-based mechanisms (e.g., sanctification), or via participation in other activities, organizations, or occupations. No studies have attempted to differentiate between alternative sources of family identity or to test for a uniquely distinct effect of religious-based congruity.

A case can be made for more interpretive analyses of religion and family. For example,

Edgell (2006) suggests religious involvement “is mediated by the interpretive frameworks that individuals bring to bear in understanding the meaning of religious involvement and the cultural schemas that determine how religion fits—or does not fit—with other aspects of adult lives, including work and family.” Thus religion and the religious influence on family life cannot be successfully studied if isolated from the social contexts that draw on people’s time and energy and that help to establish identities, religious or otherwise.

Causal Mechanisms. Primarily as a response to the limits of positivist empiricism, some sociologists and philosophers have begun to call for a more specific focus on causal mechanisms (Archer, 1995; Gorski, 2009; Sayer, 1992, 2000).⁵ As suggested throughout this paper, family and religion scholars have been mindful of the need to specify causal mechanisms—or to provide both the explanandum (religion and family linkages) and the explanans (the reason for these linkages are rooted in ...). So far, despite available research, the explanans is lacking. As suggested here, the list of mechanisms by which religion might influence family life has been well articulated: social control and support; religious values, “good family” models, sanctification, the force of religious identities, etc. However, for the most part, empirical tests of these effects have ultimately rested upon standard measures of religious affiliation, involvement, and belief. In any study of the effects of religion on family life (or vice versa), we find small to moderate correlations suggesting an association between religion and family practice. The explanation for these effects still awaits.

The scholarship on religion and family would benefit from considering the “religious congruence fallacy” as described by Chaves (2010). Religious congruence is defined in three related ways: “(1) individuals’ religious ideas constitute

a tight, logically connected, integrated network of internally consistent beliefs and values; (2) religious and other practices and actions follow directly from those beliefs and values; and (3) the religious beliefs and values that individuals express in certain, mainly religious, contexts are consistently held and chronically accessible across contexts, situations, and life domains” (p. 2). Scholars, he argues, commit the religious congruence fallacy when they assume that individuals “act in a certain way because they are in a particular religion or because they attend religious services or because they hold this or that religious belief” (p. 6). Anyone who offers an explanation that “presumes religious congruence should bear a heavier burden of proof” (p. 11). This would require evidence that individuals had consciously reflected “on religion at decision-making moments, or really live in a setting with effective religious social control.” In the case of religion and family research, the proof would require that scholars begin with a presumption of incongruence between religion and family, and then theorize when congruence might occur. The possibilities include taking mental states more seriously (rather than beliefs), attention to decision-making situations (e.g., marriage and child bearing decisions, infidelity, or domestic abuse), empirical studies of both short-term causal effects (e.g., as demonstrated in the priming literature in psychology) and medium-term effects, and then to ask how quickly short- or medium-term effects decay. In sum, he calls for a more “deeply situational model of religious influence” (p. 11–13).

Conclusion

As research progresses in the twenty-first century, much remains to be done in the study of religion and family. The simplistic models we began with over 2 decades ago must give way to more complex thinking about the connections between religion and family. Institutional change, organizational adaptations, and findings from micro-level analyses demonstrate a complex relationship between religious institutions and organizations, people’s religious lives, and their family values

⁵Christian Smith has put together a helpful introduction to critical realism that can be accessed online at <http://www.nd.edu/~csmith22/criticalrealism.htm>.

and behaviors. A review of current paradigms of institutional change combined with the study of denominational and congregational change offers a dynamic picture of religion in the modern world. Religion and family research must inevitably move away from the secularization and modernization models that have held scholars hostage. Secularization accounts are insufficient for noting the *process* by which religion is challenged and reconstituted; modernization accounts are insufficient for articulating both the emergence of new family forms and the maintenance of traditional family values. An ahistorical religion and family analysis will always come up short. Positing causal relationships at the micro-level in a rapidly changing world is itself problematic because we face the difficulty of unstable constructs in a “runaway world.”

At the very least, scholars should take seriously the questions raised about the adequacy of available methodologies and to rethink the tendency for effect sizes to be small. Given the likelihood of scholars to commit the religious congruence fallacy, more focus must be given to religious influence as situation and context specific, and involving internalization and decision-making processes. More care in asserting cause and more attention to demonstrating which mechanisms offer the best explanation of religion and family effects is sorely needed.

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Part IV

Diversity in Family Life

Charlotte J. Patterson

How do lesbian and gay identities figure in family lives today? From the standpoint of social science, answers to this question focus on couples, parents, children, other family members, and on their relationships and interactions with one another. In the shifting contexts that contemporary families inhabit, these relationships and interactions are changing over time, but they are nevertheless shaped in fundamental ways by sexual identities. Likewise, the experiences associated with lesbian and gay identities are affected by their positions in family lives. How to understand the impact of family relationships on lesbian and gay individuals, on the one hand, and the impact of individual lesbian and gay identities on families, on the other, are the twin topics of this essay.

Sexual orientation, as a concept, must be understood in its cultural and historical context. The notion of identities defined by sexual orientation seems to have arisen in Western industrialized nations at the end of the nineteenth century, and to have gradually gained ground in public awareness during the more than 100 years since that time (Adam, 1987). As knowledge and attitudes about sexual orientation have shifted over time, so have the experiences of nonheterosexual people. Even the very terms used to describe sexual orientation have been transformed. What

was “homosexual” to one generation was called “gay or lesbian” by the next generation and is now called “queer” by at least some members of yet another generation (Gamson & Moon, 2004). To study the role of sexual orientation in family lives is, of its nature, to follow a moving target that is also changing shape. Social scientists do this by collecting and interpreting data about people who find themselves at the intersections of many different currents of change.

This article presents an overview of social science research and theory on sexual orientation and contemporary family lives, with special attention to the family lives of lesbian women and gay men. The article focuses on recent studies conducted in Western industrialized countries. Research on lesbian and gay couples is described first, followed by studies of lesbian and gay parents and their children, and by research on other family relationships. The review of research is followed by a discussion of significant theoretical and conceptual issues, an overview of some limitations of existing work, and by suggestions about directions for future research.

Couple Relationships

Research on lesbian and gay couples has ranged across a number of different issues. This section provides an overview of findings on love and commitment, power and the division of labor, sexual behavior, problems and conflict in relationships, and the ending of couple relationships.

C.J. Patterson, PhD (✉)
Department of Psychology, Gilmer Hall,
University of Virginia, P.O. Box 400400,
Charlottesville, VA 22904, USA
e-mail: cjp@virginia.edu

This is followed by a discussion of recent changes in law and policy, such as recent steps toward legal recognition of same-sex couple relationships, and of research on their impact on family lives. For other recent reviews of research and theory on lesbian and gay couples, see Kurdek (2005), Peplau and Fingerhut (2007), and Rothblum (2009).

Love and Commitment

Most lesbians and gay men express the desire for an enduring love relationship with a partner of the same sex. When D'Augelli and his colleagues surveyed a group of lesbian and gay youth about their hopes for the future, fully 82% of boys and 92% of girls expressed the hope that they would be involved in a coupled relationship in the future (D'Augelli, Rendina, Sinclair, & Grossman, 2006/2007). Many youth also expressed the hope that they would someday be able to marry same-sex partners (D'Augelli et al. 2006/2007). For these young lesbian and gay people, being involved in a couple relationship was central to their vision of the good life.

Research findings suggest that many lesbians and gay men are successful in creating such couple relationships. Initial survey data suggested that 40–60% of gay men, and 45–80% of lesbian women could be said to be involved in steady romantic relationships (see Morris, Balsam, & Rothblum, 2002; Peplau & Cochran, 1990; Peplau, Veniegas, & Campbell, 1996). Working with nationally representative data from adults in the United States, Black, Gates, Sanders, and Taylor (2000) reported that 28% of gay men and 44% of lesbians were involved in couple relationships. More recently, drawing on probability samples of adults in California, Carpenter and Gates (2008) have reported that between 37 and 46% of gay men and between 51 and 62% of lesbian women are involved in couple relationships. Despite some variations among samples, the available data suggest that many lesbian and gay individuals are in couples, and that lesbian women are more likely than gay men to be coupled.

When asked about their current relationship, the great majority of coupled lesbians and gay men describe themselves as happy with it (Kurdek, 1998; Kurdek & Schmidt, 1986a, 1986b; Peplau, Padesky, & Hamilton, 1982). For example, in Kurdek's (1998) longitudinal study of married heterosexual and cohabiting lesbian and gay couples, members of all three couple types described themselves at the beginning of the study as being satisfied with their relationships. Over the 5 years of the study, members of all three couple types experienced a drop in satisfaction with their relationships, but there were no differences among lesbian, gay, and heterosexual couples in this regard (Kurdek, 1998, 2001).

Research has also focused on factors related to differences in relationship satisfaction among couples. As predicted by exchange theory, the correlates of relationship quality for lesbian and gay couples include feelings of having equal power, perceiving many attractions and few alternatives to the relationship, endorsing few dysfunctional beliefs about the relationship, placing a high value on the relationship, and engaging in shared decision-making (Kurdek, 1994, 1995). The combination of satisfaction with social support and absence of ineffective arguing is also related to satisfaction with the relationship (Kurdek, 2004).

Power and Division of Labor

How should power be allocated in a couple? The great majority of lesbian and gay couples believe that an equal balance of power is desirable (Peplau & Spalding, 2000), but not all report that they achieve equality. In Peplau and Cochran's (1990) study, only 59% of lesbians, 38% of gay men, 48% of heterosexual women, and 40% of heterosexual men reported that the balance of power in their current relationship was exactly equal. Others have found that majorities of gay as well as lesbian couples report equal power (see Peplau et al., 1996; Solomon, Rothblum, & Balsam, 2004).

When power is unequal in a relationship, which partner has more, and why? Social

exchange theory predicts that the person in a couple who has more resources (e.g., income, education) should have greater power (Peplau, 1991). Results of a number of studies have supported this view (Peplau & Fingerhut, 2007). In early research, Harry reported that older, wealthier men generally had more power in their intimate relationships (Harry, 1984; Harry & DeVall, 1978). In a study of young lesbians, Caldwell and Peplau (1984) reported that wealthier, better educated women tended to have more power than their partners. In partial contrast, Blumstein and Schwartz (1983) reported that the partner with greater financial resources had more power in money management issues in gay, married heterosexual, and unmarried (but cohabiting) heterosexual couples, but not in lesbian couples. Solomon et al. (2004) reported that the partner who earned more money did less housework among heterosexual but not among lesbian or gay couples. The extent to which financial resources affect balance of power in lesbian and gay couples remains unclear (see Peplau & Fingerhut, 2007).

Although some people anticipate that, in same-sex couples, one partner plays a traditionally “male” and one a traditionally “female” role, researchers have found that this is rarely the case. Relatively equal sharing of household tasks has been reported as more common among same-sex couples—both those with and those without children (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983; Chan, Brooks, Raboy, & Patterson, 1998; Dunne, 1998; Gartrell et al., 1999; Khor, 2007; Kurdek, 1993, 2007; McPherson, 1993; Patterson, 1995a, 1995b; Patterson, Sutfin, & Fulcher, 2004; Solomon et al., 2004; Sullivan, 1996; Tasker & Golombok, 1998). Lesbian and gay couples report that egalitarian ways of dividing up labor are the most common.

There is some evidence, however, suggesting that stepfamilies may be a special case. In stepfamilies, in which one partner joins the family when the other has already had children, the division of labor appears to be more specialized. For instance, Moore (2008) studied African American lesbian stepfamilies, and found that the biological mother was responsible for more

of the unpaid labor involved in household and childcare than was her partner. A similar result has been reported for gay stepfamilies (Crosbie-Burnett & Helmbrecht, 1993; Current-Juretschko & Bigner, 2005).

It is worth noting that most studies of household division of labor have employed similar methodologies. Members of couples have usually been asked to describe their divisions of labor for various household tasks (e.g., cooking dinner, taking out the trash) on Likert scales, where one end of the scale means that “I do it all the time,” the other means “my partner/spouse does it all the time,” and the middle of the scale means that “we do this equally.” These questions require participants to summarize their daily activities and assign quantitative scores to them. Relying instead on qualitative, in-depth interviews from several same-sex couples, Carrington (1999) has suggested that the quantitative data tell only part of the story. Carrington (1999) has suggested that same-sex couples are much more diverse in their approaches to the allocation of household labor than the quantitative literature would suggest, and has stressed contrasts between what members of a couple say and what they actually do in practice. No studies have yet employed both quantitative and qualitative approaches to the study of division of labor among same-sex couples, however, so this issue remains unresolved.

Sexual Behavior

Sexual behavior among lesbian, gay and heterosexual couples is extremely diverse, but some generalizations appear to be warranted on the basis of existing research findings (Peplau, Fingerhut, & Beals, 2004). First, for all types of couples, the frequency of sexual relations is highest at the beginning of a relationship, and declines over time. Such declines are least pronounced among gay couples and most significant among lesbian couples (Kurdek, 1995). Overall, the research findings suggest that lesbian couples have sexual relations less frequently than do gay and heterosexual couples (Farr, Forssell, & Patterson, 2010; Solomon et al., 2004).

Why might differences in frequency of sexual relations among lesbian, gay and heterosexual couples exist? One possibility is that women have less inclination and experience than men in initiating sexual encounters (Peplau et al., 2004). Another is that women's sexuality may be expressed in a wider array of ways than men's, leading to forms of sexual expression among lesbian couples that do not necessarily result in penetration or orgasm. Yet another possibility is that the survey methodology that has most often been used in this research may be inappropriate for lesbian couples (Rothblum, 2009). As Blumstein and Schwartz (1983) reported, lesbians may place greater value on nongenital expressions of love, such as hugging and other affectionate behaviors, and hence may answer survey questions about frequency of sexual relations from a different perspective than do gay or heterosexual men.

Another area in which strong gender differences emerge is in that of the degree of a couple's sexual exclusivity. Lesbians and heterosexual couples have been found to be more supportive than gay men of monogamy in their relationships, and their reported behavior corresponds to these views. In their classic study, Blumstein and Schwartz (1983) reported that, among couples who had been together at least 2 years, most lesbian and heterosexual couples preferred and experienced monogamous sexual relationships, whereas most gay couples did not. These data were collected before the HIV/AIDS epidemic had gained public attention. However, data collected during 1988–1989, after HIV infection had become widespread in the United States, revealed the same pattern of results (Bryant & Demian, 1994). Solomon et al. (2004) recently found that a majority of gay couples reported having sex outside their primary relationship, whereas only 15% of men in heterosexual relationships reported that they did so; among women, there were no differences as a function of sexual orientation. Current work with gay couples suggests that many have agreements about whether or not to allow sexual activities with partners outside the couple, and that many such agreements allow for outside sex within certain limits (Hoff & Beougher, 2010; Hoff et al., 2009). Despite

differences in preferences and in actual behavior, however, lesbian, gay, and heterosexual couples all report similar satisfaction with their sexual relationships (Bryant & Demian, 1994; Kurdek, 2004; Solomon et al., 2004). Thus, although gender differences in sexual attitudes and sexual behavior would appear to be substantial, reported sexual satisfaction within couple relationships has not varied as a function of sexual orientation or gender of partners (Peplau et al., 2004).

Problems and Conflict

When lesbian and gay couples experience problems in their relationships, many concern the same issues that heterosexual couples must also face. As in heterosexual relationships, difficulties can emerge due to different religious, racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic backgrounds of partners, and due to the different values that these backgrounds may have engendered. Relationship difficulties can also arise as a result of problems at either partner's job, financial pressures, friction with members of extended family networks, and so forth, just as they do in heterosexual relationships. Kurdek (2005) reported that the top five areas of conflict for lesbian and gay couples were finances, driving style, affection/sex, being overly critical, and division of household tasks.

There are, however, some conflicts that are more characteristic of lesbian and gay couples than of heterosexual couples. Prominent among these are issues created by negative social attitudes toward homosexuality. Because of prejudice and discrimination directed toward lesbians and gay men, many are unwilling to disclose their sexual identities to family members, neighbors, coworkers, and sometimes even to friends. When a couple disagrees about the extent to which they should disclose the lesbian or gay nature of their relationship, problems in their relationship can ensue (James & Murphy, 1998; Kurdek, 2005). Resolution of such conflicts may be central to the success of the couple relationship over time (Peplau & Fingerhut, 2007).

There is also some research on the ways in which couples seek to resolve conflict in their relationships.

Survey data suggest that same-sex couples may argue more effectively than do heterosexual couples. For instance, members of same-sex couples may be less likely than those in heterosexual couples to withdraw from arguments, and more likely to suggest compromises or other solutions (Kurdek, 2004). In videotaped assessments of couples discussing problems in their relationships, same-sex couples have also been described as more likely than heterosexual couples to maintain a positive tone (Gottman et al., 2003).

The longevity of lesbian and gay relationships has also been a topic of interest. Blumstein and Schwartz (1983) reported that, for couples who had already been together 10 years, breakup rates over the 18 months of their study were low; only 6% of lesbian couples, 4% of gay couples, and 4% of married couples separated during this period. For couples who had been together less than 2 years, 22% of lesbian couples, 16% of gay couples, 17% of cohabiting (but unmarried) heterosexual couples, and only 4% of heterosexual married couples had separated; thus, being married was associated with low breakup rates, but otherwise there were no differences. More recent studies (see Kurdek, 1995, 2004) have also found low rates of separation, and no differences in breakup rates between lesbian and gay couples. Dissolution rates for same-sex couples do, however, appear to be higher than those for heterosexual married couples.

Kurdek and Schmidt (1986a) compared the attractions that a relationship held for the partners and also the barriers to exiting a relationship for lesbian, gay, unmarried (but cohabiting) heterosexual, and married heterosexual couples. They found no differences among these four types of couples in the strength of attractions toward their relationships, but did find significant differences in barriers to leaving the relationships. Specifically, married heterosexual spouses reported more obstacles to leaving the relationship—ranging from financial to emotional to moral and religious issues—than did members of the other three types of couples. Thus, higher breakup rates for same-sex couples may be attributable to higher barriers to exit from a relation-

ship for heterosexual as compared to lesbian or gay individuals (Kurdek, 1998).

Changes in Law and Policy

Dramatic changes in the legal recognition afforded to same-sex couples have recently taken place in some jurisdictions. Looking back, it can be difficult to recall that, in 1990, same-sex couple relationships were not legally recognized in any way, in any part of the world. The marriages of same-sex couples are now recognized under the laws of Belgium, Canada, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, and Sweden. Registered partnerships or registered cohabitation agreements for same-sex partners have attained legal status in at least fifteen more countries (Badgett, 2009).

In the United States, legal recognition of same-sex couple relationships has emerged in some, but not other jurisdictions. In 2004, Massachusetts was the first state to provide legal recognition of same-sex marriages, and since that year, a handful of other states have followed. Still other states have offered civil unions and domestic partnerships as mechanisms for recognizing same-sex couple relationships under the law. In most parts of the United States today, however, lesbian and gay couples do not have access to marriage or any other form of legal recognition for couple relationships. Nowhere in the United States today are same-sex couples' relationships recognized by federal law (Badgett, 2009). Public opinion has, however, been shifting in favor of same-sex marriage and other forms of legal recognition. Adults in the United States are divided about whether the law should provide for marriages, domestic partnerships, or civil unions, but a clear majority favors legal recognition of some kind for same-sex couple relationships (Harris Interactive, 2008).

The changes in legal recognition for same-sex couples over the last 20 years seem likely to affect the qualities of these relationships. For instance, legal marriage might serve as a barrier to dissolution of same-sex couple relationships and, in this way, result in lower rates of separation.

With legal recognition of same-sex marriage, breakup rates of same-sex couples might be expected to fall closer to the lower rates characteristic of married heterosexual couples. In support of this view, von Metzke (2005) reported that divorce rates of lesbian, gay, and heterosexual couples in the Netherlands are about equal. Research in Sweden, however, has shown that lesbian and gay couples are more likely than heterosexual couples to end registered partnerships (Badgett, 2009). Factors such as social support from family members and others may also be relevant, and may vary among couple types (Solomon et al., 2004), regardless of their legal status. Intriguing questions thus remain unanswered about the impact of legal status on the longevity of same-sex couple relationships, as well as on other aspects of these relationships.

Legal status of a couple's relationship could also affect other aspects of a couple's life together (Badgett, 2009). In particular, legal recognition of same-sex couple relationships might affect many economic decisions for couples, and might also influence the degree to which couples feel comfortable with divisions of labor that involve considerable specialization. With the added security provided by a legally recognized relationship, perhaps more lesbian and gay partners will feel able to give up a paid job and depend upon financial support from a partner, in order to care for young children or elderly parents. If so, then married same-sex couples may shift to more specialized divisions of labor, more like those shown by heterosexual couples. These and many related issues remain to be explored in future research.

Lesbian and Gay Parents and Their Children

Lesbian and gay people become parents through a number of different routes (Goldberg, 2009; Johnson & O'Connor, 2002; Patterson, 1992, 1997, 2000; Patterson & Riskind, 2010). In some families, children were born or adopted in the context of heterosexual marriages that later dissolved when one or both parents came out as lesbian or gay. In other families, children

were born or adopted after parents had affirmed lesbian or gay identities. Families of the first type have usually undergone the difficulties and reorganizations characteristic of parental divorce and separations. Families of the second type, however, have not necessarily experienced such transitions. The experiences of family members are therefore likely to be quite different in these two types of families. For this reason, the data on each are presented in separate sections below.

Divorced Lesbian and Gay Parents

Many lesbian mothers and gay fathers who became parents in the context of earlier heterosexual marriages have faced legal challenges to their parental rights upon divorce (Joslin & Minter, 2009). In the context of such legal challenges, derogatory stereotypes and other negative assumptions about lesbians and gay men have sometimes been voiced by lawyers, judges, and other parties (Patterson & Redding, 1996). For instance, in the context of child custody and visitation disputes, the mental health and parenting abilities of lesbian and gay parents have frequently been questioned (Falk, 1989, 1994). Indeed such notions have frequently been offered as justifications for removing children from the custody of lesbian and gay parents (Richman, 2009). In an effort to provide empirical evaluation of such claims, much early research compared mental health and parenting ability of divorced lesbian mothers with those of divorced heterosexual mothers. Such studies consistently showed that lesbian mothers were at least as likely as heterosexual mothers to be in good mental health and to exhibit good parenting abilities (for a review, see Patterson, 1992, 1997).

The early research did, however, identify some differences between divorced lesbian and divorced heterosexual parents. For example, divorced lesbian mothers reported more fears about loss of child custody than did divorced heterosexual mothers (see, for example, Lyons, 1983; Pagelow, 1980). Thus, early research led to the conclusion that, although lesbian and heterosexual mothers did not differ in their overall

mental health or parenting abilities, lesbian mothers nevertheless had some special concerns (Falk, 1994; Patterson, 1992).

It might be tempting to dismiss these findings as outdated, were it not for some recent evidence suggesting that such concerns may still be very real. Shapiro, Peterson, and Stewart (2009) studied aspects of mental health among lesbian and heterosexual mothers, most of whom were probably divorced, and all of whom were living either in the United States and Canada. The contrast between those living in the United States and Canada is interesting because, despite many similarities between the two countries, Canada provides a more supportive legal climate for lesbian mothers and their children. For example, adoption and marriage rights are available to lesbian mothers in Canada, but not to those in many parts of the United States. Shapiro et al. (2009) found that lesbian mothers in the United States reported more worries about legal problems and about discrimination based on sexual orientation—but not more general family worries—than did lesbian mothers in Canada. Among heterosexual mothers, whose family relationships enjoyed protection of law in both countries, there were no differences among those living in the United States and Canada. Thus, legal and policy climates are important parts of the environment for lesbian and gay parents, and they may influence mental health.

Possibly because most divorced gay fathers have not been custodial parents, and have therefore not lived with their children after divorce (Patterson & Chan, 1998), there has been little research about mental health and parenting abilities of gay fathers. The available evidence suggests that divorced gay fathers describe much the same reasons for becoming parents and show parenting abilities that are at least as well developed as those of divorced heterosexual fathers (Bigner & Bozett, 1990; Patterson & Chan, 1998). In this way, findings from research on divorced gay fathers have paralleled, to some degree, those from research on divorced lesbian mothers.

Much research on divorced gay fathers, however, has arisen from concerns about changes over time in the gay father identity. Early work by

Miller (1978, 1979) and Bozett (1980, 1981a, 1981b, 1987) attempted to conceptualize the processes through which men who considered themselves heterosexual fathers came to view themselves as gay fathers. The pivotal nature of identity disclosure and also of reactions to disclosure by others in a man's social network was emphasized by both authors. Emerging relationships in the gay community were seen as crucial to men's integration of their parental and sexual identities. As men came out, fell in love, and disclosed gay relationships to others, even while remaining connected to their children, they came to integrate their parental and their sexual identities, and to call themselves gay fathers (Patterson & Chan, 1998). This was once the main pathway through which men became gay fathers. As gay men come out earlier and consider other pathways, divorced gay fathers perhaps are not as numerous today, but they still form an important group of nonheterosexual parents (Tornello & Patterson, 2010).

Lesbians and Gay Men Choosing Parenthood

Whereas it was once expected that lesbian women and especially gay men would remain childless, this is less and less the case. Increasingly in recent years, lesbian women and gay men have been choosing to become parents in the context of already-declared nonheterosexual identities (Hermann-Green & Gehring, 2007; Johnson & O'Connor, 2002; Mallon, 2004; Rabun & Oswald, 2009). This trend has created new types of families that may be called planned lesbian- and gay-parent families, and that have some different issues than do the lesbian- and gay-parented families that resulted from divorce. With lesbians and gay men choosing parenthood, questions about the desire for children, the transition to parenthood, and related issues come into view (Patterson & Riskind, 2010).

What proportion of lesbians and gay men want to have children? To decide that they want to become parents, both lesbians and gay men must overcome antigay sentiments that portray

parenting as an exclusively heterosexual prerogative (Berkowitz & Marsiglio, 2007; Gianino, 2008; Mallon, 2004). Apparently, lesbians and gay men are succeeding in doing this in large numbers. In research with childless gay men, both Beers (1996) and Sbordone (1993) found that at least half reported that they would like to become fathers. Gates, Badgett, Macomber, and Chambers (2007) analyzed data from the (United States) National Survey of Family Growth, and found that 41% of childless lesbians and 52% of childless gay men expressed a desire to have children; these numbers were somewhat lower than those for heterosexual adults. Moreover, gay men who expressed a desire to become parents were less likely than their heterosexual peers to express the intention to become parents; in other words, there was a bigger gap between desire and intention for gay than for heterosexual men (Riskind & Patterson, 2010). This was not true for women; lesbian women who desired parenthood were just as likely as other women to intend to become parents (Riskind & Patterson). Overall, it is clear that many lesbians and gay men do wish to become parents, but that some may be uncertain about how to make this happen.

Recent research has also found strong expectations of parenthood among lesbian and gay youth. In a study of lesbian and gay youth in New York City, D'Augelli et al. (2006/2007) found that 86% of young men and 91% of young women described themselves as likely to rear children someday. These figures are closer to those for heterosexual individuals, suggesting the possibility that shifts may be occurring over time in the likelihood that lesbian and gay individuals see themselves as able to become parents.

Having made a decision to pursue parenthood, a number of issues are likely to emerge for lesbian women and gay men (Goldberg, 2009; Patterson, 1994b, 2000). Questions about support from partners, friends, and members of the family of origin may all surface. Similarly, issues about access to accurate information, as well as to medical, legal, and other resources may also arise. Many adoption agencies across the United States are working with lesbian and gay prospective adoptive parents (Brodzinsky et al., 2003),

but it may be difficult for some individuals to find them. Many reproductive health services are available to lesbian and gay adults, but it may be challenging for some individuals to locate the agencies and clinics that are open to all. As they begin to pursue parenthood, these and/or related general issues are likely to emerge for lesbian and gay individuals.

Some other issues are specific to lesbian and gay couples. For instance, if a couple has not chosen adoption, they may need to decide which partner should be their child's biological parent. For lesbian couples, this decision will mean that one member of the couple will become pregnant and give birth to the child. She will almost certainly be seen by most people around the couple as the child's "primary" mother (Patterson, 1998), and in many states, she will also be the child's parent whose status is recognized by the law (Joslin & Minter, 2009; Richman, 2009). For gay couples who are pursuing surrogacy, one member of the couple will become the child's biological progenitor (Bergman, Rubio, Green, & Padron, 2010). The child is thus likely to resemble the biological father in one or more ways, which will no doubt affect the responses of those around the family. As in the case of lesbian couples, the biological father is, in many states, the only one who is likely to have legal standing as a parent. Should same-sex parenting couples ever separate, the parent whose relationship to the child is recognized under the law is far more likely in most jurisdictions than the other parent to find his or her relationship with the child protected by the courts (Patterson, 2009b; Richman, 2009). As consequential as these decisions may be for all who are affected by them, they have as yet occasioned relatively little research (Goldberg, 2009).

Regardless of parental sexual orientation, the transition to parenthood has many similar elements. Becoming a parent is a major life transition, and it has both exciting and stressful aspects (Cowan & Cowan, 1992). As happy as new parents may be about this change in their lives, they must also master new tasks, cope with new demands on their time, and deal with role transitions of various kinds. These realities characterize the transition to parenthood for lesbian and

gay parents, just as they do for heterosexual parents (Bergman et al., 2010; Gianino, 2008; Goldberg & Sayer, 2006; Mallon, 2004). Satisfaction with couple relationships often declines during this transition, and this seems to be as true of lesbian couples as it is of heterosexual couples (Goldberg & Sayer, 2006). No data have yet emerged on changes in relationship quality across the transition to parenthood for gay couples.

Although there are many similarities, the transition to parenthood is also different in many ways for lesbian and gay than it is for heterosexual individuals (Goldberg, 2009). Prospective lesbian and gay parents are less likely than others to be sure that they can depend upon support from the members of their families of origin, or from their friends. For instance, in their study of lesbian women during their pregnancies, Gartrell et al. (1996) found that most expected at least some support from relatives, but 15% of the women did not expect any of their family members to recognize the baby as a relative. Goldberg (2006) also reported that some lesbian women, interviewed just before the birth of their child, reported a notable lack of support from their families of origin. Three months after the baby's birth, however, lesbian mothers agreed that their families had become more supportive (Goldberg, 2006). Especially because social attitudes and other contextual factors are likely to loom so large in this regard, much remains to be learned about the ways in which transitions to parenthood are experienced by lesbian and gay individuals.

In summary, research on lesbian women and gay men choosing parenthood is burgeoning, but much remains unstudied. In particular, lesbian and gay individuals and couples may pursue diverse pathways to parenthood, and little research is yet available on some of these (e.g., surrogacy). Even pathways such as lesbians' use of donor insemination remain in need of additional research (Goldberg, 2009; Tasker & Patterson, 2007; Telingator & Patterson, 2008). The role of sexual orientation in family formation is only beginning to be understood, and further research in this area seems likely to be fruitful (Patterson & Riskind, 2010).

Lesbian- and Gay-Parented Families in Context

Research on the relationships of people within lesbian- and gay-parent families has resulted in a generally positive picture (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010). Both children and adolescents have been found to have warm and supportive relationships with lesbian and gay parents (Brewaeys, Ponjaert, Van Hall, & Golombok, 1997; Golombok, Spencer, & Rutter, 1983; Kirkpatrick, Smith, & Roy, 1981; Wainright, Russell, & Patterson, 2004). Most of the research has focused on lesbian mothers, and has highlighted the greater involvement of co-mothers than of fathers or stepfathers in heterosexual parent families (Tasker & Golombok, 1997). The relatively egalitarian division of labor that has been reported by most lesbian and gay couples has, in some studies, been associated with positive adjustment among their children (Chan, Brooks, et al., 1998; Ciano-Boyce & Shelley-Sireci, 2002; Patterson et al., 2004; Tasker & Golombok, 1998; Vanfraussen, Ponjaert-Kristoffersen, & Brewaeys, 2003).

There are fewer data on gay-father families, but much of what is known is similar to the findings on lesbian mothers (Barrett & Tasker, 2001). Bigner and Jacobsen (1989a, 1989b) reported that divorced gay fathers described themselves as more likely to use reasoning during disciplinary encounters, more responsive to their children, and somewhat more strict in setting standards than did divorced heterosexual fathers. Gay fathers who had partners were more likely to express satisfaction with their lives and described themselves as being more successful at meeting common challenges involved in parenting than did those who were single (Barrett & Tasker, 2001; Crosbie-Burnett & Helmbrecht, 1993).

Research has also focused on children's contacts with members of the extended family, especially grandparents (Fulcher, Chan, Raboy, & Patterson, 2002; Patterson, Hurt, & Mason, 1998). Patterson and her colleagues found that most children of lesbian mothers were described by their mothers as being in regular contact with grandparents. In one study that included both children of lesbian and heterosexual parents,

there were no differences in frequency of contact with grandparents as a function of parental sexual orientation (Fulcher et al., 2002). Gartrell et al. (2000) have also reported that most grandparents acknowledged the children of lesbian daughters as grandchildren. Thus, available evidence suggests that inter-generational relationships in lesbian mother families are satisfactory. Again, much remains to be learned about the nature and influence of these family relationships.

Children's contacts with adult friends of their lesbian mothers have also been assessed (Fulcher et al., 2002; Golombok et al., 1983; Patterson et al., 1998). All of the children in these studies were described as having contact with adult friends of their mothers, and most lesbian mothers reported that their friends were a mixture of lesbian, gay, and heterosexual individuals. Children of lesbian mothers were no less likely than those of heterosexual mothers to be in contact with adult men who were friends of their mothers (Fulcher et al., 2002). Thus, findings to date suggest that children of lesbian mothers have positive contacts with many adults in the context of their family lives.

Issues may emerge for some parents as they attempt to decide how open to be about their non-heterosexual identities in different settings. For instance, some lesbian mothers report withholding information about their sexual identities in healthcare settings, particularly if the situation does not seem safe for disclosure (Perlesz et al., 2006; Weeks, Heaphy, & Donovan, 2001). Some lesbian and gay parents also report selective disclosure at their children's schools, based on their evaluations of individual attitudes and school climate (Casper & Schultz, 1999; Perlesz et al., 2006). Most lesbian and gay parents express desire for as much openness as possible in the context of maintaining a safe and welcoming environment for themselves and their children (Tasker & Patterson, 2007).

Children with Lesbian and Gay Parents

Research on the children of lesbian and gay parents first emerged during an era when parental rights of lesbian and gay parents were often

contested in the courts. As a result, much of the research has been designed to address issues that were seen as relevant in legal proceedings. In particular, three major types of concerns about the development of children with lesbian and gay parents have guided much of the research. The first is that development of sexual identity may be impaired among children of lesbian and gay parents. The second category of concerns involves possible problems with aspects of children's personal development other than sexual identity, such as self-esteem. A third category of concerns is that children of lesbian and gay parents may experience difficulty in social relationships, especially with peers. As the following review will reveal, none of these concerns have been supported by the results of empirical research. Other reviews of this literature can be found in Biblarz and Stacey (2010), Bos, van Balen, and van den Boom (2005), Meezan and Rauch (2005), Patterson (1997, 2000, 2009a), Perrin (2002), Short, Riggs, Perlesz, Brown, and Kane (2007), Stacey and Biblarz (2001), and Tasker (1999).

Sexual Identity

Research has considered three aspects of sexual identity: *gender identity*, which concerns a person's self-identification as male or female; *gender-role behavior*, which concerns the extent to which a person's activities, occupations, and the like are regarded by the culture as masculine, feminine, or both; and *sexual orientation*, which refers to a person's sexual attractions, which may be homosexual, heterosexual, or bisexual. Research relevant to each of these three major areas of concern is summarized below.

Gender identity. In studies of children and adolescents, results of projective testing and related interview procedures have revealed that development of gender identity among children of lesbian mothers follows the expected pattern (Green, 1978; Green, Mandel, Hotvedt, Gray, & Smith, 1986; Kirkpatrick et al., 1981). More direct assessment techniques have been used by Golombok et al. (1983) with the same result; all children in this study reported that they were

happy with their gender, and that they had no wish to be a member of the opposite sex. No evidence has been reported in any of the studies to suggest difficulties among children of lesbian mothers. A recent study of young children of gay fathers also reported no difficulties (Farr et al., 2010), and the same was true of a recent study of school-aged children with lesbian mothers (Bos & Sandfort, 2010).

Gender-role behavior. A number of studies have reported that gender-role behavior among children of lesbian mothers falls within typical limits for conventional sex roles (Brewaeys et al., 1997; Farr & Patterson, 2009a, 2009b; Golombok et al., 1983; Gottman, 1990; Green, 1978; Green et al., 1986; Hoefler, 1981; Kirkpatrick et al., 1981; Kweskin & Cook, 1982; MacCallum & Golombok, 2004; Patterson, 1994a; Sutfin, Fulcher, Bowles, & Patterson, 2008). For instance, Kirkpatrick et al. (1981) found no differences between children of lesbian vs. heterosexual mothers in toy preferences, activities, interests, or occupational choices.

Gender-role behavior of children was assessed in a study by Green et al. (1986). In interviews with the children, no differences between the 56 children of lesbian and 48 children of heterosexual mothers were found with respect to favorite television programs, favorite television characters, or favorite games or toys. There was some indication in interviews with children themselves that the offspring of lesbian mothers had less sex-typed preferences for activities at school and in their neighborhoods than did children of heterosexual mothers. Consistent with this result, lesbian mothers were also more likely than heterosexual mothers to report that their daughters often participated in rough-and-tumble play or occasionally played with “masculine” toys such as trucks or guns, but they reported no differences in these areas for sons. Lesbian mothers were no more and no less likely than heterosexual mothers to report that their children often played with “feminine” toys such as dolls. In all cases, children’s sex-role behavior was seen as falling within the expected range.

Brewaeys et al. (1997) assessed gender-role behavior among children who had been conceived via donor insemination by lesbian couples, and compared it to that of those who had been conceived via donor insemination by heterosexual couples, and to that of those who had been naturally conceived by heterosexual couples. They used the Preschool Activities Inventory (Golombok & Rust, 1993), a maternal report questionnaire designed to identify “masculine” and “feminine” behavior among children, and found no significant differences between children of lesbian and children of heterosexual parents on preferences for gendered toys, games, and activities (Brewaeys et al., 1997). Similar results have been reported by Farr and Patterson (2009b), who studied lesbian-, gay-, and heterosexual-parented adoptive families, and by MacCallum and Golombok (2004), who studied older children with single lesbian or single heterosexual mothers. Despite some controversy (e.g., Stacey & Biblarz, 2001), the overall findings suggest that children of lesbian mothers develop patterns of gender-role behavior that are much like those of other children.

Sexual orientation. A number of investigators have also studied a third component of sexual identity, sexual orientation (Bailey, Bobrow, Wolfe, & Mikach, 1995; Bozett, 1980, 1987, 1989; Golombok & Tasker, 1996; Gottman, 1990; Green, 1978; Huggins, 1989; Miller, 1979; Paul, 1986; Rees, 1979; Tasker & Golombok, 1997). In all studies, the great majority of offspring of both lesbian mothers and gay fathers described themselves as heterosexual, and the results suggest that rates of homosexuality are similar among the offspring of lesbian, gay, and heterosexual parents. For instance, Huggins (1989) interviewed 36 adolescents, half of whom had lesbian mothers and half of whom had heterosexual mothers. No children of lesbian mothers identified themselves as lesbian or gay, but one child of a heterosexual mother did; this difference was not statistically significant. Bailey et al. (1995) asked gay fathers whether their adult sons were heterosexual, bisexual, or gay and found that the large

majority were heterosexual, with only 9% identified as gay or bisexual.

Golombok and Tasker (1996; Tasker & Golombok, 1997) studied 25 young adults reared by divorced lesbian mothers and 21 young adults reared by divorced heterosexual mothers. They reported that offspring of lesbian mothers were no more likely than those of heterosexual mothers to describe themselves as feeling attracted to same-sex sexual partners. If they were attracted to same-sex partners, however, young adults with lesbian mothers were more likely to report that they would consider entering into a same-sex sexual relationship, and they were more likely to have actually participated in such a relationship. They were not, however, more likely to identify themselves as nonheterosexual (i.e., as lesbian, gay, or bisexual). These results were based on a small convenience sample, and should be interpreted with caution. At the same time, the study is the first to follow children of divorced lesbian mothers into adulthood, and it offers a detailed and careful examination of important issues. Understanding of issues in this area could benefit from additional research. Regardless of the outcomes of future studies, however, it should be emphasized that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and heterosexual identities are all normal variants of human sexual orientation.

Social Development

Questions have been posed about the social development of children and adolescents with lesbian and gay parents. These have often focused on the possibility that youngsters might be teased, bullied, or excluded from peer activities because of parental sexual orientation. A number of investigators have reported that children and youth may encounter antigay sentiments at school and in their neighborhoods (e.g., Gartrell, Deck, Rodas, Peyser, & Banks, 2005; Kosciw & Diaz, 2008; Ray & Gregory, 2001). For instance, in a recent survey of 154 adolescents with lesbian and gay parents, a majority had heard derogatory comments about lesbian and gay people at their

school (Kosciw & Diaz, 2008). As Gartrell et al. (2005) have reported, those who had heard such remarks reported feeling disheartened by them, particularly when teachers failed to intervene (see also Bos & van Balen, 2008).

On the other hand, when researchers have compared the development of peer relations among children with lesbian mothers and those with heterosexual parents, no differences have emerged. For example, Golombok et al. (1983) reported no differences in the overall quality of peer relations among children with divorced lesbian vs. those with divorced heterosexual mothers. A similar result was reported by Vanfraussen and her colleagues (2003) for children from planned lesbian mother families vs. heterosexual parent families, and by Wainright and Patterson (2008) for adolescents reared by same-sex vs. opposite-sex couples. Both Wainright and Patterson (2006) and Rivers, Poteat, and Noret (2008) found that adolescents from families with same-sex parents were no more likely to be victimized at school than were those from opposite-sex parent families. Thus, research findings suggest that, despite some encounters with antigay sentiments, the overall quality of peer relations among children and youth with nonheterosexual parents is often no different than that among children and youth with heterosexual parents.

Other Aspects of Personal Development

Studies of other aspects of personal development among children of lesbian and gay parents have assessed a broad array of characteristics. Among these have been separation-individuation (Steckel, 1987), psychiatric evaluations (Golombok et al., 1983; Kirkpatrick et al., 1981), behavior problems (Bos, van Balen, & van den Boom, 2007; Brewaeys et al., 1997; Chan, Raboy, & Patterson, 1998; Flaks, Ficher, Masterpasqua, & Joseph, 1995; Gartrell et al., 2005; Golombok et al., 1983, Golombok, Tasker, & Murray, 1997; Patterson, 1994a; Tasker & Golombok, 1997; Wainright et al., 2004), personality (Gottman,

1990; Tasker & Golombok, 1997), self-concept (Bos & Sandfort, 2010; Golombok et al., 1997; Gottman, 1990; Huggins, 1989; Patterson, 1994a; Puryear, 1983; Wainright et al., 2004), locus of control (Puryear, 1983; Rees, 1979), moral judgment (Rees), school adjustment (Wainright et al., 2004), and intelligence (Green et al., 1986). The research findings suggest that concerns about difficulties in these areas among children of lesbian mothers are unwarranted (Patterson, 2009a, 2009b; Perrin, 2002; Stacey & Biblarz, 2001; Tasker, 1999). As was the case for sexual identity and for social development, studies of these aspects of personal development have revealed no major differences between children of lesbian vs. heterosexual mothers. Much less attention has been devoted to children of gay fathers, but the available data (e.g., Farr et al., 2010; Farr & Patterson, 2009a, 2009b) yield similar conclusions.

Individual Differences

While few if any group differences between children of lesbian/gay and heterosexual parents have been reported, there are many variations in adjustment within the group of those reared by lesbian and gay parents. Most prominent among the predictors of within-group differences is the quality of relationships between children and adolescents, on the one hand, and the parents with whom they live, on the other (Golombok, 1999). Consistent with data on other children, research on lesbian- and gay-parented families has revealed that the overall quality of children's relationships with their parents is the best predictor of children's adjustment (e.g., Bos et al., 2007; Chan, Raboy, et al., 1998; Farr & Patterson, 2009a, 2009b). Similarly, among adolescents, research has shown that the best predictor of most indexes of positive adjustment is the degree to which relationships with parents are seen as warm, close, and supportive (Patterson & Wainright, 2010; Wainright & Patterson, 2006, 2008). More important than parental sexual orientation for children's adjustment, in short, is the quality of relationships with the parents they have.

Research on Other Family Relationships

In addition to parent-child and couple relationships in which they may participate, lesbians and gay men are likely also to maintain contacts with their siblings, parents, and other members of their families of origin (Cohen & Savin-Williams, 1996; Herdt & Beeler, 1998; Laird, 1998; Patterson & D'Augelli, 1998; Savin-Williams, 1998, 2005). Although, as Herdt and Beeler (1998), Laird (1998) and others have emphasized, many other issues are undoubtedly significant. The largest amount of research to date has focused on the concerns of young lesbians and gay men about disclosing their sexual identities to members of their families of origin, especially to parents.

After acknowledging lesbian or gay identities, many people begin to wonder whether and how to disclose such identities with (i.e., "come out to") people who are important to them. Most lesbian and gay youth come out first to close friends, and only later—if at all—to family members (Herdt & Boxer, 1993; Savin-Williams, 1998). Young people are more likely to come out first to mothers rather than to fathers, usually because they expect more positive responses from mothers (Bryant & Demian, 1994; Cohen & Savin-Williams, 1996). For example, Remafedi (1987) studied a sample of gay and bisexual teenagers, and found that most had come out to their mothers but not their fathers, and almost all had come out to at least one friend; similar results were reported by D'Augelli, Hershberger, and Pilkington (1998). Recent research suggests that lesbian and gay youth may be coming out to parents and others at younger ages today than in earlier years (Floyd & Bakeman, 2006; Herdt & Boxer, 1993; Savin-Williams, 2005).

Although it is difficult to predict parental reactions to disclosure of a nonheterosexual orientation by their offspring, the most common initial reactions have been described as negative (Cohen & Savin-Williams, 1996; D'Augelli et al., 1998; Strommen, 1989a, 1989b). Negative reactions are likely to be more pronounced among older

parents, those with less education, and those whose parent–child relationships were troubled before the disclosure. Although interactions between lesbian and gay young people and their parents often deteriorate immediately after disclosure, they generally improve again over time. The best predictor of postdisclosure relationships between lesbian and gay young adults and their parents is the quality of their relationships before the disclosure (Cohen & Savin-Williams, 1996; Savin-Williams, 1990, 1998; Savin-Williams & Diamond, 2000).

Is disclosure of lesbian or gay identity to parents related to youths' or young adults' well-being? Because of the significance of parent–adolescent relationships, one might expect parental acceptance to be associated with favorable outcomes. Consistent with this view, Savin-Williams (1990) found that adolescent and young adult lesbians who reported that their parents were accepting of their sexual identities (or would be accepting if they knew) also reported feeling more comfortable with their sexual orientation. This was true for young men, however, only if they also described their relationships with parents as important to their self-image (Savin-Williams, 1990). Because the research to date has been correlational in nature, it remains unclear whether parental acceptance makes lesbian and gay youth feel better about themselves, or whether youth who already have high self-esteem are more likely to disclose to parents, or whether cyclical processes may be involved. Identification of causal pathways represents an important challenge in this area.

Parental reactions to disclosure of sexual minority identities are also associated with physical and mental health among adolescents. For example, Rosario, Schrimshaw, and Hunter (2009) have recently reported that parental reactions to youths' disclosure of lesbian and gay identities accounted for more variation in their health outcomes than did the fact of disclosure itself. In particular, adolescents whose disclosures were met with negative or rejecting reactions reported more use of alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana than did those whose disclosures were met with more positive responses. Similarly,

Ryan, Huebner, Diaz, and Sanchez (2009) found that sexual minority young adults who experienced negative family reactions to disclosure of their sexual identities were more likely than others to experience depressive symptoms, to participate in unsafe sexual activities, and to use illegal drugs. Physical and mental health outcomes for sexual minority youth and young adults thus appear to be significantly associated with family support or rejection. Again, however, this research is correlational in nature, and identification of causal pathways remains a challenge for future research.

While some studies have focused on young adults' disclosure of lesbian and gay identities to parents, other studies have shown that, among samples of older lesbian and gay adults, there are many who have never come out to parents or other family members. When a lesbian or gay identity has not been disclosed, any one of several coping strategies may be employed by the individual and by other members of the family (Brown, 1989). A common one is distancing, whether emotionally or geographically (or both) from the family of origin. Another is the unspoken agreement that nobody in the family will discuss the lesbian or gay individual's personal life; which might be called the "I know you know" strategy. A third approach is to disclose to one family member, who is thought to be supportive, on the condition that no others be told; this approach appears to depend on coalitions among subgroups within a family. Although these strategies may or may not be viewed as problematic by those who employ them, they all block the achievement of true intimacy, and add in this way to the stress experienced by lesbian and gay adults (Brown, 1989).

When a family member's nonheterosexual orientation becomes known, Strommen (1989a, 1989b) has described the family's reaction as involving a two-stage process. First, the family members struggle to understand and assimilate this new information about one of its members. The family may reject the lesbian or gay person, or it may reorganize itself to accommodate this shift in identity while still including the lesbian or gay person in family activities. Parents often

find the process of reorganization to be difficult. Efforts to reorganize the family also may extend over substantial periods of time. In the end, some family members discover that the experience has brought them unexpected benefits (Bernstein, 1995).

Disclosure of nonheterosexual identity is only one issue of many that are relevant to lesbian and gay family lives. Research has not yet explored at any length the ways in which sexual identities affect other aspects of parent–child or sibling relationships in adulthood (Allen & Demo, 1995). How are experiences in romantic relationships, parenting, grandparenting, and occupational lives affected by an individual’s assuming either a lesbian or gay identity? How do the sexual identities of family members affect responses to illness, death, and bereavement? How indeed does sexual orientation affect understandings of family membership itself? There is much territory here for research to explore, and there have been some intriguing efforts (Badgett, 1998; Herdt & Beeler, 1998; Orel & Fruhauf, 2006; Oswald, 2002; Patterson & D’Augelli, 1998; Weinstock, 1998; Whalen, Bigner, & Barber, 2000); such explorations should lead to a more inclusive understanding of family lives.

Role of Theory in Research on Lesbian and Gay Family Lives

The guidance of research by theory has not been as explicit in this field as it has been in some other areas of research on families. Much research has been guided by questions suggested by negative stereotypes rather than by formal theories. Other studies have been guided by concern about problems experienced by populations such as gay youth. Overall, theoretical formulations have not been in the forefront of scholarship in this area.

Although specific theoretical formulations may be rare, two general conceptual orientations—the assimilationist and the separatist—have competed for the attention of scholars over the years. From the standpoint of one such orientation, lesbian and gay people are seen as being very much like other people. By assimilating lesbian and gay

individuals’ experiences of family life to those of the normative heterosexual model, mainstream theories may be seen as applying to all. From this perspective, differences between heterosexual and nonheterosexual family lives are either absent or insignificant, and so mainstream theories are useful in comprehending lesbian and gay as well as heterosexual experience.

This assimilationist perspective has had some notable successes. For instance, exchange theory has been useful in accounting for some of the behavior of lesbian and gay couples, just as it has in accounting for the behavior of heterosexual couples (Peplau & Fingerhut, 2007). The predictors of positive adjustment among children and adolescents with lesbian and gay parents have also proven to be very similar if not identical to those among the offspring of heterosexual parents (Bos et al., 2007; Chan, Raboy, et al., 1998). In some respects, lesbian and gay people and their families seem to be just like other people and families.

The lives of lesbian and gay families, on the other hand, are undeniably different, in many respects, from those of others. For instance, lesbian and gay youth face the task of disclosing their sexual identities to family members, a highly charged undertaking that has no clear parallel among heterosexual youth. In most parts of the world, lesbian and gay couples live without legal recognition of their relationships, and hence must survive without legal rights and benefits that other couples expect; again, there is no clear parallel for these experiences among heterosexual couples. Even when gay and lesbian couples must accomplish the very same tasks as others, there are indications that they may do so in different ways. Studies of lesbian and gay parenting couples, for example, suggest that they are far more likely than others to share the work involved in childcare (e.g., Chan, Brooks, et al., 1998). Thus, theories that describe division of labor for heterosexual parents may not fit the choices made by lesbian or gay parents nearly as well.

From this second perspective, lesbian and gay family lives are fundamentally different from those of heterosexual people. Often embraced by those writing from explicitly feminist standpoints,

this approach emphasizes the radical challenge to heterosexuality and to patriarchy posed by the advent of openly lesbian and gay couples, and especially by lesbian- and gay-parented families (Clarke, 2000; Riggs, 2006). This can be called a separatist perspective, in that it emphasizes the various ways in which lesbian and gay family lives must be seen as distinct from those of other people. To comprehend the new approaches to family lives embodied by lesbian and gay parents and their children, the separatist approach suggests that new theories will be required.

Neither assimilationist nor separatist approaches are likely to be useful in every case. One of the challenges in this area of research, then, is to know when to think in terms of similarity or assimilation, and when to think in terms of difference or separatism. When, and for what purposes, are the family lives of lesbian and gay people just like those of other people? When, and for what purposes, must lesbian and gay family lives be seen as fundamentally different from those of other people? In domains where sexual orientation has little impact on attitudes or behavior, research should reveal that existing theories are successful. In areas where sexual orientation is important, however, new theories may be needed. Either way, continued research should stimulate a more inclusive understanding of family lives through the development of new as well as existing theory.

Discussion and Directions for Future Research

Research on sexual orientation and family lives has grown tremendously in recent years. In this section, a summary of major research findings to date is provided. A brief discussion of implications of the research for theories of human development and for public policy is also presented, followed by some suggestions for future research.

Research on lesbian and gay family lives has expanded greatly over the last several years. Beyond their witness to the sheer existence of family lives among lesbian and gay people, the results of existing studies, taken together, also

yield a picture of resilience, even in the midst of discrimination and oppression. Indeed, the evidence suggests that, despite obstacles, lesbian and gay couples are often able to create supportive relationships and social networks. The evidence also suggests that home environments provided by lesbian and gay parents are as likely as those provided by heterosexual parents to enable psychosocial growth among family members. Lesbian and gay youth struggle against antigay prejudice in many areas of their lives; when their families are supportive, they do so with greater success. In short, the literature is beginning to provide glimpses of the conditions under which family lives of lesbian and gay people go well.

As discussed above, considerable amounts of research on lesbian and gay parenting has focused primarily on comparisons between lesbian and gay families, on the one hand, and heterosexual families, on the other. At least to some extent, this approach reflects the concern of researchers to address prejudices and negative stereotypes that have been influential in judicial decision-making and in public policies relevant to lesbian and gay couples, parents and their children in the United States (Herek, 2007; Patterson, 2009b). Now that results of research have begun to converge so clearly on answers to questions posed in this way, it may be time for research also to address a broader range of issues in this area.

Many important research questions arise from a focus on the interests of lesbian and gay parented families themselves. For instance, many lesbian and gay couples with children are interested in distinctions between the experiences of biological and nonbiological parents (Patterson, 1998). How important, they ask, are biological linkages in influencing experiences of parenthood? Similarly, both lesbian and gay parented families are concerned about the qualities of children's experiences at school, and significant research in this area has been reported (e.g., Kosciw & Diaz, 2008). It would seem likely that, in the future, scholarship will increasingly concern itself with the study of sources of strength and resilience in lesbian and gay couples as well as among lesbian and gay parents and their children.

In the meantime, however, the central results of research to date have important implications. If psychosocial development among children born to lesbian mothers and gay fathers is, as research suggests (Patterson, 1994a), essentially normal, then traditional theoretical emphases on the importance of parental heterosexuality need to be reconsidered. Although many possible approaches to such a task are possible (Patterson, 1992), one promising approach is to focus on the significance of family process rather than structure. Thus, structural variables such as parental sexual orientation may ultimately be seen as less important in mediating children's developmental outcomes than qualities of family interactions, relationships, and processes. By including variables of both types, future research will facilitate comparisons between them (Patterson & Wainright, 2010).

Results of research with lesbian and gay parents and their children also have implications for family law and policy (Patterson, 2009b). If, as would appear to be the case, neither parents nor children in lesbian and gay families run any special risk of maladjustment or other psychosocial problems, then a good rationale for prejudice and discrimination becomes more and more difficult to provide. Without such a rationale, many legal precedents and public policies relevant to lesbian and gay families require reconsideration. Ultimately, lesbian and gay couples and parents might come to be viewed as couples and parents like others, whose unique qualities are unrelated to family law. Policies might be designed to protect their legitimate interests, as well as those of their family members (Herek, 2007; Patterson, 2009b). Considerable progress has been made in this area over the years (Joslin & Minter, 2009; Richman, 2009), but much remains to be done.

A number of issues have gone all but unstudied to date in the research literature on the family lives of lesbians and gay men. For instance, with notable exceptions, little attention has been devoted to the specifics of assessment of sexual orientation (Meyer, Rossano, Ellis, & Bradford, 2002) or to possible changes over time (Diamond, 2008). Similarly, the phenomena associated with bisexuality (Fox, 2003) have received relatively little

study. With some exceptions (e.g., Moore, 2008; Rosario, Schrimshaw, & Hunter, 2004; Rosario et al., 2009) ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic diversity of lesbian and gay family lives have yet to be systematically explored. Related challenges have emerged from queer theory (Gamson & Moon, 2004). These and other issues all provide important opportunities for future research.

From a methodological perspective, it would be valuable to have more studies that follow couples or parents and their children over time. Some promising beginnings have been made in this regard (Diamond, 2008; Goldberg, 2009; Goldberg & Sayer, 2006; Tasker & Golombok, 1997). Longitudinal studies of the relationships between lesbians, gay men, and members of their families of origin over relatively long periods of time could also be helpful in describing predictable sequences of reactions to distinctive life events (e.g., coming out to parents). To avoid the pitfalls associated with retrospective reporting, these studies should utilize prospective designs that follow participants over time.

Another methodological issue in the literature to date is the relative dearth of observational data. Observational studies of couples, parents, and children, as well as of lesbian and gay adults with members of their families of origin could provide rich information about family processes in the family lives of lesbian, gay, and heterosexual youth and adults. Such observational data could be collected from dyads or triads or larger family groups, at home or in the laboratory, in a single visit or in repeated sessions over time; and could add tremendously to knowledge about the families of lesbians and gay men. The observational work of Gottman and his colleagues on modes of conflict resolution among lesbian, gay and heterosexual couples is an important step in this direction (Gottman et al., 2003), and more such efforts are needed.

Overall, the study of lesbian and gay peoples' family lives can be seen as a context in which to explore the limits of existing theoretical perspectives, and it can be seen as an opportunity to develop new ones. It can also inform discussions of public policy. Future work in this area has the potential to improve understanding of lesbian and

gay peoples' family lives, broaden existing theoretical notions about family structure and process, and inform legal decision-making relevant to lesbian and gay family lives. Rapid change in attitudes, social climates, and legal rulings relevant to lesbian and gay family lives during recent years has transformed the daily lives of many lesbians and gay men. The experiences associated with lesbian and gay family lives will no doubt also be affected by future events. Another role for research in the years ahead is to document the ways in which changes over time in attitudes, behaviors, and public policies both influence, and are influenced by lesbians, gay men, and their families.

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African American Families: Research Progress and Potential in the Age of Obama

28

Mia A. Smith-Bynum

This decade review of the research on African American families occurs at a fortuitous time in American history. A country founded on free, primarily African slave labor has elected its first president of color. This historic milestone provides an opportunity for scholars to reflect upon the progress African American families have made while simultaneously underscoring the need for research yet to be done. African American families made progress on several demographic indicators on quality of life, reveal substantial progress in the last decade. The last decade proved to be an active period of scholarship on African American family life (Burton, Bonilla-Silva, Ray, Buckelew, & Freeman, 2010). A cursory search of the literature reveals that, since 1999, well over 900 studies in several disciplines have been conducted on African American families.

Collectively, these studies represent a mix of methodological approaches that examine African American family life from multiple disciplinary angles. Studies examining family formation (e.g., childbirth, cohabitation, marriage) tended to be demographic studies that often, though not exclusively compared African Americans to other racial/ethnic groups. In contrast, many studies focused on parenting and parent-child relationship containing within-group study designs focused on

variation within African American families (e.g., Brody, Kim, Murry, & Brown, 2004). Furthermore, in the last decade, the field has yielded more methodologically rigorous studies involving more multi-informant research (e.g., Campione-Barr, & Smetana, 2004; McHale et al., 2006), more longitudinal research intended to understand developmental change in African American families (e.g., Brody, Murry, Kim, & Brown, 2002) and more efforts to address the conflation of race and socioeconomic status (e.g., Roopnarine, Fouts, Lamb, & Lewis-Elligan, 2005).

Space limitations preclude a full review of all of the literature published in the last 10 years. This chapter is a selective review of the research on African American families. It is limited to family formation patterns in African American families, societal and internal dynamics that characterize African American marriages, and parenting processes as an outcome and predictor of child development. The parenting section addresses general parenting processes and includes a brief review of the literature on racial socialization as there are recent extensive reviews on this topic published elsewhere (Hughes et al., 2006; Lesane-Brown, 2006).

An extensive search of the published research literature between 1999 and 2011 was conducted using PsychINFO, Family Studies Abstracts, and Families & Society Studies Worldwide. The search terms “Blacks” and “African American” were used to identify studies involving populations of African descent. These publications were cross-referenced with search terms designed to

M.A. Smith-Bynum, PhD (✉)
Department of Family Science, School of Public Health,
University of Maryland at College Park,
College Park, MD, USA
e-mail: msbynum@umd.edu

identify studies on family life addressed in this chapter (e.g., cohabitation, divorce, family, families, marriage, marital, marital quality, marital satisfaction, parenting, racial socialization). From there, additional studies were located by viewing the reference sections of the publications. Once themes in the methodology and patterns of finds began to reoccur, the search was concluded. This review heavily emphasizes peer-reviewed, primarily empirical, published articles in research journals. However, authored books and edited volumes are also used to round out review when they added an important perspective to the topical areas addressed.

Lastly, most studies on families of African descent in the United States have focused primarily on those African Americans (e.g., born in the United States) and devoted limited attention to Black immigrant families. As a result, we limit our review to African American families but do highlight results for Black immigrant groups when they are included in studies on African American families. For this reason, the term “African American” is the ethnic label used to refer to the population throughout this review.

The chapter begins with an overview of the demographic features of African American families and the forces that shape them. It will be followed by a brief overview of the major theoretical perspectives that characterize the study of African American families, latest developments in trends in family formation in African American families, and marital relations. The next section reviews major findings in studies that focus on family formation patterns in African American families, including marriage, cohabitation, divorce, and childbearing. The second half of the review addresses parenting research, including general parenting practices and racial socialization.

Family Formation, Cohabitation, Marriage, and Divorce in African American Families: A Demographic Overview

There are 40.7 million African Americans in the United States, representing 13.5% of the US population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007).

Approximately 94% of this population is native born with the remainder being naturalized citizens (2.7%) or foreign residents (3.4%) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005). African American families tend to be younger and multigenerational, and large in part because they have more children on average. African American grandparents coreside with their grandchildren 3.5 times more often than White American grandparents (7% vs. 2%), and they are more often involved in the care of their coresident grandchildren (52% vs. 45%). Married-couple families comprise 44% of all African American families (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Though this represents a slight decrease from 48% in 1991 (U.S. Census Bureau, 1993), the US census data also indicate that about 31% of African Americans, age 15 and older, are married and about 11% are divorced (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). By and large, African American families reside largely in the South.

African American families can be found in a variety of stations of life based on the adult family members’ accumulated accomplishments in education, occupation and income, neighborhood quality, and relatedly, decisions about partner selection, marriage, childbearing, family formation, and relationship dissolution. Embedded in these patterns is a continued cultural emphasis on extended kinship networks that distinguish African American families (and other ethnic minority families) from their White American counterparts. From a purely demographic perspective, African American family life can be best described as a bimodal group: (1) families that by all indications have achieved at least middle-class status as indicated by education, earned income, and occupational status (e.g., Lacy, 2007); and (2) families with fewer economic and educational resources that, as a result, are more vulnerable to the vicissitudes of the American and global economy (Lewin, 2001). To stop at this characterization, however, would miss the historical contexts and forces that shaped the most readily observable features or markers of this population that we observe in the present day (Dubois, 1908).

As noted, a substantial amount of attention has been devoted to explaining the lives of the most vulnerable African American families

(Gadsden, 1999; Smetana, 2000). These efforts have had varying degrees of success because of reliance on deficit model-based and/or race-comparative frameworks that overlooked key socio-structural factors affecting the families and that failed to acknowledge and assess cultural strengths (Billingsley, 1992; McLoyd, 2006). Indeed, overreliance on these frameworks often seemed to reify stereotypes about poor African American families, resulting in further stigmatization and marginalization of families most in need research that informs careful, thoughtful policy interventions (Johnson & Staples, 2005). In fact, a cursory review of the literature would suggest to the uninformed that all African American families are poor, single-parent families whose families formed from unplanned, primarily adolescent, pregnancies. It is only in considering African American family life in its entirety can scholars truly grasp the structural influences of race, class, and culture on the lives of the individuals within those families. Moreover, in so doing, we can generate effective policies and interventions that address the needs of this population.

African American families make choices with respect to family formation, whether it occurs through nonmarital childbirth, cohabitation, marriage, and even divorce and family dissolution that reflect the socio-structural constraints of racism and discrimination and also their cultural belief systems regarding the meaning of families. As members of American society, certainly many African Americans subscribe to some aspects of broader American cultural norms and expectations about family and marriage (Hatchett, Veroff, & Douvan, 1995; Haynes, 2000). At the same time, these beliefs and expectations seem to be tempered by a sense of pragmatism and/or realism about the degree to which African American families can fulfill those norms. Also, African American families have a distinct, vibrant culture in the United States that is appealing, rejuvenating, and integral to the healthy existence of many of the members that identify with the African American racial group (Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998). The affirmation and validation emanating from an understanding of

and facility with African American cultural spaces often supercedes the negative mainstream messages that African American families encounter regarding the ways in which they go about their family lives (Lacy, 2004). That African American families diverge from other racial/ethnic groups in key areas of family life should come as no surprise given the historical socio-structural and cultural forces at play (Johnson & Staples, 2005). Rather, researchers should always return to the context in which these trends unfold for meaningful, culturally sound interpretations that ultimately inform policy and interventions that maximize positive outcomes (Harrison, Wilson, Pine, Chan, & Buriel, 1990).

Theoretical Approaches to the Study of African American Family Life

Development of theory and application of theory to the study of African American families has been historically fraught with controversy and political tensions (Allen, 1978; Gadsden, 1999; Hill, 2006). This controversy stems from the longevity of the racial/ethnic differences in demographic patterns, economic realities, and a tendency by researchers to rely heavily on comparing African American families to White American families on various metrics. Particularly since the publication of the Moynihan Report (1965), scholarship and public policy decisions involving African American families reflected the ethos of the times and the national debate during which the scholarship was conducted (Taylor, Chatters, Tucker, & Lewis, 1990). Early scholarship used conceptual frameworks that characterized differences between African American and White American families as being structurally and/or culturally deficient (Johnson & Staples, 2005; Slaughter-Defoe, Garrett, & Harrison-Hale, 2006; Tamis-LeMonda, Briggs, McClowry, & Snow, 2008). These terms were used to describe and explain the various racial disparities on numerous indicators of well-being (e.g., cognitive, social).

Historically, scholars devoted little attention to more objective descriptions and analysis of cultural patterns; the impact of racism and oppression

on family life heavily emphasized the most vulnerable African American families who have the fewest economic resources and who are forming families and raising children under the most challenging of circumstances (see Stack, 1978 for exception). Consequently, a skewed portrait of African American family life evolved in the literature. Analysis of the ways in which this scholarship unfolded pointed to limitations in the existing theoretical frameworks and the ideological thrust behind theory used and the questions asked that often cast African American families in a negative light (Allen, 1978; Johnson & Staples, 2005).

Perhaps the most controversial piece of scholarship influencing the national debate, public policy, and ultimately new scholarship about African American family life in the 1970s and onward is the Moynihan Report (1965). Recently, some scholars and policy makers have argued that Moynihan at least was partially correct in his assertions given recent demographic trends among African American families (Haskins, 2009). At the time, the report produced a firestorm of negative reactions from policy makers, politicians, liberal-oriented scholars, and African American civil rights activists alike. Debate continues over what Moynihan intended to convey through his report with some arguing that his take-home message has been oversimplified (Berger & Simon, 1974). Nevertheless, most have come to agree that his “tangle of pathology” thesis asserts that American slavery destroyed the structure of African American families, resulting in matrifocal families, unstable and deviant by definition. Consequently, an African American underclass emerged plagued by numerous social ills including unemployment and high rates of nonmarital birth.

The Moynihan Report has been criticized for devoting insufficient attention to the role of institutionalized and interpersonally mediated racism on the economic plight of African American families, and notably, the compromised breadwinner role among African American men and for its problematic methodology (Berger & Simon, 1974). The report ushered in a new period of scholarship, often referred to as revisionist scholarship, intended to unpack and highlight the

strengths in African American family life (e.g., Billingsley, 1968; Gutman, 1976; Stack, 1978). Research during this period made note of the strengths of African American families, including the benefits of the extended kin network.

To date, few single theories attempt to describe African American family life in its entirety. The complexity of African American family life makes this a daunting challenge in that these theories must account for those aspects of African American family life that are distinctly *African*, that is, those West African cultural traditions that were retained when African slaves were transported to the United States during the Middle Passage and throughout American history (Boykin & Toms, 1985; Johnson & Staples, 2005; Nobles, 1974). Theories must account for the impact of slavery, and American racism’s impact via law and custom as manifested through economic practices, segregation, and reduced educational opportunities on family formation and kinship relations over multiple generations. Census data reveal a unique tapestry of African American family types that share commonalities with other groups and while maintaining some key distinctions.

A close review of the literature reveals a series of micro- and macrotheories, each focusing on specific aspects of African American life. Theories focused specifically on African American families cover family formation patterns (Burton, 1990), economic deprivation and parenting in low-income single-parent families (McLoyd, 1990), marriage formation (Wilson, 1987), or specific aspects of African American family life such as racial socialization (Hughes, Rodriguez, Smith, Johnson, Stevenson, & Spicer, 2006; Stevenson, 1994; Stevenson, Cameron, Herrero-Taylor, & Davis, 2002), and culture (Boykin & Toms, 1985). Some theories also focus more on African American child development, in which family socialization patterns play a role (Spencer, 2006; Spencer, Dupree, & Hartmann, 1997). Though intended for a clinical audience, Boyd-Franklin’s (2003) Multisystemic Family Therapy theory is notable for its useful descriptions of general patterns of interaction and organization (e.g., role flexibility, three-generational family

structure) as well as the features of the interior life of African American families (e.g., religion and spirituality, the impact of racism and intra-racial skin color prejudice). It describes the adaptive nature of these family forms and illustrates the clinical presentation of problems when external stressors and life transitions strain this adaptability.

Several theorists have modified ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986) for application to African American children and families (Ogbu, 1981; Spencer et al., 1997) and to ethnic minority families in general. Several more recent theories that have proven useful in the study of African American family life attempt to explain family socialization patterns common to all ethnic minority families and focus more on the ways that families shape child development as opposed to family development (e.g., García Coll et al., 1996; Harrison et al., 1990). These theories take into account the emphasis on kinship networks in African American families and the impact of the historical events and contexts that shape the experiences of families of color in the United States and the impact of factors shaping the experience of race.

Review of Research Findings on African American Families

Family Formation, Cohabitation, Marriage, and Marital Dissolution in African American Families

As noted, family formation patterns in some African American families resemble the broader trends observed in the larger American population (e.g., childbirth in a married “nuclear” family). They also reflect the socio-structural and historical challenges of race in the United States. Aspirations for a nuclear family were not in keeping with the demands of slavery because marriage was illegal and family members could be sold off (Cherlin, 2005; Ruggles, 1997). Even once slavery was abolished, various laws, policies, and social forces continued to impede African Americans’ capacity to make free choices about

how they chose to live and work from the Reconstruction era into the present (Johnson & Staples, 2005).

Marriage as a prerequisite life event for having children is less prevalent among African Americans, and is also becoming less common among Americans in general (Cherlin, 2005). Marriage holds many benefits for spouses, including improved economic status, better health and psychological adjustment (Booth & Amato, 1991). However, these benefits have always been historically more difficult for African Americans to obtain despite data indicating that African Americans often hold marriage in high regard (Bryant, Taylor, Lincoln, Chatters, & Jackson, 2008; Dixon, 2009). Studies suggest that they often subscribe to traditional notions of marriage that, in many cases, includes a strong religious foundation (Marks et al., 2008), traditional spousal roles and duties (Kane, 2000), economic stability and external indicators of success (e.g., white picket fence) (Edin, Kefalas, & Reed, 2004; Haynes, 2000). Consequently, some have argued that marriage as an institution is less appealing to African Americans and they may find fewer incentives to marry at all (Burton & Tucker, 2009; Hill, 2006; Holland, 2009). Furthermore, some research has suggested that African American spouses may struggle with more marital tension and less marital satisfaction (Corra, Carter, Carter, & Knox, 2009; Tucker & Mitchell-Kernan, 1995). To that end, this section reviews research on the three pathways to family formation as they occur in African American families: (1) cohabitation, (2) childbirth, and (3) marriage and marital dissolution.

Cohabitation and Nonmarital Childbirth

Cohabitation is becoming an increasingly common form of family formation for all Americans (Goodwin, Mosher, & Chandra, 2010). Data indicate that African Americans select into cohabitating unions more often than White Americans (Manning, 2001). Data from the 2002 National Survey of Family Growth indicated that for African American men and women between the ages of 15 and 44, respectively, approximately 1 in 2 reported a history of cohabitation (Goodwin et al., 2010). A total of 10% of both African

American male and female respondents in the same age group were cohabitating at the time of the study. Interestingly, data also show that African American couples decide to cohabit after giving birth less frequently than White American couples. (Manning, 2001). Collectively, these studies suggest cohabitation serves different purposes for individuals depending on relationship goals, education and socioeconomic status, and desirability of marriage. For some, cohabitation serves as an alternative form of marriage. African American cohabitators are less likely to marry than their White American counterparts, even when marital intentions are expressed. Due to the demographic nature of much of the literature on cohabitation, it is difficult to assess all of the various meanings both halves of cohabitating couples ascribe to their unions. Additional research is needed to understand the meanings and dynamics of cohabitation among African American couples.

Manning (2001) used data on cohabitating women between the ages of 15 and 44 from the 1995 National Survey of Family Growth to examine what factors influence the decision to have children within a cohabitating union. Results indicated that African American women were 69% more likely to give birth inside a cohabitating union than White American women. African American women were also three times more likely to stay with the partner when they gave birth in the union than White American women. For these African American women, childbirth within a cohabiting union more than likely reflects a marriage-like relationship in many cases.

Although demographic data indicate that low-income African American couples often begin new families through childbirth, or childbirth and cohabitation, they still endorse the symbolic importance of marriage as a life goal (Edin et al., 2004). In many cases, low-income couples retain a desire to marry though they may view it as less attainable for them than couples with more income. One study of the relationship factors predicting transitions in cohabitating unions found that African American couples were as likely as White American couples to report marriage expectations (70%; Brown, 2000). Only 20% of

them eventually married, compared with 60% of White American couples expressing similar expectations. African American couples either remained in cohabitating unions or these unions dissolved. This pattern suggests that economic factors may have precluded the transition to marriage for those in intact relationships at follow-up. The story is a little less clear when considering the cohabitation patterns of African American women with more education and income as few large demographic studies test for moderator effects of race and income and/or race and education on cohabitation as an outcome or a predictor. Researchers need to devote more efforts to examining within-group variation within African American couples that cohabit in order to tease out the effects of race and class on nonmarital family formation (Lincoln, Taylor, & Jackson, 2008). These efforts will also permit an understanding of the character of cohabitation among different segments of the African American population.

Nonmarital births are more common among African American women than in other groups (Wildsmith & Raley, 2006), and this appears to be the case even as women move up the economic strata (Gibson-Davis, 2011). The decision-making parameters regarding family formation are unclear as this subgroup has more economic means, thus their decisions could be driven by the mainstream middle-class American norms (e.g., marriage followed by childbirth), a high value based on children (e.g., religiosity), and/or lower stigma for nonmarital childbirth among African Americans (Goldscheider & Kaufman, 2006; Holland, 2009). It must also be acknowledged that despite endorsement of mainstream cultural norms, African American women are outpacing their male counterparts in education (Burton & Tucker, 2009). The smaller numbers of similarly educated African American potential male partners reduces the likelihood for partnering off (Wilson, 1987). Thus, even if the relationship is not one headed for marriage, one might decide to have a child in the event of an unexpected nonmarital pregnancy because they view their future prospects for marriage as uncertain (Holland, 2009).

Marriage and Divorce Among African American Couples

African American married-couple families constitute a significant proportion of African American family households, but they are especially vulnerable to disruption. Theorists have posited that trends in education (Mincy, Lewis, & Han, 2006), employment (Tomaskovic-Devey & Stainback, 2007), and incarceration (Dixon, 2009; Holzer, Raphael, & Stoll, 2006) among African American men have undermined the capacity for African American couples to fit into traditional mainstream norms for marriage (Hill, 2009). Essentially, marital aspirations conflict with traditional notions that couples may hold about gender roles in the marriage, especially as they relate to the male breadwinner role and the associated distribution of power men typically hold in this role. For one, the gap between African American women's and men's education can prevent these marital unions from occurring since women are less likely to marry partners who are substantially less accomplished than they are. When these unions do occur, the presence of a substantial educational gap can strain marital relations due to conflicts about household division of labor (Furdyna, Tucker, & James, 2008). Marital strain can also result from the likelihood that, over time, couples with large educational discrepancies favoring women find that they have less in common with each other. This can make maintaining marital intimacy and trust more difficult (Burton & Tucker, 2009). Unless couples can adapt to these realities, the resulting friction created by poor gender-spousal role fit can be difficult to sustain over time.

For economic and practical reasons, African American couples have adapted to these challenges by exhibiting more role flexibility and egalitarianism in their division of labor in economic and domestic arenas out of necessity (Vespa, 2009). Still, debate persists about whether this apparent behavioral egalitarianism in family roles reflect couples' actual underlying attitudes about gender, marital power, and what African American women and African American men "should" do in their marital roles given American cultural expectations for marriage (Haynes, 2000;

Kane, 2000). Indeed, one recent study found that the smaller gap observed between African American husbands and wives in time spent on regular housework is actually the result of African American wives doing less housework in comparison to wives of other racial/ethnic backgrounds, not African American husbands doing more (Sayer & Fine, 2011).

To consider that the aforementioned challenges have characterized African American marital unions from the beginning, it may not be surprising to some to learn that marital instability has been a key feature of African American family life dating back to the 1800s (Ruggles, 1997). By law, African American couples were unable to marry under slavery, setting the stage for more flexible norms regarding family formation (Johnson & Staples, 2005). In highlighting concerns about declines in African American marriage rates, there is a tendency to emphasize the high rates and stability of marriage in the first half of the twentieth century (Cherlin, 2005). Since that time, steep declines in rates of marriage have been observed (Tucker & Mitchell-Kernan, 1995).

Data also show that contemporary African American marriages are more likely to dissolve, in part because of the uneasy power balance that must constantly be negotiated among many African American married couples. In writing about the relationship tasks that African American married and cohabitating couples must accomplish in order to last, Pinderhughes (2002) describes the dilemmas this way:

[African American couples] must manage the anger and frustration stemming from their societal role, such that the vulnerability and mutuality so necessary for the intimacy are not destroyed by the invincible stance and readiness to struggle that are needed to cope with that role. They must maintain intimate relationships in the face of ongoing, disruptive circumstances that demand very different behaviors. They must not channel their anger and frustration into their bodies or discharge their feelings onto mates or children. Males have to especially guard against using domination in their relationships as compensation for social justice (p. 277).

Previous research has estimated that African American women face a 50% greater chance of

marital dissolution when compared to White American and Mexican American women (Phillips & Sweeney, 2005). As a group, data have shown that the rates of divorce within the first 15 years of marriage are approximately 55% (Amato, 2010). Clarkwest (2007) conducted a study investigating whether background dissimilarities in African American spouses at the outset of their relationship, resulting in part from a smaller pool of "marriageable prospects," contributed to greater risk of marital separation or divorce. Using three waves of longitudinal data from the National Survey of Families and Households spanning 16 years (1987–2003), his results indicated that African Americans were more dissimilar from their spouses when compared to non-African Americans in many areas. These areas were church attendance, desired number of children, support for maternal employment, sexual attitudes and beliefs about the appropriate degree of independence in marriage. These dissimilarities resulted in a 50% increase in marital dissolution rates for African American couples in the sample.

Recent research bolsters the notion that divorce results in part from discontinuity in gender roles expectations in marriage and the actual daily realities among many African American couples. A 10-year study examined the impact of military service on longitudinal divorce rates among White and African American service men that participated in the National Longitudinal Study of Youth (Teachman & Tedrow, 2008). Teachman and Tedrow argue that military employment offers African American men an attractive employment option for which a college education is not required. Building on a study conducted by Lundquist (2006), they argue that hierarchical organizational structure and the clearer path for career advancement in the military mitigates some of the potential impact of racial discrimination more commonly found in the civilian employment market. They posit that Army service in particular could benefit marriages because of the high enlistment rates of African Americans within the Army, and relatedly, the presence of African Americans in senior positions. They found that at every time point

African American men on active duty in the Army were 46% less likely to end their marriages when compared with their civilian counterparts. In contrast, neither military service status nor branch of service had an effect on the risk of divorce among White American men. These results seem to suggest that improved opportunity for stable employment for African American men can positively benefit African American marriages through its impact on the male breadwinner role.

Spousal dissimilarity also seems to play a significant role in the divorce rate among African American couples. Clarkwest (2006, 2007) conducted a longitudinal race-comparative study using three waves of the National Survey of Families and Households (1987–1988, 1992–1994, 2001–2003). In both studies, he found African American couples faced a 50% greater chance of divorce when compared to other couples. The 2007 study revealed that both variables entered as controls and variables measuring areas of spousal dissimilarity impacted racial differences in divorce risk. Specifically, discrepancies in marital age, history of previous divorce or parental divorce, education, church attendance, attitudes toward premarital sexual activity, and tolerance of infidelity accounted for 21% of the racial difference in rates of divorce. African American couples were more dissimilar at the time they married than other couples in five areas: church attendance, desired number of children, support for maternal employment, sexual attitudes, and beliefs regarding appropriate levels of independence in marriage.

Education and income levels of African American spouses show evidence of a mixed pattern of relationships in predicting divorce. Orbuch and colleagues found that 50% of African American couples had divorced by year 14 of their longitudinal study of urban African American and White American couples (Orbuch, Veroff, Hassan, & Horrocks, 2002). Results indicated that while greater education reduced divorce risk for African American wives and both halves of White American couples, it had no such impact for African American husbands. Involvement in housework by African American husbands did

reduce risk, however. Another longitudinal, nationally representative study demonstrated that African American wives with the least amount of income have grown increasingly more likely to experience separation or divorce over time when compared to their wealthier White and African American counterparts (Kim, 2010). These data suggest that more economic resources are generally beneficial, but only hint at potential internal dynamics with the marital couples that exacerbate or reduce risk of divorce.

Very little research addresses marital processes within African American couples (Cutrona et al., 2003; Goodwin, 2003; Wickrama, Bryant, & Wickrama, 2010). Of these, there are very few studies of within-group variation of marital processes among African American couples (Brown, Orbach, & Bauermeister, 2008). Marital satisfaction is often lower in African American couples than White American couples (Clark-Nicholas & Gray-Little, 1991; Faulkner, Davey, & Davey, 2005; Furdyna et al., 2008; McLoyd, Cauce, Takeuchi, & Wilson, 2000). A study that tracked trends marital happiness between 1973 and 2006 by race and gender does indeed reveal that African American husbands and wives report lower satisfaction than their White American counterparts (Corra et al., 2009).

Nevertheless, Allen and Olson's (2001) study suggests that there are similarities between African American and White American couples with respect to the structure of happy and ailing marriages on dimensions of communication, conflict resolution, financial management, leisure activities, children and parenting, egalitarian roles, personality issues, family and friends, and religious orientation. Using cluster analyses, they replicated the typology of marriages described by Olson and Fowers (1993) in over 400 African American marital couples presenting for treatment. The results indicated great similarities in typology of marriages compared with White American couples previously studied. These results also revealed that on average, for African American couples classified as *happy* or *vitalized*, both halves of the couples in these groups were fairly accomplished and economically stable. Ninety percent of these couples reported

being either *satisfied* or *extremely satisfied*. In contrast, *conflicted* couples experienced more discrepancies in the spouses' education levels with wives often having achieved more. The most distressed couples, *devalitized* couples, reported the lowest scores across each of the dimensions of marriage measured and low levels of marital dissatisfaction. On average, this group reported lower education, more struggles with full-time employment, and less frequent employment in professional occupations.

Religion is a major feature of many African American marriages (Brown et al., 2008; Furdyna et al., 2008). Religious African Americans are more likely to marry (Clarkwest, 2006). Engagement in religious practices (e.g., church attendance) also predicts marital stability (Brown et al., 2008). Marks et al. (2008) interviewed 30 African American married couples residing primarily in urban centers around the country that self-identified as couples in long-term happy marriages. Though the sample is small, it is also notable that participating couples were more affluent on average than other African Americans at the time they were interviewed. Interview data revealed that couples relied on their religious beliefs as a way to weather external challenges to the marriage and using thoroughly open and respectful communication to resolve marital conflict.

Studies also indicate that religiosity can have differing effects on spouses' marital satisfaction or happiness. Furdyna et al. (2008) found that religious African American wives reported less marital happiness when they earned substantially more income than their husbands than those earning incomes somewhat more or equal to that of their husbands. They suggest highly religious African American wives may hold traditional beliefs about the male breadwinner role. They may also wish to focus more on their domestic duties. When the marital reality conflicts with this belief system, wives may feel less satisfied or fulfilled in the marriage.

Beyond religiosity, only a handful of studies have attempted to examine other general or culturally relevant factors or processes occurring within African American marriages that impact

overall well-being, satisfaction, and related constructs (Lincoln & Chae, 2010). Goodwin's (2003) study of marital well-being in their third year of marriage addresses the thorny issue of low levels of marital trust among African American wives as one source of marital tension that serves to undermine marital relations in African American couples. She found that marital trust and a sense of "underbenefitting" from the marriage predicted lower levels of marital well-being at twice the rate of White American wives in the sample. African American women also trusted their spouses less after 3 years of marriage.

Kelly and Floyd's (2001, 2006) studies actually measure cultural attitudes directly (e.g., Afrocentricity, endorsement of negative African American stereotypes) to assess their impact on dynamics within the marital and committed couple relationship. Their 2006 study was notable for a complex set of relationships between religious well-being, Afrocentric beliefs, marital trust, and their outcome variable. Specifically, Afrocentric beliefs benefited husbands' marital trust only when religious well-being was low and when socioeconomic status was high. They found that among husbands with low incomes, Afrocentricity actually had a negative impact on marital trust. Findings yielded a negative association between endorsement of negative stereotypes about African Americans and marital trust among husbands. Against conventional thinking, Afrocentric beliefs yielded no direct relationship to marital trust or adjustment for husbands or wives in their sample. They cite issues with measurement of Afrocentricity as one potential source of the pattern of findings. These patterns may also be a function of incompatible beliefs between religion and Afrocentricity. Afrocentricity may be a buffer for African American husbands in white-collar professions where they are in the extreme minority. These findings might also suggest that husbands with less income may find that a focus on Afrocentricity might heighten their awareness of their gender role struggles as African American men in ways that are detrimental to marital trust.

The incredibly small handful of studies on micro-level processes in African American mar-

ried and cohabitating couples highlights the need for significant programmatic research in this area. It also highlights the paucity of research on the role of cultural beliefs and similar factors (e.g., racial identity, racial discrimination) in marital processes and couples relationships more generally. Similarly, more research is sorely needed at the dyadic level to understand more comprehensively the factors that undermine and support African American marriages and the role of attitudes and emotions about mate selection, dating, and cohabitation in marital outcomes.

Parenting and Children's Outcomes in African American Families

The impact of African American parenting behaviors on child developmental outcomes has long garnered substantial attention from researchers (Baumrind, 1972; Brody & Flor, 1998; Harrison et al., 1990; Lesane-Brown, 2006; McAdoo, 2002; Spencer, 1983; Steinberg, Dornbusch, & Brown, 1992). In contrast to the research on family formation, which often used designs that compared African American families to other racial/ethnic groups, a growing number of the studies on parenting in the last 10 years focused on within-group variation in African American families. There is also a greater focus on internal processes within families (Brody et al., 2002).

As noted, the nature of African American parenting continues to be a subject of research scrutiny, particularly regarding whether it is best described as authoritarian (i.e., low warmth with high discipline and control) or whether it is actually authoritative parenting expressed in a distinctly African American cultural manner, or an adaptation to the risks embedded in the ecological contexts in which African American families reside (e.g., no-nonsense parenting, Brody & Flor, 1998). We know more today about the nature of African American parenting than we did 10 years ago. Still, researchers often fail to measure culture or cultural variables explicitly (Hill & Bush, 2001) and race-comparative studies often still continue to substitute race for culture and/or ethnicity (Phinney & Landin, 1998).

There was a substantial increase in the number of studies addressing racial socialization relative to the number of published articles on the topic in the decade prior. In terms of the age group of the children studied, most studies contain samples of schoolagers and adolescents. I have organized the next section to take into account the way the literature has developed during this period. It begins with studies that have a primary focus on general parenting. We define general parenting as those studies that focus on parent–child relationship quality, discipline, monitoring, psychological control, and those studies examining the impact of different forms of family structure on children’s outcomes.

General Parenting

A topic receiving longstanding attention in the literature on African American families is the nature and effectiveness of parenting in African American families (Baumrind, 1972; Chase-Lansdale, Brooks-Gunn, & Zamsky, 1994; Gonzales, Caucé, & Mason, 1996; McAdoo, 2002). In the past decade, researchers have worked to identify more precisely the nature of parenting in this regard and to a certain degree; they have been more diligent in taking into account context and cultural influences (McLoyd, 2006). Studies in this area attempt to capture the wide array of family structures that characterized these families by making more explicit efforts to assess the caregiving arrangements of single-parent families in particular, rather than assuming that no other adults are present in such families (e.g., Conger et al., 2002). In so doing, researchers and policy makers have been able to identify the more vulnerable family configurations and to tease out why they are more vulnerable (e.g., Hummer & Hamilton, 2010; Jackson, Brooks-Gunn, Huang, & Glassman, 2000).

One ongoing debate in the field entails whether African American parents primarily use an authoritative (e.g., high warmth, high structure) or authoritarian parenting style (e.g., low warmth, high structure; McGroder, 2000; Pittman & Chase-Lansdale, 2001). In the late 1990s and early 2000s, research findings seemed to indicate that traditional definitions of authoritative and

authoritarian parenting did not apply to African American families (Brody & Flor, 1998; Brody, Flor, & Gibson, 1999; Murry, Bynum, Brody, Willert, & Stephens, 2001). Moreover, the function and usefulness of strict parenting styles typically conceptualized as authoritarian neglected to account for the kinds of contextual risks that African American children face (Gonzales, Caucé, Friedman, & Mason, 1996; Mason, Caucé, Gonzales, & Hiraga, 1996; Smetana, Campione-Barr, & Daddis, 2004).

African American parents raise their children with a heightened awareness of the risks to healthy development their children face such as residence in or adjacent to low-income, high crime communities (Lambert, Brown, Phillips, & Ialongo, 2004; Patillo-McCoy, 1999), and vulnerability to racial stereotyping regarding their intellect (Steele & Aronson, 1995), and criminal involvement (Bynum, Best, Barnes, & Burton, 2008; Sanders-Phillips, 2009). Still, studies that rely upon race-comparative designs have a limited capacity to explaining the cultural nuances of African American parenting specifically. There has been improvement in researchers’ awareness of the need to attend to confounding of race and socioeconomic class at the recruitment phase (e.g., Hill & Bush, 2001; Hill & Herman-Stahl, 2002). Statistically controlling for socioeconomic status continues to be an inadequate remedy as many race-comparative studies often have groups that are discrepant on socioeconomic class at the outset (e.g., Jackson-Newsom, Buchanan, & McDonald, 2008; Steinberg & Fletcher, 1998).

Parenting research focused on African American infants, toddlers, and preschoolers in the last 10–20 years largely focuses on parenting processes in low-income, single-parent families (Jackson, 2003; Mitchell et al., 2009). These studies often involve a focus on risk for children’s negative developmental outcomes (Tamis-LeMonda et al., 2008). Several of the recent within-group studies examine the factors that undermine competent parenting among African American single mothers parenting young children and their subsequent impact on children’s developmental outcomes (McLoyd, 1990; Murry, Bynum, et al., 2001).

Earlier research revealed that the fewer economic resources families have, the more difficult single mothers find the task of raising young children (Jackson et al., 2000). Inadequate economic resources reduce mothers' confidence and increase their psychological distress, which in turn, results in harsher parenting and less warmth in parenting interactions with children (Brody & Flor, 1997). It also undermines children's outcomes as well in several arenas (McLoyd, 1990, 1998). Jackson's (2003) study of African American single mothers of young schoolagers (6–8 years of age) found that in particular, low-wage employment and residence in poor-quality neighborhoods predicted higher levels of behavior problems 2 years later. Depressive symptomology and parenting a son worsened these outcomes. Jackson also conducted several studies in the 1990s and early 2000s with urban African American single mothers of preschoolers. Her work indicated that parenting a male child (Jackson, 1998) is more stressful, and this challenge might be especially difficult when mothers have less education on average and when they report greater role strain (Jackson, 1993, 1994).

Parenting studies involving young African American children that attempt to disentangle socioeconomic class or culture/ethnicity from race in the study design phase continue to be rare. In one observational study of the families of young infants (i.e., 3–4 months) in low-, middle-, and high-income African American families, fathers were observed to participate in more social stimulation than mothers and more displays of affection in comparison to mothers (Roopnarine et al., 2005). Another study investigated maternal socialization of emotion regulation in African American preschoolers (Garner, 2006). The study revealed that emotion matching (defined as the displaying emotion considered to be an appropriate reaction to a child's emotional display), discussion of emotion, and maternal distraction predicted greater emotion competence in children.

A small amount of evidence suggests that parental intrusiveness during children's play may function differently in interactions between African American parents and their young children.

Parental intrusiveness is typically defined as the degree to which parents control or direct children's play in ways that interfere with the natural pacing of children's play and mastery of given skills. It is generally thought to be a negative parenting behavior because of linkages to negative developmental outcomes in young children (Egeland, Pianta, & O'Brien, 1993). However, in the case of intrusiveness as well as with other constructs focused on some aspect of parental control relevant to later stages of child development, recent studies seem to indicate that high control in the presence of high warmth does not translate into negative developmental outcomes for African American children in the way it seems to for White American children.

For instance, Ipsa et al. (2004) longitudinal study investigated the impact of maternal intrusive behaviors when children were 15 months old on three child outcomes at 25 months of age: dyadic mutuality, engagement of mother, and child negativity toward mother (e.g., anger, dislike). They also examined these processes in African American, White American, and Mexican American families with two different degrees of acculturation to determine whether ethnicity (e.g., culture) moderated the impact of intrusiveness. At the mean level, African American mothers and less acculturated Mexican American mothers had higher scores on intrusiveness than the White American mothers in the sample, suggesting that these behaviors are more normative in the former two groups. Though mothers rated as higher on intrusiveness also had children who displayed greater negativity towards them, this relationship did not exist for African American families when mothers were high on warmth. Intrusiveness did not predict child engagement with the mother in any of the three ethnic minority groups. They acknowledge, however, that the probability levels only approached significance in the statistical models. Similarly, Pungello and colleagues (2009) found that maternal intrusiveness (time 1 = child 12 months old) was unrelated to growth in children's expressive language skills over 4 time points (18–36 months) (Pungello, Iruka, Dotterer, Mills-Koonce, & Reznick, 2009). Analyses did reveal racial differences in the

indicators of language development between the two groups despite extensive efforts to recruit equivalent groups with respect to socioeconomic status and efforts with regard to sample restrictions and statistical controls to make the groups as equivalent as possible.

Collectively, these results indicate that African American mothers' engagement of their young children in ways that are currently labeled as intrusive may have a different meaning within their cultural context. It is also possible that maternal warmth reduces any potential negative impact of intrusive or dominating behaviors in dyadic interactions. Moreover, racial differences in the developmental outcomes in question may be a function of socioeconomic class and other unmeasured factors that also covary with racial-ethnic group membership. Placing our understanding of how African American parents engage and structure their children should also reflect the cultural emphasis on respect for elders in African American families (Boykin & Toms, 1985). The pattern of findings here and in the sections to follow highlights a need to attend directly to cultural belief systems and practices in parenting study designs going forward.

Physical discipline and corporal punishment. As we move up the age spectrum, studies reflect continued interest in constructs assessing various dimensions of parental control in African American parenting and potentially different meanings in the context of African American families. Spanking is defined as mild forms of physical punishment (e.g., striking the child on the buttocks, slapping the child's hand). Though it can vary in intensity (McLoyd & Smith, 2002), it does not rise to the level of physical abuse (Christie-Mizell, Pryor, & Grossman, 2008). Considered a controversial parenting practice, physical punishment is widely used in the United States (Lansford, Deater-Deckard, Dodge, Bates, & Petit, 2004). Evidence suggests that it is used often by African American parents (Lau, Litrownik, Newton, Black, & Everson, 2006). Previous research has linked corporal punishment to negative developmental outcomes in children in the form of greater externalizing behaviors,

and more recently, depressive symptoms (Christie-Mizell et al., 2008; Lau et al., 2006; McLoyd, Kaplan, Hardaway, & Wood, 2007).

In the last 10 years, several studies have shown that the negative linkages between child outcomes and physical punishment commonly reported for White American families do not hold up consistently when African American families are considered (Horn, Joseph, & Cheng, 2004). Recent studies using large, representative samples and smaller samples suggest that factors such as maternal warmth (McLoyd & Smith, 2002) and maternal endorsement of spanking as an appropriate disciplinary strategy (McLoyd et al., 2007) attenuate the linkage between spanking and externalizing and internalizing problems, respectively. Findings from the 2007 study indicated the following: (1) physical punishment was associated with greater maternal psychological distress regardless of endorsement status; (2) the association was stronger for nonendorsers than endorsers; (3) the use of physical punishment longitudinally predicted greater depressive symptoms by mothers who did not endorse physical punishment as appropriate parenting strategy; and (4) there was no association between physical punishment and later child depressive symptoms by endorsing mothers.

Lansford et al. (2004) found that physical discipline in the early childhood years and during early adolescence predicted lower externalizing problems in African American 11th graders. These findings reinforce the notion of considering the context in which spanking is applied in African American parenting. Some argue that this pattern reflects greater cultural acceptance of corporal punishment (Deater-Deckard, Dodge, Bates, & Petit, 1996), even though cultural beliefs are not directly assessed. The relative consistency of these patterns coupled with the longitudinal nature of the data underscore the need to measure cultural beliefs about the meaning and interpretation of physical punishment by both African parents and children.

Parenting studies involving adolescents in the last 10 years also reflect this continuing theme that parental control constructs may have a different meaning in African American families.

In a series of rigorous studies, Smetana and colleagues assessed cultural processes embedded in autonomy granting process in middle-class African American families with adolescents (Smetana, 2000; Smetana et al., 2004). Middle-to upper-class African American parents reported that all areas of decision-making involving various facets of their adolescents' lives fall under their purview and that they had the legitimate authority as parents to make decisions in this area. These parents also engage in more joint decision making with their adolescents than previously seen in studies on White American middle-class adolescents, with parents granting more autonomy to adolescents as adolescents grew older (Smetana et al.). This work provides evidence that the nature and perception of parental authority during the adolescent years differs in distinct ways from White American families that she has previously studied.

Racial Socialization

The area receiving perhaps the greatest increase in attention in the African American parenting literature in the last 10 years is racial socialization. There are several existing, overlapping definitions of racial socialization (Hughes et al., 2006; Lesane-Brown, 2006; Stevenson et al., 2002). In this chapter, we define racial socialization as a set of parenting strategies designed to prepare African American children for the developmental challenges of being a person of color in the United States. These challenges include coping with exposure to racial discrimination and exposure to negative racial stereotypes that threaten healthy identity development and coping with racial discrimination in its various forms (Boykin & Toms, 1985). As the press to understand African American children and families within their cultural context has gained currency as an acceptable research approach in the field, the growth in this research area allows us to make some observations about what we have learned about the nature and impact of this culturally relevant parenting activity.

Racial socialization practices are common in African American families, and can be considered normative (Bowman & Howard, 1985;

Demo & Hughes, 1990; Lesane-Brown, 2006) though the content of the messages and strategies vary from family to family (Hughes & Johnson, 2001). Racial socialization refers a variety of message types and frameworks, but comprehensive reviews narrowed the topics to four broad areas: cultural socialization, preparation for bias, promotion of mistrust, and egalitarian attitudes/silence about race (Hughes et al., 2006). In this review, we provide a general description of the progress in this area and give a synopsis of findings on how African American parents prepare children to cope with racial bias and messages about cultural socialization and related constructs (e.g., cultural pride).

Recent studies also indicate that specific demographic factors like parent gender, parent education, child age, child gender, and family socioeconomic status are associated with frequency, content, and timing of racial socialization strategies. Parents that are more affluent and more educated seem to engage in more racial socialization strategies than families with less income (Hughes & Johnson, 2001; Neblett, Smalls, Ford, Nguyễn, & Sellers, 2009; Neblett et al., 2008). It has been speculated that African American parents from more educated, affluent backgrounds are likely to have more contact with White Americans and thus, may encounter more discrimination (Hughes, 2003; White-Johnson, Ford, & Sellers, 2010). It also appears that the child's age (Demo & Hughes, 1990) and degree of racism exposure impacts when certain topics get introduced (Hughes & Johnson, 2001; McHale et al., 2006; Stevenson & Arrington, 2009), suggesting that parents are consciously adapting the timing and introduction of certain race-related content based on the racial context and developmental needs of their children.

Recently, researchers have devoted more attention to the role of gender in racial socialization. One study found that mothers appear to engage in more cultural socialization than fathers (McHale et al., 2006). A smaller qualitative study of maternal racial socialization found that mothers did not differ in the amount of racial socialization messages delivered to sons and daughters (Frabutt, Walker, & MacKinnon-Lewis, 2002).

Parents living in different racial contexts likely socialize their children about race in ways as a function of those racial contexts (Caughy, Nettles, O'Campo, & Lohrfink, 2006). Maternal warmth is associated with racial socialization globally (Frabutt et al., 2002), and specifically with greater cultural socialization and preparation for bias (McHale et al., 2006). These findings suggest that supportive and involved mothering involves teaching children important life lessons about race. Fathers that were warmer, more educated, and older were more likely to engage in cultural socialization and preparation for bias. This effect was especially pronounced for sons as compared to daughters.

Cultural socialization. Cultural socialization messages, also referred to as messages aimed at instilling a sense of racial pride, teach children about African American history and cultural traditions (Caughy, O'Campo, Randolph, & Nickerson, 2002; Stevenson et al., 2002). These types of racial socialization messages seem to be the most frequently occurring (Brega & Coleman, 1999; Hughes, 2003; Hughes & Johnson, 2001). Moreover, this aspect of socialization seems to come from parents where as other areas of racial socialization may be more likely to be prompted by external events or children's accounts of their experiences with racial discrimination (Hughes et al., 2006). Studies suggest that cultural socialization appears to be positive for the psychological functioning of children and young adults (Bynum, Burton, & Best, 2007; Harris-Britt, Valrie, Kurtz-Costes, & Rowley, 2007), but some conflicting findings have been reported.

Several different measures with slightly different construct definitions exist in this area (e.g., cultural pride, racial pride, cultural legacy appreciation, Africentric home environment). This may account for some of the mixed findings. For example, cultural socialization predicted fewer depressive symptoms and positive ethnic identity in school-aged children from two-parent families, especially when both mothers and fathers delivered these messages (McHale et al., 2006). Cultural legacy appreciation predicted specific aspects of racial identity, nationalism, and racial

centrality in adolescents (Stevenson & Arrington, 2009). In one study of preschoolers residing in different types of neighborhoods, a home environment infused with African American culture predicted better cognitive skills and vocabulary knowledge among girls but not boys and fewer internalizing problems in boys and girls (Caughy et al., 2006). The impact of the home environment was more pronounced among children from high-risk neighborhoods. However, counterintuitively, girls in similar environments from low-risk neighborhoods exhibited more externalizing problems. More research is needed to clarify under which conditions cultural socialization is beneficial for children's developmental outcomes.

Preparation for bias. Preparation for bias is defined as messages designed to make children aware of the possibility of racial bias and discrimination and to provide a way to cope in the face of these possible biases (Hughes et al., 2006). Findings regarding the impact of preparation for bias have been mixed. On the one hand, it can be helpful to know that such barriers exist so that children may be able to interpret them and develop the capacity to cope with them. However, too many messages about the realities of racial bias can backfire, and result in greater psychological distress (Bynum et al., 2007).

Results from a self-report study investigating the buffering effects of racial socialization on African American eighth-graders indicated that moderate levels of preparation for bias buffered their self-esteem from the impact of racial discrimination (Harris-Britt et al., 2007). In contrast, low or high levels of preparation for bias seemed to render adolescents more vulnerable to racial discrimination experiences. High levels of preparation for bias can result in lower levels of locus of control if mothers are teaching about it and fathers are not (McHale et al., 2006). Preparation for bias has been associated with more internalizing problems in young African American children (Caughy et al., 2006) and older children (McHale et al., 2006), but these findings need to be replicated. Taken together, these study results suggest at a minimum that parents must be careful with respect to how they deliver such

messages and to take into consideration whether they are delivering similar messages to children about the realities of racial bias.

Conclusion and Directions for Future Research

The research literature on African American families has made substantial advancements in the last 10 years in some key areas. There is greater recognition of the need for more attention to the internal variation in family processes within this population as well within other ethnic minority groups in the United States. Greater attention to internal variation in African American families has occurred more often in the parenting literature. Future research should be devoted towards understanding the internal dynamics of mate selection processes, and also, cohabitation and marital relationships. Large population studies are useful for identifying broad trends, but they are limited in revealing the underlying the meaning of personal choices regarding family formation in these studies. In this arena, race-comparative frameworks can only go so far in terms of showing how African Americans are different. Given that this approach dominates the family formation literature, there is an opening for researchers to complement this work with smaller scale studies using more intensive methods. More qualitative research, observational methods, and more extensive assessments of psychological and cultural constructs would answer many questions about the meaning of family formation decisions and guide policies that support African American families.

Furthermore, future studies need to take into account the race-based external pressures on African American families (Lundquist, 2006). Within the parenting literature, investigators have begun to incorporate experiences with racial discrimination into study designs to illustrate how they undermine parenting and child outcomes (e.g., Brody et al., 2008; Caughy, O'Campo, & Muntaner, 2004; Murry, Brown, Brody, Cutrona, & Simons, 2001). Similar attention is needed to understand how African American men and women manage the challenges of racial discrimination and the process by which it impacts

romantic relationships in each stage or type (e.g., dating, cohabitation, marriage). Specific attention to how the dynamics of racial identity and racial discrimination experience intersect with the gender role expectations that affect mate selection (Collins, 1998) is needed. Scholars have presented compelling conceptual thinking about these particular dynamics that undermine African American marriages, but more empirical data at the dyadic level are sorely needed. To the extent that marriage is a valued outcome in our society, more attention is needed in this arena.

This review also underscores the need for more research on middle-class African American families of all types. Within these studies, researchers need to expand their measurement of cultural variables (e.g., racial identity, exposure to racial discrimination, cultural beliefs). There is a wide array of measures available that can be incorporated into study designs to illuminate within group variation within this population. It is no longer necessary to rely as heavily on racial-ethnic group membership as an indicator of culture processes or endorsement of culturally based belief systems. New measures should also be developed in subfields where they are lacking. Assumptions about variation (or lack thereof) within racial-ethnic groups need to be tested by measuring culturally based beliefs in all such groups enrolled in our studies. Lastly, making explicit efforts to study more affluent families and to measure cultural processes explicitly will improve our understanding of the role of culture and socioeconomic class in African American family life (Bynum, 2007).

In conclusion, the state of the research on African American families is a portrait of progress and potential. The field has made substantial progress in documenting the lives of African American families where they live. Researchers also attend more to the factors that shape African American family life to a greater extent than occurred 10 years ago. Still, the field should not rest on its laurels; this review generated as many questions as it has attempted to answer. The wealth of research conducted to date establishes a clear foundation for researchers to chart new paths in the knowledge base on African American families.

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The Adjustment of Asian American Families to the U.S. Context: The Ecology of Strengths and Stress

29

Yan Ruth Xia, Kieu Anh Do, and Xiaolin Xie

Demography, History, and Culture

Asian Americans are represented by estimated 28 subgroups and are unique and diverse in their own languages, cultures, and socioeconomic backgrounds (Ishii-Kuntz, 2000). In 2000, there were approximately 11.9 million Asian Americans in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). In 2008, the number increased to 15.5 million, comprising more than 4.6 of the total US population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009b) and this number was projected to increase to 40.6 million by 2050 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). According to data from the U.S. Census Bureau (2000), the most notable post-1965 change was the rapid population growth of Asian Americans, from less than 1.5 million in 1970 to 11.9 million in 2000. The net increase of Asian American population from 2000 to 2009 is over 3.4 million (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). This figure is currently growing, but does not account for individuals with mixed ancestries, such as Asian and Hispanic, Asian and Black, or Asian and White.

Y.R. Xia, PhD (✉) • K.A. Do, PhD
Department of Child, Youth, and Family Studies
University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln, NE, USA
e-mail: rxia2@unl.edu; Ando111@yahoo.com

X. Xie, PhD
School of Family, Consumer, and Nutrition Studies
Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL 60115, USA
e-mail: xialinx@niu.edu

As a whole, Asian Americans are quite diverse in terms of nationalities, languages, ethnicities, and cultural traditions. The three largest Asian American populations in the United States, accounting for about 60% of the total Asian population, are Chinese (over 2.8 million), Asian Indian (over 2.2 million), and Filipino (over 2.1 million) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004). The three smallest Asian American populations in the United States, comprising only 0.7% of the total Asian population, include Sri Lankan (22,339), Malaysian (11,548), and Bangladeshi (50,473) (U.S. Census Bureau).

In examining the Asian American population by region, the majority (40%) reside in the West, with similar numbers living in the Northeast and Southern regions, 21.2% and 21.1%, respectively (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). A smaller percentage (11.7%) of Asian Americans live in the Midwest region (U.S. Census Bureau). Hawaii (38.5%), California (12.4%), and New Jersey (7.6%) rank as the three most concentrated Asian American populations when compared to the total state populations (U.S. Census Bureau).

Within the private sphere of the home, data from the 2008 American Community Survey (ACS) indicated that there were approximately 3.1 million Asian American family households, 81.4% of which consisted of married couples, 12.1% of single female-headed households, and about 6.5% of single male-headed households (U.S. Census Bureau). For the most part, Asian Americans are highly educated, with 49.4% holding a Bachelor's degree or higher and only 14.6%

having less than a high school education. Occupationally, 47.1% of Asian Americans hold managerial, professional, or related positions. This chapter will focus on Asian American families that migrated to the United States in the last 3 decades. Myths about Asian American families will be examined, along with the ecology of stress that influences family dynamics, and their family strengths and resiliencies.

Myths About Asian American Families

Asian American families are far from what the media has often depicted as the *Model Minority* because they have their fair share of challenges and stresses. At times, these challenges and stresses are not well recognized, and thus, do not receive immediate or sufficient attention. Below are some myths pertaining to Asian American families.

Myth 1: Asian American Students Are Model Students: Good Grades, Respectful, and Trouble-Free

Students from Asian America families are supposed to get straight As in school; they must be very respectful to teachers and parents, they must be drug-free or trouble-free; their parents must be well educated and have good salaries; their families must live comfortably. This stereotypical image of the *Model Minority* hurts Asian American communities. For example, this stereotype may contribute to Asian students not being eligible for some scholarships or financial assistance that is available to minority students. "Politically, this idealized picture of Asian families has been used to criticize everything from the woes of other minorities and their dependence on big government to the consequences of our country's departure from traditional family roles" (Lee & Zhan, 1998, p. 132). As a result, Asian American individuals may be alienated from peers or coworkers (Leong & Grand, 2008; Lo, 2010; Tang, 2008) and their issues may not

receive enough attention or warrant the same type of social and community support. As a result, their relationship with these groups in the social context may be strained.

Myth 2: Asian American Families Earn More Money Than Other Ethnic Families

According to the ACS, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau's (2009a), the median income of Asian households was \$68,780, which is higher than Whites (\$53,131), Blacks (\$33,463), and Hispanics (\$39,923). However, there are several reasons contributing to this high income when we take into account the characteristics of Asian households. For example, Asian families tend to be intergenerational, with many individuals, including grandparents, parents, children, and sometimes even unmarried aunts or uncles. Data from the ACS (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009a) indicated that 11.4% of Asian households consisted of other relatives, whereas only 5.3% of White households were so. More specifically, 5.9% were in a household with grandchildren compared to 2.9% of Whites. In addition, due to the collectivistic nature of Asian culture, these family members often pool their income together. Therefore, anybody who can work is encouraged to contribute to the household income, and family financial resources are shared. As such, the family or household income appears to be high, but the average resources per person may be limited.

Chan (1991), a leading researcher in Asian American studies, reexamined *returns on education* discussed by sociologists. *Returns on education* referred to additional dollars earned for each additional year of education obtained after high school. Asian Americans were disadvantaged when their investment in education was taken into account. The additional income earned by investing each additional year in college was estimated at \$320 and \$438 for Chinese and Japanese Americans, respectively, as compared to \$522 for Whites (Varma, 2004). They have to complete more years of education in order to reach the same income level.

Myth 3: All Asian American Families Are Sailing off Smoothly After They Migrate to the United States

Asian Americans are more diverse than homogeneous. They or their ancestors came from different ethnic groups, for various reasons, and with unique cultural heritages. For example, a vast number of Asian Americans who migrated from Southeast Asia (e.g., Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia) in the last 30 years left their countries involuntarily as refugees while those from Japan, China, and India came voluntarily to pursue an advanced degree and promising careers. Most refugee immigrants were neither prepared psychologically, nor were equipped with English language skills. They were faced with many challenges in adjusting to their lives in the United States. They do, however, exhibit resiliency and strengths that help overcome adversity. For example, Vietnamese Americans living in eastern New Orleans before Katrina drew strengths from their culture and history to rebuild their community (Leong, Airriess, Li, Chen, & Keith, 2007). By early 2007, more than 90% of former Vietnamese American residents had returned to eastern New Orleans.

The Ecology of Stress

Asian American families face a multitude of stressors and challenges. Some are general life stressors, while others are more unique to Asian Americans as an ethnic and cultural group. The type of stress and challenges, however, also varies across ethnicity and culture, country of origin, acculturation level, education, language skills, migration history, social class, and length of residency in the United States. These contextual sources of stress and challenge originate both at the broader societal level and within individual families. They directly or indirectly influence parent-child relationships, couple's relationships, power structures, and gender roles.

For example, results from the Mental Health America Attitudinal Survey (2006) revealed that 34% of the Asian Americans sampled indicated feeling stressed from their relationships with oth-

ers, family relationships, and employment, while nearly 42% reported stress relating to finances. More specifically, Blair (2000) conducted a study with a random sample of 124 Cambodian adults in Utah, who have been in the United States an average of 8.1 years. The participants rated 14 stressors on average as being "very stressful" within their first year in the United States. The top four stressors included: (a) A lack of adequate English skills (77%); (b) thoughts about family members who had been left behind (63%); (c) transportation problems (62%); and (d) thoughts about people they had known who were killed in Cambodia (60%).

The researcher also assessed stressors during the past year, and participants identified an average of 5.2 "very stressful" issues, with the top four being: (a) worries about the future in the United States (27%); (b) health worries (26%); (c) worries about family left behind in Cambodia (24%); and (d) worries about not having enough money (23%) (Blair, 2000). These findings illustrate three important patterns concerning the type and level of stress experienced by Cambodian refugees in particular and Asian American immigrant families in general. First, these families tend to have "very stressful" feelings about basic survival and adaptation in the beginning phase of their resettlement in the United States. Basic language skills and the ability to get from one place to another are essential for daily living in the host country. Second, the types and level of stress in general tend to diminish as the families acculturate and find ways to meet their basic needs. In the latter phase of their resettlement, Asian immigrant and refugee families tend to worry about their future in the United States, and their health and well-being. The third pattern demonstrates the strong kinship system and family interdependency among Asian Americans. Although migration, time, and distance impeded family relationships, Cambodian refugees continued to worry about family members they have left behind in their country of origin. Overall, these stressors can have detrimental effects on Asian immigrants and refugees, with Blair (2000) concluding that these stressors contributed to substantial amounts of depression among Cambodian refugees.

Racism, Prejudice, and Discrimination

One of the more prevalent issues that is sometimes difficult to label and eliminate is the issue of racism, prejudice, and discrimination that Asian American and other minority groups experienced in both a historical and contemporary context. For instance, in 1882 the Chinese Exclusion Act banned immigration from China, and in 1907 and 1908, similar restrictions were placed on Japanese and Korean immigrants through the Gentlemen's Agreement (U.S. DHHS, 2000). A decade later, The Immigration Act of 1917 limited the entry of Asian Indians (U.S. DHHS). Asian Americans also were denied the rights to citizenship, suffrage, and due process under the law (Zia, 2000). For example, in 1923 in *United States v. Bhagat Singh Thind*, the Supreme Court ruled that Asian Indians were ineligible for citizenship (Gee, Spencer, Chen, Yip, & Takeuchi, 2007). During World War II, Japanese Americans were put in internment camps and were treated as enemies (Zia, 2000).

In the everyday context, Yoo, Gee, and Takeuchi (2009) conducted a telephone survey and found that 7% of Asian Americans ($N=888$; 376 Chinese, 245 Vietnamese, 267 Korean Americans) in their sample reported experiencing racial discrimination and 12% reported language discrimination. As expected, recent Asian immigrants, or those residing in the United States for less than 10 years, indicated the highest level of racial (9%) and language discrimination (19%) (Yoo et al.). While U.S.-born Asian Americans experienced the least language discrimination (0%), they still encounter racial discrimination (4%) (Yoo et al.). Asian Americans continue to face employment and housing discrimination (Turner, Ross, Bednarz, Herbig, & Lee, 2003) as well as more severe issues, including hate crimes and racial profiling by law enforcement (Gee, Spencer, et al., 2007; Zia, 2000).

Although some Asian American groups, such as Japanese, Chinese, and Korean Americans, have been in the United States for many generations, they are still considered foreigners due to their physical characteristics. According to

the Surgeon General, racial discrimination is a critical risk factor for mental disorders and other psychological issues (U.S. DHHS, 2000). For example, racial discrimination is significantly correlated with depressive symptoms in Filipino, Vietnamese, Laotian, and Cambodian eighth and ninth graders surveyed in California and Florida (Rumbaut, 1994). Similarly, racial discrimination is associated with greater risk for depressive and anxiety disorder in Vietnamese, Filipino, Chinese, Asian Indians, Japanese, Korean, and Pacific Islanders (Gee, Spencer, et al., 2007). In addition, unfair treatment related to discrimination is associated with increased prescription and illicit drug use as well as alcohol dependency in Filipino Americans (Gee, Delva, & Takeuchi, 2007). Even after controlling for age, sex, education, family income, health insurance, primary language, nativity status, and ethnicity, both racial and language discrimination were significantly correlated with increased chronic health conditions in Asian Americans (Yoo et al., 2009).

Acculturative Stress

New Asian immigrant and refugee families face the stress relating to their migration experience, and the ongoing adjustments to the new culture and new life. The uprooting process of immigration is challenging, because it fractures the existing social network. The family also struggle to acquire a new language and acculturate to the new environment. Family problems and tension are more likely to erupt due to these changes.

Specifically, refugee families, who came from war-torn nations and refugee camps, may have to deal with post-traumatic and psychological issues relating to their experiences. These effects may last for years, even after they have settled in the host country. For instance, a study conducted by Hinton, Rasmussen, Leakhena, Pollack, and Good (2009), with 143 Cambodian refugee patients at a psychiatric clinic in Massachusetts, highlights these important issues. The refugees in the sample had survived the Pol Pot genocide (1975–1979), in which more than 1.7 million

Cambodians were executed or died of starvation (Hinton et al.). In examining the family level of anger, the researchers found that almost half (48%) of the participants reported becoming angry with a family member in the last month, and about 10% were specifically angry with a spouse (Hinton et al.). The reasons varied from personal relationship issues (infidelity, 29%) to employment and financial stress (not having a paying job, 22%) (Hinton et al.). Moreover, about 45% of the participants indicated experiencing anger toward their children ($N=64$), and the reasons ranged from a child acting disrespectfully (30%) (e.g., yelling at a parent) to a child staying past curfew (30%). Interestingly, 68% had trauma recalls during these anger episodes, and half had flashbacks (52%) (Hinton et al.). These findings highlight the interesting dynamic between psychological and family issues.

The acculturation gaps within Asian American families may also be a source of conflict (Sue & Sue, 2008). Often times, children in immigrant and refugee families learn the language and acculturate faster than their parents. The differential rates of acculturation sometimes make the parents more dependent on their children for help in terms of language translation and other social interactions. The role reversal sometimes affects the quality of the parent-child relationship (Yee, DeBaryshe, Yuen, Kim, & McCubbins, 2006). In conjunction with acculturation, children may adopt American values and behaviors that may conflict with those of their parents. Parents and elders may see it as a sign of disrespect due to differing styles of communication and behaviors. Children may develop individualistic goals that are divergent from their collectivistic family orientation (Costigan & Dokis, 2006; Sue & Sue, 2008).

Migration and acculturation are multifaceted events involving changes at the social, emotional, cultural, and economic levels. Acculturation is the process whereby the values, attitudes, behaviors, and relationships of persons from one culture are modified as a result of contact with a different culture (Berry, 2001; Moyerman & Foreman, 1992). Specifically, the changes may mean that new immigrants take on different jobs,

develop a new relationship with spouse and children, and acquire new parenting skills (Chung & Bemak, 2006). As such, stress often results from these changes which are an inherent part of immigration experiences. (Sodowsky, Kwan, & Pannu, 1995). Acculturative stress often entails three aspects: (1) life-long duration, (2) pervasiveness, and (3) intensity (Smart & Smart, 1995). Acculturative stress, however, can serve as a motivator for positive change within the immigrant families and it is not always negative (Bush, Bohon, & Kim, 2009).

Financial Stress

The removal of the family from its extended social network also leads to a loss of the resources provided by that network. For old and new immigrants, economic and financial strain may cause family tension. In a study of Chinese adolescents and parents, Mistry, Benner, Tan, and Kim (2009) found that there are evidence of some family strain reported by Chinese parents and their adolescents, specifically involving arguments over money. In addition, these conflicts were associated with adolescents' psychological and academic functioning, in that youths who perceived greater family economic strain experienced greater emotional distress and depressive symptoms, as well as lower educational outcomes. Therefore, financial strains within the home have important implications for child and youth development.

Family obligations and filial piety are strong values in the Asian American family and collectivistic cultural values enforce the importance of sharing resources. According to the American Association of Retired Persons (2001), Asians (42%) were more likely to assist in caring for or financially supporting parents, in-laws, or other older relatives than Whites (19%), Blacks (28%), or Hispanics (34%). Particularly for new immigrants, underemployment or unemployment not only produces financial hardship, it could also engender feelings of worthlessness and failure to fulfill family obligations. Both old and new immigrants sometimes have to support not only

their primary family in the United States, but also extended families in their country of origin. For example, "A key aspect of Filipino financial practice is the remittance of funds which operates through the extended family" (Woelz-Stirling, Manderson, Kelaher, & Gordon, 2000, p. 7). These financial resources go toward the education of and to support children they have left behind, younger siblings or extended family members, as well as covering family medical and other expenses (Woelz-Stirling et al.). Remitting money may produce a financial strain on the Asian American family, and it may also be a potential source of marital distress, as couples argued about how much money and to which side of the family it should be sent to (Woelz-Stirling et al.).

Gendered Experiences

For Asian American immigrants and refugees, the migration experience not only fractures the family network but it also disrupts traditional gender roles (Ishii-Kuntz, 2004). Despite many similarities across Asian American families, however, gender role expectations vary based upon the ethnic group of origin and generation in the United States. For instance, Chinese American families, like many other Asian American families, often have a strong collectivist orientation guided by Confucian values, which endorse strict gender roles and expectations (Sue & Sue, 2008). Filial piety is highly honored, and family relationships are hierarchical in nature (Sue & Sue). This hierarchy is structured by age and gender (Nghe, Mahalik, & Lowe, 2003). Males have more authority than females; therefore, husbands and fathers are the heads of the family, and they hold the decision-making power (Sue & Sue, 2008).

Many changes occur within the family post-immigration, including shift in gender roles and processes. Particularly for men, the skills and occupational experiences from their native country do not necessarily translate to similar positions in the United States. For example, a Korean

American man might have been a doctor in Korea; however, after immigrating to the United States, he may have to restart at the bottom of the occupational ladder or abandon his career altogether, due to language or credential barriers. In addition, he may also encounter contradictory Americanized gender norms and racial stereotypes that marginalize him as an emasculated or feminized man (Lui, 2002).

As a result of immigration, men typically experience economic and social loss, while women become either co-providers or the sole providers for their families (Espiritu, 1999; Yee et al., 2006). Asian American women tend to find more job opportunities in the United States than in their native countries (Espiritu, 1999; Qin, 2006). They may enter the workforce by choice or by the need to support their family. While Asian American men tend to hold more traditional values, research shows that Asian American women tend to acculturate faster and adopt more egalitarian beliefs (Dion & Dion, 2001; Tang & Dion, 1999). With their new earning power, Asian American women have more say in family decision-making processes, thereby decreasing the men's authority as main breadwinners.

Conflicts often arise as families face the challenge of redefining gender roles, while attempting to maintain traditional patriarchal family structures. Women, in particular, face the added stress of performing household labor and working outside the home. Furthermore, the downward mobility of males often causes marital conflicts that may escalate and increase the risk of marital violence (Bui & Morash, 1999; Kim, Lau, & Chang, 2007). All of these factors and cultural changes may be seen as a threat to the hierarchical family structure and the patriarchal position of the male head of household. Consequently, this instability with the added stress and frustration may push Asian American men to attempt to reassert his control over the family through physical violence and marital abuse (Lui, 2002; Lum, 1998; Suárez-Orozco & Qin, 2006). More research is needed to understand how Asian American men cope with both gender role and racial conflicts. Future studies should also

examine how Asian American families cope with stress and how to minimize incidences of marital and familial violence.

Domestic Violence

The most stressful and detrimental aspect of Asian American family life may be violence within the home. Although there are no national data concerning the prevalence of domestic violence within the Asian American community, a study conducted by the Asian Task Force Against Domestic Violence has shed some light on this issue Yoshioka, Dang, Shewmangal, Chan, and Tan (2000). In this study, the researchers sampled Chinese, Cambodian, Korean, South Asian, and Vietnamese in Massachusetts, and they found that 25–38% of their participants ($N=607$) reported knowing a woman who met at least one criteria of domestic abuse (e.g., isolation, physical assaults). On the other hand, 12% of the respondents indicated that they know a man who is being beaten by his partner. Similarly, when domestic violence occurs, seeking outside intervention is considered shameful and brings dishonor to the family (Kim et al., 2007; Yoshioka et al., 2000). Keeping from losing face, a core traditional cultural value of many Asian ethnic groups, is more about the impact of an individual's behavior on his/her family than about an individual's personal feeling of shame and guilt (Hall & Eap, 2007). Victims do not seek outside help because they are concerned about the impact of their act on other people in the family. This cultural emphasis also keeps Asian families from seeking professional and public assistance for mental health and family conflict resolution. Two contextual factors contribute to intimate partner violence among Asian American couples (Kim et al., 2007). First, among the most significant stressors related to immigration and acculturation process are social isolation, experiences prior to the immigration such as trauma, and changes in social status as well as gender roles before and after the migration. Second, male superiority and male preference in the culture of the country of

origin make it difficult for male spouse to adjust to the redefined gender roles, with the result being that marital conflict is exacerbated.

Strengths, Resiliency, and Acculturation Framework

Studies of Asian American family strengths remain patchy and is a topic that warrants more scholarly attention and research in the future. However, a few studies using samples from the country of origin have been conducted that this study will draw upon. Stinnett and DeFrain (1985) identified six American family strengths: appreciation and affection; commitment; positive communication; enjoyable time together; spiritual well-being; and the effective management of stress and crisis. Olson and DeFrain (2003) compared Olson's model of three major qualities with their model of six characteristics and found that they fit well together. Olson's cohesion was represented by DeFrain and Stinnett's commitment and time together. Olson's adaptability fit closely to their family's ability to cope with crisis and spiritual well-being. Olson's communication was equivalent to DeFrain and Stinnett's positive communication and appreciation and affection.

Cross-cultural studies continually enhance the ever-evolving family strengths model (DeFrain & Asay, 2007; DeFrain & Stinnett, 2002). For example, Casas (1979) conducted a study of Latin American families and concluded that love, understanding, mutual respect, family togetherness, and communication were the major qualities of strong Latin American families. Xie, DeFrain, Meredith, and Combs (1996) found that families in China perceived that a sense of harmony was part of family strengths. A sense of harmony was defined as having a sense of family, having commitment to the family, enjoying each other's company, getting along, and being willing to compromise and forgive. Medora, Larson, and Parul (2000) conducted a similar study in India and identified five of the six aforementioned strengths by Stinnett and DeFrain (1985). Besides those five, three other strengths were revealed.

They were a sense of harmony, a feeling of support and overall well-being, and a feeling of cooperation and dependability.

A limited number of Asian American Family Strengths studies have found the common strengths that are revealed in the samples of the countries of origin and, in addition, these studies have revealed salient strengths unique to Asian American families. Ishii-Kuntz (1997a) proposed that three central family strengths of Chinese American families are cultural continuity (despite early immigrant adversities); the absorption of extended family members; and the financial contribution of women. The major family strengths of Japanese American family are strong family solidarity (despite historical experiences), strong feelings of obligation and commitment towards parents, and tolerance toward family diversity (Ishii-Kuntz, 1997b). Xie, Xia, and Zhou (2004) conducted a mixed method study of Chinese Americans about their family strengths and acculturation stress. Their qualitative study revealed a model of five major themes related to family strengths and three themes related to acculturation stress. Themes germane to family strengths included: family support leading to achieving a renewed sense of family; contextual support from friends and community; communication among family members; spiritual well-being; and balancing host and heritage cultures. Themes associated with acculturative stress were: language barriers, loneliness, and loss of social status and identity at the early stage of immigration. Measures were developed based on this new model and used in a subsequent survey (Xia, Xie, & Zhou, 2005). A Confirmative Factor Analysis (CFA) indicated that the survey data supported the Chinese American family strengths model.

Many immigrants in their process to adapt to the culture strive to reestablish their social groups through associations or church organizations. One example would be the pivotal role Korean churches play in Korean immigrants' adjustment to the new culture (Choi, 1997). According to Kim (1981), Korean churches serve as a cultural broker between the congregation and other larger social institutions. Therefore, the functions of churches include "the religious need (meaning,

the social need (belonging), and the psychological need (comfort)" (Hurh & Kim, 1990). Coehlo, Yuan, and Ahmed (1980) suggest that the presence of support from people of both the same country of origin and the host culture is likely to facilitate an immigrant's adaptation. Contact with people from the same country reinforces one's sense of self and affinity to the heritage culture, whereas contact with people from the host culture facilitates the entry into the American society.

Kim (1995) identified a process of "stress-adaptation-growth" that many immigrants achieved in a new country provided they had the social support and individual motivation. In this process, an immigrant's identity was no longer monocultural, but bicultural. Bicultural identity was "an identity that conjoins and integrates, rather than separates and divides" (p. 348). It depicts immigrants adopting and balancing the two cultures they live in. Furthermore, research on acculturation and cultural identity has more and more recognized that acculturation is not a static state but a process of negotiation and integration, for example, bidirectional model (Berry, 1980; Ryder, Alden, & Paulhus, 2000) and the developmental model of Asian identity development by Sue, Mak, and Sue (1998). However, research with Asian American samples need to take into account the social context, as the political realities of Asian Americans are different and the behavioral outcomes (e.g., academic achievements and help seeking) associated with these constructs are different (Bhatia, 2003; Okazaki, Lee, & Sue, 2007; Tanaca, Ebreo, Linn, & Morera, 1998).

Despite the challenges and stress Asian American families encounter during their migration experiences in the United States, these families also exhibited strengths and resiliency that ultimately help them reestablish their lives in this country. It is worth noting that what is found in early research about the role of Korean church and the recent research about Chinese American Family strengths shows the enculturation process defined by Kim and Abreu (2001). Korean American and Chinese Americans strengthen their families and community by maintaining and

socializing or resocializing themselves into their culture heritage while adapting to the new social and cultural environment in the United States. They survive and then thrive by balancing between these two processes (enculturation and acculturation).

Asian American Children

Redefined Roles

As part of the immigrant family system, children are also impacted by the changes in the familial, social, political, and economic contexts due to the migration. However, very little research has comprehensively examined the experiences, and particularly, stress in Asian American children. Growing up in the United States, they straddle two different worlds, their minority culture as well as the dominant society (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2002). Asian American youths confront the complex task of identity formation and cultural group affiliation (Suárez-Orozco & Qin, 2006). Sometimes, they are forced to integrate conflicting values and beliefs, living in an individualistic society while upholding collectivist traditions (Sue & Sue, 2008). Similar to their parents, Asian American children also face racism and discrimination in their social life.

Specifically, children of newly arrived immigrant and refugee families often find themselves facing many new responsibilities. Because they tend to acculturate and acquire the language faster than their parents, children often become a social and language broker for their parents. Children often encounter situations that they may not be ready or adequately prepared for. They are placed in adult settings, in the center of adult interactions, being exposed to medical, financial, and other personal information, and forced to make decisions that might not be appropriate for children (Yee et al., 2006). In the process of carrying out these new roles to help their family, parental power has to be compromised and family dynamics are changed.

Especially for children who are older siblings in their families, in addition to helping parents,

they are required to fulfill their responsibilities for helping their younger siblings. For example, “South Asian siblings care for younger siblings and teach them survival skills—personal self-care, domestic skills, or occupational skills” (Yee et al., 2006, p. 76). Moreover, among Vietnamese and Korean American children, the first born and older siblings tend to have higher status within the household, are more involved in disciplining younger siblings, and hold more traditional viewpoints and behaviors similar to the parents (Pyke, 2005). Therefore, the older siblings must act as second parental figures, teaching and disciplining their younger siblings. They often serve as a mediator between parents and younger siblings. More research is needed to understand how these experiences affect Asian American children in general.

Parenting and Parent–Child Relationships

The immigration process has affected the normal parent–child relationship as presented by several case studies and research on immigrant children (Berrol, 1995; Rumbaut, 1994; Zhou, 1997). First of all, *serial migration* (Waters, 1997) prevents family members from being united simultaneously. In many situations, parents come to the United States for a lengthy period of time before their children can join them, and thus, strain the parent–child relationship. Second, economic survival in the new land necessitates the father’s as well as mother’s work force participation. This often results in parents’ long absence from home and leaving little time for the supervision of children. Last, immigrant children live in the families where parents do not speak English well, and they are accorded the interpreter and translator positions in the family. This role reversal can decrease parental authority and lead to parental dependence on children (Ngyuen & Huang, 2007; Zhou, 1997).

Because of language and the school environment, children and their parents tend to acculturate at different speed, a phenomena that led Portes and Rumbaut (1996) to conceptualize the acculturation gaps between immigrant parents and

their offspring as “generational consonance vs. dissonance.” Generational consonance refers to the notion when both parents and children acculturate at the same speed or remained unacculturated, whereas generational dissonance occurs when children acculturate at a faster speed than that of their parents and fail to conform to parental authority. Baumrind (1971, 1991) identifies four patterns of parenting styles that describe how parents negotiate the needs of children for both nurturance and limit setting. These four styles of parenting are authoritative parents, who are both demanding and responsive using supportive rather than punitive disciplinary methods; permissive parents, who are more responsive than they are demanding and are lenient and avoid confrontation; authoritarian parents, who are demanding and directive but not responsive, expecting their orders to be followed without clarification; and rejecting-neglecting or disengaged parents, who are neither demanding nor responsive and provide no structure nor support. According to studies with European American samples, the authoritarian parenting style has been found to be associated with lower school achievement. However, this does not hold true with Asian student sample who scored high on the authoritarian style, and yet as a group, achieved the highest GPA (Chao, 1994; Kim & Chun, 1994).

Some researchers have begun to challenge the aforementioned parenting styles. Chao’s (1994) study reveals that Baumrind’s (1971) typology does not adequately capture the important features of Chinese child rearing, implying that parents from different cultures may be using other types of effective parenting styles that do not fall under Baumrind’s (1971) parenting styles. According to Chao (1994), a different style of parenting typical of Chinese American parents was called “training”—it accentuates the importance of parental supervision in working hard, being self-disciplined, and achieving academic success. Therefore, this type of parenting has acquired an extra component other than the emotional one manifested in praising, hugging, and kissing. This new component includes “an investment, involvement, and support of children.”

Another study with Korean American adolescents who have been raised in the “Korean way” reveals that these adolescents consider authoritarian parents to be positive parental figures, and they see this parenting style as appropriate (Kim, 2002). This lends support to the notion of different parenting practices in different cultures. Whereas strict and controlling supervision leads to low academic achievement among White students, it results in positive outcomes for Korean American children’s educational success (Kim).

From the perspective of Asian American youth, treating elders with respect, following parents’ advice, and fulfilling family obligations are highly valued, more so than their European American counterparts (Fulgini, Tseng, & Lam, 1999). However, the youth believe that their values and expectations concerning familial obligation are lower than that of their parents (Fulgini et al.). This could be a source of conflict within the parent–child relationship. For instance, highly assimilated Korean American youth reported experiencing greater conflict with their parents who tend to hold more traditional values (Rhee, Chang, & Rhee, 2003). The conflict could intensify across the different generations, as third generation Asian American youth tend to have a lower sense of familial obligation than their first generation peers (Fulgini et al., 1999). Specifically for Asian American females, intergenerational conflicts are heightened around issues relating to dating and marriage (Chung, 2001). Daughters often reported more tension with their parents for being overly protective and imposing their traditional viewpoints on them (Chung). Overall, contrary to popular belief, having a strong sense of familial obligation and collectivist values did not seem to impede the social development and peer relationships of Asian American youth (Fulgini et al., 1999).

Communication Patterns

Affectionate and open communication are generally discouraged in Asian culture (Le, Berenbaum, & Raghavan, 2002; Lowinger & Kwok, 2001). This includes physical and verbal expressions of love, anger, and other strong emotions and opinions.

The emphasis on restricted communication has its roots in the Asian cultural values of maintaining harmony (Kim & Kim, 2001), collective interests, and tolerance. Unaffectionate and implicit communication is observed in families with parents who are more traditional and less assimilated to American society (Chung, 2001). This has become less desirable in families with parents who have obtained advanced education and in the families with young adult children.

Research on Chinese families shows that open communication is inversely associated with parent–adolescent conflict (Xia et al., 2004). Park, Vo, and Tsong (2009) have found the similar association in the study of parents and their adult children in Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, and Filipino American families, and Asian Indian American families. Their study also found that, even if fathers and sons have different views about cultural values, they can still enjoy a good relationship if they communicate openly and are sensitive to each other’s emotional needs. Without open and affectionate communication, conflict increases between fathers and sons, as well as mothers and daughters. Affectionate communication significantly benefits father–daughter relationships when the differences in their cultural values and beliefs are low (Park et al.).

Academic Achievements and Parental Expectations

As a group, Asian American children have achieved an impressive record of academic success. Studies show that their grade point averages in high school and college are higher, and on an average, they score higher on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) than other ethnic groups (Sue & Abe, 1995). They also have a higher percentage of college and post-bachelor degrees compared with other ethnic groups (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009a, 2009b). Specifically, 29.4% Asian vs. 18.5% of non-Hispanic Whites, 11.5% of African Americans, 8.7% of Hispanics, and 8.6% of Native Americans have received bachelor’s degrees (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009a, 2009b). As for post-bachelor’s degrees, 20.2% of Asian,

10.8% of non-Hispanic Whites, 6.1% of African Americans, 3.9% of Hispanic, and 4.4% of Native Americans (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009a, 2009b). This record of excellence in academics has to do with the deeply rooted belief in Asian culture that diligence and effort is more indicative of success than intelligence. Chen and Stevenson (1995) found that Asian American 11th graders spent almost 20 h a week studying, and their Euro-American counterparts spent about 14 h a week. They also devoted more time in other educational activities, such as private tutoring or after-school studies, music, and their ethnic language lessons. In order to concentrate on their studies, they were not encouraged to hold a part-time job, be involved in dating, or perform household chores (Chen & Stevenson, 1995; Kao, 1995). However, there are variations in educational attainment among different Asian American subgroups. East Asians, such as Chinese (25.7%), Japanese (31.6%), and Koreans (33.7%), are more likely to have earned a Bachelor’s degree than Southeast Asians, such as Cambodian (10.7%), Hmong (11.2%), Laotian (8.7%), and Vietnamese (18.1%), with the exception of Filipinos (38.9%) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009a, 2009b).

Besides hard work, studies also show that parental involvement is another key factor. Parental involvement includes providing encouragement, support, and direct instruction at home and maintaining open communications with the school. Studies showed that, when compared to their counterparts in other ethnic groups, Asian American parents consistently have higher educational expectations for their offspring in terms of school performance, college choices, college and postgraduate degrees, and the appropriate amount of time and effort their children spend on studies (Chen & Stevenson, 1995; Kao, 1995; Spera, Wentzel, & Matto, 2009).

Asian Americans strongly believe education is the key to upward social mobility. Sorenson (1994) believes that Koreans consider education, indicative of social status, to have “intrinsic worth”. Parents place high expectations for their children’s academic success. The high degree of parental involvement and its positive outcome in terms of educational achievement are embedded

in the Korean society. When they immigrate to the United States, they bring along their cultural expectations on education. Kim (2002) shows that parental expectations, communication between parents and children, and parents' English proficiency were significant factors in predicting children's academic achievement.

Older Asian American Immigrants and Intergenerational Relationships

The number of Asian American seniors is burgeoning. This group is the fastest growing minority senior group, with an increase of 114% between 1980 and 1990, and an increase of 64.4% (0.81–1.34 million) between 2000 and 2009 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). In 1990, the four largest sending countries of senior immigrants were Philippines, China, Korea, and Vietnam, with a total of 14,481, or 30% of all senior immigrants who came to the United States (U.S. Immigration & Naturalization, 1991). Senior Asian immigrants are far from a homogeneous group. Min (1998) conceptualized Asian seniors as being members of two distinct groups—the “invited senior” and the “immigrated senior.” The first group are invited to immigrate to the United States by their adult children residing in the United States and are themselves senior upon their arrival. The second group immigrate to the US with their families as adults and reach old age later. Therefore, the first group tend to depend on their children and the US government for their living, whereas the second group achieve independence through their work history. The language proficiency levels and their acculturation degrees vary between these two groups. As aforementioned earlier, immigration history varies among ethnic groups. A significant number of Korean immigrants came to the United States after the 1965 Immigration Act, and therefore, many of the Korean elderly are “invited elderly.”

Asian American families have been under the influence of Confucianism through the millennia. This philosophy emphasizes social and family harmony and adherence to the family hierarchy (Ho, 1981; Hsu, 1985). Inherent in Confucianism is the notion of filial piety which conveys respect

and obligation to aging parents, honoring the family name, and emphasis on group harmony (Wong, 1998). Filial piety entails authority, the power hierarchy, and family lineage (Chow, 1996). Asian families are described as highly cohesive, partially due to a high cultural emphasis on harmony and mutual obligations and low value on overt conflicts because obedience and respect for elders are valued. One practice of subordinating oneself to the larger social group is seen in the way Asians write their names. The family name, being more important, precedes the personal name (Wong & Lai, 2000).

One manifestation of filial piety is in the formation of the extended family in which three generations co-reside, and mutual exchange of services is available. Min (2006) reported that 15% of Asian American families are multi-generational, with Filipino families being the highest (22%), followed by Vietnamese 16%, Chinese, 15%, Korean 10%, and Japanese 5%, the lowest. Other studies found that separate residence is becoming more common among middle-class Chinese immigrant families (Kritz, Gurak, & Chen, 2000; Lan, 2002; Lee & Angel, 2002). Factors that influenced independent living include the degree of integration, English language proficiency, length of US residence, citizenship status, ethnic group membership, health status, available resources, and available choices (Forsyth et al., 2009; Kritz et al., 2000; Liang, Brown, Krause, Ofstedal, & Bennett, 2005). Overall, senior Japanese were found to be more likely to maintain independent households when they could live with their spouses. Chinese, Filipino, Korean, and Asian Indian were found less likely than Japanese to live independently because they had a shorter length of stay in the US, were later generations rather than the first generation, and maintained a higher level of home cultural values (Phua, Kaufman, & Park, 2001). Compared with European American families, coresidency of older parents and adult children in Asian American families is, in general, a cultural practice rather than a result of economic constraints, e.g., adult children moving back to live with their parents.

However, acculturation has an impact on senior immigrants' living arrangements. Because

of the high employment rate among Asian immigrant wives, they are more acculturated to the main culture in which the primary relationship is couple-centered. The traditional patrilineal family in which parents and married sons are emphasized through co-residence is now giving way to neolinesal family. According to the 1980 census, 75% of Korean seniors lived with their adult children; by the 1990 census, 57% still practiced coresidency with their children, and this number is expected to go down to 50% in 2000 (Yoo & Sung, 1997). However, contact between generations is frequent. Kim and Kim (2001) found that 67–75% of adult children called their parents once a week or more. Research shows that senior Asian immigrants are more likely to live with their extended families than non-Hispanic White immigrants (Wilmoth, 2001).

Results from studies of living arrangements and seniors' emotional health status are divided. Osako and Lui (1986) found that Japanese American senior parents who coresided with their adult children reported a similar degree of loneliness as those who maintained in a separate household. In another study, Kim and Kim (2001) found that the invited Korean senior parents did not feel a sense of belonging in their adult children's family. Some of them felt they were neglected and slighted. Mui and Burnette (1994) revealed that elderly who maintained a separate residence had better physical and functional health than those who lived with family members. However, those who lived independently also reported a higher degree of depression, loneliness, and social isolation than the latter.

As to variations among East Asian elderly and reciprocity between seniors and their adult children, Ishii-Kuntz (1997c) found in her study that Korean immigrant elderly were more likely to receive financial aid, services, and emotional support from their adult children compared to their Chinese and Japanese counterparts. In the same study, Korean adult children were younger than their Chinese and Japanese counterparts and were more likely to have minor offspring that needed the care of the senior. Therefore, a reciprocal care relationship developed between these seniors and their adult children. This was

consistent with what Lee, Netzer, and Coward (1994) found that elderly parents who provide assistance to their adult children in such areas as child care are more likely to receive support in return. Other studies found that elderly, upon entrance to the United States, instead of being care recipients, were integrated into the family and contributed to family care and support. Many Korean seniors worked in their adult children's business or assisted their children by providing care to the grandchildren and taking care of household chores (Min, 1998). Treas and Mazumdar (2004) concluded that senior immigrants contributed heavily to their adult children's family by cooking, taking care of grandchildren, and passing cultural values to the younger generation. They were valuable assets in immigrant families. Because of immigrants' working schedule, their children have limited interaction with their parents. These seniors, thus, provided critical supervision and support to their grandchildren (Treas, 2008).

Summary

The number of Asian American families is on the rise, making it 4.6% of the total US population. Asian American families are also a diverse group, comprising many different ancestries, cultural variations, and countries of origin. However, there remains a paucity of research focusing on Asian American Families. The media's depiction of them as a *Model Minority* is doing a disservice to this population group. Because of this stereotype, many issues and challenges that this group encounters may not gain adequate attention. Some of these issues include acculturative stress, intimate partner violence, lack of a social support network, and intergenerational relationships and mental and health of all ages. Like other immigrant groups, this group experiences discrimination and racism. Yet, Asian American families also exhibit resiliency and strengths during their immigration journey. They are family-oriented, hardworking, and never give up their dreams. They have overcome many obstacles during this process and find the way to embrace their new lives in the United States.

Research on Asian American families remains sketchy, although it has been steadily growing (Fang et al., 2008). Many fields (population studies, anthropology, psychology, public health, social work, sociology, and family studies) have all contributed to the new understanding of this population. However, the focus has been on the acculturation process and its related stress, ethnic identity development, child and adolescent development, parenting practice, and elderly living arrangement. Fang et al. have done a nice review of studies on Asian Americans from 1992 to 2006 and propose that future research on Asian American family experiences should be conceptualized and interpreted in its relevant cultural framework rather than in alignment with norms. In our review of literature, we conclude that research is needed that focuses on gendered experiences of adolescent boys and girls (boys in particular), marriage and partner relationships, and the mental health of Asian American elderly. To examine the social, cultural, and political contexts, and their mutual influences, Asian American family research can utilize mixed method designs and the wide variety of data analysis strategies that are available today. For example, research should examine how the cultural and media contexts moderate the association between developmental outcomes and parent–adolescent communication. Research is also needed to understand how the changes in the family system (role expectations, boundaries, patterns of communication, etc.) are associated with the adjustment of Asian American family members. To advance the understanding of Asian American families, research should also examine families as units or systems. Current research neglects this systemic focus in favor of emphasizing the experiences of the individuals within Asian American families.

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Adriana J. Umaña-Taylor and Kimberly A. Updegraff

Latino families are a large and rapidly growing segment of the U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). Latinos¹ currently comprise 15.1% of the U.S. population and are the fastest growing ethnic group in the U.S., increasing 3.3% from 2006 to 2007, compared to 2.9% for Asians, 1.6% for Native Hawaiians and other Pacific

Islanders, 1.3% for Blacks,² 1% for American Indians and Alaska Natives, and 0.3% for Whites (U.S. Census, 2008). In fact, U.S. Census projections indicate that, by the year 2050, Latinos will comprise 24.4% of the U.S. population, Blacks will comprise 14.6%, and Asians will represent 8% (Bergman, 2004). For the most part, the tremendous growth in the Latino population is the result of higher birth rates compared to other ethnic populations in the U.S. and immigration from Mexico, the Caribbean, and Central and South America (Knight, Roosa, & Umaña-Taylor, 2009). The impact of the Latino population in the U.S. is evident in a number of ways beyond their large size and rapid growth. For instance, in the U.S. Census 2000, 18% of the nation's population reported that they spoke a language other than English at home and, in every region of the U.S., Spanish was the leading non-English language spoken at home (Shin & Bruno, 2003). In fact, approximately 78% of Latinos reported that they spoke Spanish at home (Ramirez, 2004). Thus, the presence of Latino families is now felt across all regions of the U.S. As the presence of Latinos in the U.S. has become more salient, the amount of scholarship devoted to Latino families also has increased.

¹There is a great deal of confusion regarding the terms Latino and Hispanic, and whether one is more accurate (or politically correct) than the other for labeling individuals who belong to this tremendously heterogeneous population. The two terms refer to slightly different groups (see Hayes-Bautista & Chapa, 1987; Treviño, 1987, for historical accounts of the creation of these terms and their intended use), and there is a lack of agreement among scholars regarding which term is most appropriate; however, such a discussion is beyond the scope of this chapter. For the purpose of the current chapter, the term Latino is being used to refer to individuals with Spanish speaking ancestors whose origins are in South America, Central America, islands in the Caribbean with an extensive history of Spanish colonization (i.e., Cuba, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico), or Spain. This includes, for example, individuals whose ancestors are from Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Guatemala, Ecuador, El Salvador, Mexico, Peru, and Venezuela, to name a few.

A.J. Umaña-Taylor, PhD (✉) • K.A. Updegraff, PhD
 Program in Family and Human Development,
 Arizona State University, School of Social
 and Family Dynamics, PO Box 873701,
 Tempe, AZ 85287-3701, USA
 e-mail: Adriana.Umana-Taylor@asu.edu;
 kimberly.updegraff@asu.edu

²For the purposes of presenting demographic trends in the U.S. in this introductory paragraph, we use Census categorization of ethnic-racial groups, which acknowledges that Latinos represent an ethnic group and can be of any race (e.g., White, Black).

We approach the review of scholarship on Latino families from an ecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Crouter, 1983), emphasizing how individual characteristics, proximal processes in key settings such as family and work, and larger contextual conditions (e.g., culture, socioeconomic status) shape family dynamics. We draw on literature from several different disciplines including family studies, sociology, and developmental and clinical psychology. Our goals are to provide an overview of existing Latino family scholarship, identify individual and contextual factors that introduce variability into family dynamics, and provide directions for future research. Unless otherwise noted, all of the studies included in this review utilized samples living in the continental U.S.

Overview of Existing Latino Family Scholarship

An exhaustive review of existing scholarship for any ethnic group on a topic as broad as “family studies” is impossible. Thus, in the sections that follow we review three substantive areas that have generated the significant existing research on Latino families. We provide this review as a backdrop from which to understand the general trends in research on Latino families, but in no way suggest that this is an exhaustive review of existing work. In particular, we focus our review on (a) general parenting behaviors, (b) cultural-specific parenting processes, and (c) the role of gender in shaping family roles, activities, and relationships in Latino families.

General Parenting Behaviors

A majority of the existing work on Latino families has focused on parenting-related processes (e.g., parenting behaviors, parent-child relationship characteristics) and, more specifically, how these processes are linked to child development and adjustment. For instance, several research teams have examined parenting styles and strategies among Latino families (e.g., Buriel, 1993; Caldera, Fitzpatrick, & Wampler, 2002; Chavez

& Buriel, 1986; Delgado-Gaitan, 1993; Domenech Rodríguez, Donovick, & Crowley, 2009), with some focusing specifically on how parenting is linked to child outcomes (e.g., Domenech Rodríguez, Davis, Rodríguez, & Bates, 2006; Farver, Eppe, & Ballon, 2006; Fracasso, Busch-Rossnagel, & Fisher, 1994). Harwood, Leyendecker, Carlson, Asencio, and Miller’s (2002) review of parenting among Latino families in the U.S., for example, identified the construct of proper demeanor, or *respeto*, as a key parenting value among Latino families. They explained that Latino parents from diverse national origin and socioeconomic backgrounds generally endorsed this aspect of child socialization and emphasized this value in the socialization of their children more so than their European American counterparts (Harwood et al.). Similarly, in their extensive review of parenting behaviors among Latinos (e.g., Costa Rican, Central American, Puerto Rican, Mexican), they concluded that Latino families tended to encourage interdependence or sociocentrism, in which children are socialized to place a greater emphasis on their obligations to the family and the larger group, rather than on their individual needs or desires (Harwood et al.). Finally, in another review of parenting behaviors among Latino families, Grau, Azmitia, and Quattlebaum (2009) found that Latina mothers (i.e., Puerto Rican and Mexican-origin) tended to be more controlling with their children than European American mothers, and they also tended to use fewer verbal strategies in their parenting than European American mothers. They concluded that the use of more directive/controlling parenting behaviors, fewer verbal strategies, and more nonverbal strategies appeared to be common characteristics of Latino parenting behaviors (Grau et al.).

Findings from previous studies such as those described above have been pivotal in providing scholars with a conceptually and empirically grounded rationale for examining and/or expecting differences to emerge between Latino families and mainstream European American families with respect to family processes. For example, Domenech Rodríguez et al. (2009) argued that due to differing socialization goals and parenting strategies among Latino families, there was a need

to examine whether Baumrind's parenting styles (i.e., authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful) were consistent with the experiences of Latino families. Indeed, their findings indicated that the four traditional parenting styles did not adequately capture Latino families' experiences and, furthermore, that a previously undetected parenting style termed "protective parenting" was more consistent with the experiences of a majority of the Latino families studied (Domenech Rodríguez et al.). Together, these studies have advanced Latino family scholarship by providing conceptually grounded arguments (and subsequent findings) that offer a clearer picture of Latino family life and, importantly, the underlying causes of differences between Latino families and mainstream U.S. families.

Other research teams have focused their efforts on understanding how parenting behaviors are linked to child outcomes in Latino families, often times with the intent of testing whether the associations between parenting behaviors and outcomes are similar for Latino and mainstream U.S. families, on which most research has been based. In some studies, the associations between parenting behaviors and child outcomes have functioned similarly for Latino families as they have with ethnic majority populations. Consistent with a plethora of work on mainstream U.S. families, studies of Latino children and families have found that maternal sensitivity and responsivity to children's cues are associated with positive developmental outcomes (e.g., cognitive functioning, secure attachment classification) among infants and young children (see Grau et al., 2009, for a review). In addition, Dumka, Roosa, and Jackson (1997) found that higher levels of Mexican-origin mothers' supportive parenting were associated with lower levels of conduct disorder and depressive symptoms in their children; furthermore, mothers' inconsistent discipline was associated with increased conduct disorders and depressive symptoms. Thus, these general parenting behaviors are viewed as universal and as serving promotive functions across cultural groups (Grau et al., 2009).

Other studies reveal differences in the connections between parenting behaviors and child

outcomes in Latino families. In a study of Latino (i.e., Dominican and Puerto Rican) mother-infant dyads, Fracasso et al. (1994) explored whether the types of maternal behaviors associated with infants' secure attachment differed for Latinos when compared to previous samples. Contrary to findings from studies that had included predominately non-Latino populations, Fracasso et al. (1994) found that maternal interventions were actually associated with *secure* attachments, rather than insecure attachments, in their sample of Latino families. The authors suggested that their findings underscored the need to consider that the cultural context may largely inform how maternal behaviors are interpreted and linked to child outcomes. In a study of Mexican American and European American mother-child dyads, maternal acceptance was significantly and positively associated with children's self-esteem among both ethnic groups; however, the association between acceptance and self-esteem was significantly stronger for European American families than for Mexican American families (Ruiz, Roosa, & Gonzales, 2002). Thus, although maternal acceptance is a significant predictor of child outcomes across groups, it appears to be more salient in predicting child outcomes in ethnic majority populations than in Latino populations. In a second study, researchers found that Mexican American and European American families who were characterized by high levels of warmth and acceptance, consistent use of discipline, and low levels of conflict and hostility tended to have children with fewer conduct problems (Hill, Bush, & Roosa, 2003); no ethnic group differences emerged in their work. Although the findings from these studies may appear to contradict one another—at times noting differences between groups and in other instances suggesting similar processes across groups, it may simply be a matter of important moderators being overlooked. For instance, national origin, generational status, and socioeconomic status are key demographics that can introduce significant variability into family processes and may be masking certain relations. A more nuanced discussion of these potential moderators is presented below.

Culture-Specific Parenting Processes

In addition to examining general parenting behaviors, studies of Latino families have focused on parenting behaviors that are culture-specific. In particular, researchers have examined parents' efforts to socialize their children about their ethnic group membership (e.g., Knight, Bernal, Garza, Cota, & Ocampo, 1993; Quintana, Castañeda-English, & Ybarra, 1999; Quintana & Vera, 1999; Umaña-Taylor, Alfaro, Bámaca, & Guimond, 2009; also see Hughes et al., 2006, for a review). A majority of this work has focused on parents' efforts to teach or expose their children to their ethnic background by doing things such as discussing ethnic group history or teaching them about the parents' or grandparents' country of origin, exposing them to traditional foods and celebrations, or attending festivals or activities that celebrate the heritage culture (e.g., Knight et al., 1993; Quintana et al., 1999; Supple, Ghazarian, Frabutt, Plunkett, & Sands, 2006; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2009; Umaña-Taylor & Fine, 2004). For the most part, these studies have consistently found that parents' efforts toward ethnic socialization are significantly associated with increased ethnic identity among Latino youth. Specifically, as parents socialize their children more about their ethnicity, children tend to report increased exploration of their ethnicity, as well as a stronger sense of commitment toward their ethnic group (e.g., Quintana et al., 1999; Supple et al., 2006; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2009). Because ethnic identity has been identified as a significant protective resource for ethnic minority youth (Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999; Phinney, 2003), identifying parenting behaviors that can promote positive ethnic identity development among Latino youth has critical implications for youth's positive development.

Interestingly, research on Latino families' ethnic socialization strategies has not typically focused on parents' efforts to prepare their children for ethnic or racial bias such as discrimination or prejudice (for exceptions, see Hughes, 2003; Knight et al., 1993; Quintana & Vera, 1999), despite studies repeatedly noting that experiences with

discrimination are a salient reality for Latino youth and families (Fisher, Wallace, & Fenton, 2000; Katz, 1999; Szalacha et al., 2003). In contrast, this has been a central focus in research with African American families (for a review see Hughes et al., 2006). In the few studies that have examined preparation for bias among Latinos, researchers have found that parents' socialization efforts were associated with greater ethnic knowledge among their children and, furthermore, children's ethnic knowledge was positively associated with their understanding of ethnic prejudice (Quintana & Vera, 1999). Thus, parents' efforts with respect to socializing their children about potential discrimination appear to increase children's ethnic knowledge and understanding of prejudice.

Existing research also has identified within group differences in the extent to which Latino parents from specific national origin groups report this type of ethnic socialization (i.e., preparation for bias). Specifically, Hughes (2003) found that Puerto Rican parents were less likely to report this type of socialization than Dominican parents. Interestingly, Dominican parents were less likely to report this type of socialization than African American parents. This variability within Latino groups and between Latinos and African Americans is an area ripe for future research. These differences may be the result of the historical context for the particular ethnic group, the degree to which the ethnic group, on average, is phenotypically distinct (or similar) when compared to the U.S. mainstream population, or likely a combination of these and other factors. As an example, the type of ethnic socialization approaches that parents employ may be closely linked to children's phenotypic characteristics, such that parents of Black Latino children may be more likely than parents of White Latino children to emphasize preparation for bias. Understanding the source of these differences could contribute to preventive intervention efforts aimed at increasing parents' awareness of the benefits of different types of ethnic socialization, and particularly, having a better idea of the ethnic socialization strategies with which parents may be most familiar and comfortable.

Gender Dynamics in Latino Families

A significant amount of scholarship on Latino families also has been devoted to understanding the role that gender plays in family processes. The role of gender in shaping family dynamics is a defining characteristic of research on Latino families (Cauce & Domenech Rodríguez, 2002; Marin & Marin, 1991). When compared to African Americans and European Americans, Latinos have been described as more traditional, on average, in their gender role attitudes and division of household responsibilities (Golding, 1990; John, Shelton, & Luschen, 1995; Kane, 2000; Pinto & Coltrane, 2009). Interest in gender dynamics in Latino families comes primarily from early writings emphasizing rigidly traditional gender roles and culturally prescribed norms for male dominance and female subservience, with the majority of this work focusing on Latino families of Mexican descent (e.g., Madsen, 1961, 1964; Mirandé, 1977; Padilla & Ruiz, 1973; Peñalosa, 1968). Despite widespread acceptance, these early depictions of the strong patriarchal structure of Mexican American families were not grounded in scientific evidence (Staples & Mirandé, 1980). This early emphasis on traditional gender dynamics in Mexican American culture set the stage, however, for scholarship on Latino families in the decades to follow (e.g., Baca Zinn, 1980, 1982; Coltrane & Valdez, 1993; Hawkes & Taylor, 1975; Ybarra, 1982).

To test unsubstantiated ideas about male dominance in Mexican American families, scholars conducted a series of investigations focused on power and decision-making dynamics in Mexican-origin marriage relationships (Cromwell & Cromwell, 1978; Cromwell & Ruiz, 1979; Hawkes & Taylor, 1975; Ybarra, 1982). A consistent pattern emerged revealing that Mexican-origin husbands and wives described decision-making as a shared or egalitarian process most often and male dominance of family decisions was relatively less common (Cromwell & Cromwell, 1978; Cromwell & Ruiz, 1979; Hawkes & Taylor, 1975; Ybarra, 1982). Thus, assumptions about the strong patriarchy in

Mexican American families were called into question and scholars turned their attention to the possibility that there is substantial variability in gender role dynamics in marriage in Mexican culture (Coltrane & Valdez, 1993; Williams, 1990).

Gender and Latino Couple Relationships

Consistent with ecological models (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and cultural adaptations of these perspectives (Garcia Coll et al., 1996; McAdoo, 1993; Ogbu, 1981), recent theoretical and empirical work has suggested that Latino parents' gender roles (e.g., division of housework and paid employment) are tied *both* to socioeconomic conditions and to cultural backgrounds, beliefs, and values. Several studies have found, for example, that wives' paid employment, education level, and income were positively associated with patterns of shared decision-making among Mexican American couples (Baca Zinn, 1980; Coltrane & Valdez, 1993; Williams, 1990; Ybarra, 1982). These studies, which were based primarily on small samples and typically employed qualitative data collection strategies, provide evidence that gender dynamics in Latino families result, in part, from "the social location of families... where they are situated in relation to societal institutions allocating resources" (Baca Zinn, 1990, p. 74). Some evidence further suggests that *within-couple* differences in socioeconomic resources may play a particularly important role in shaping gendered family work in Latino families (e.g., Coltrane & Valdez, 1993; Pinto & Coltrane, 2009; Updegraff & Umaña-Taylor, 2010), similar to findings that have emerged in studies of European American families (e.g., McHale & Crouter, 1992; Updegraff, McHale, & Crouter, 1996). Through qualitative interviews with 20 Mexican American middle-class couples, Coltrane and Valdez (1993) found that, when wives' educational and economic contributions to the family (i.e., income, education, job prestige) were equal to or greater than husbands', co-provider arrangements (i.e., sharing relatively equally in the division of paid and unpaid work) were most common. In a larger study of Mexican immigrant, Mexican American, and Anglo families, Pinto and Coltrane (2009)

found that when mothers contributed a greater proportion of the family income, they spent less time doing housework. This effect was stronger for Mexican than for Anglo mothers.

The role of cultural beliefs and values in parents' gender role ideologies is evident from both ethnic-comparative and ethnic-homogeneous work. Data from ethnic-comparative designs provide evidence of more traditional gender role attitudes in Latino couples when compared to European American and/or African American couples (e.g., Golding, 1990; Kane, 2000; Pinto & Coltrane, 2009). Investigations that attend to *within-group variability* in gender dynamics in Latino families draw attention to the role of cultural backgrounds and experiences and socioeconomic factors in explaining within-group variability in gender dynamics among Latino/Mexican-origin couples (e.g., Coltrane & Valdez, 1993; Leaper & Valin, 1996; Pinto & Coltrane, 2009; Updegraff & Umaña-Taylor, 2010). Leaper and Valin (1996) found, for example, that less traditional gender role attitudes were predicted by higher education levels and more communal values (i.e., values that reflect an emphasis on others' needs over individual needs in the same way that familism values emphasize the needs of the family over the needs of the individual) for both mothers and fathers. In addition, U.S.-born mothers and those with lower scores on competitive values also reported less traditional gender role attitudes. Updegraff and Umaña-Taylor (2010) identified patterns across family members (i.e., mothers, fathers, and two adolescent offspring) in their Mexican and Anglo orientations and examined connections to family background characteristics and parents' gender role attitudes and behaviors. Families who were categorized as Anglo-oriented (i.e., strong ties to Anglo culture and relatively weaker ties to Mexican culture), as compared to families that included parents with strong Mexican ties, reported more socioeconomic resources, higher education levels, and less traditional gender role attitudes and behaviors (i.e., division of household tasks and paid work). In addition, mothers and fathers in Anglo-oriented families reported being more similar to one another in their socioeconomic contributions

to the family (i.e., education levels, incomes, job prestige) than did parents in other families. Taken together, these findings highlight the substantial variability that exists *between* and *within* Latino families living in the U.S. in their gendered marital dynamics and roles and underscores the role of both socioeconomic factors and cultural processes in shaping marital dynamics and roles in this cultural context.

Additional insights about gender dynamics in Latino couple relationships come from research that draws on theories of international migration and focuses on the role of migration in shaping and reshaping gender role enactments and ideologies in Latino immigrant couples (Greenlees & Saenz, 1999; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2003; Menjívar, 2003; Parrado & Flippen, 2005; Parrado, Flippen, & McQuiston, 2005). Parrado and Flippen (2005) addressed the role of migration in shaping couple power dynamics in a comparative study of Mexican immigrant women in North Carolina as compared to non-migrant women from four sending communities in Mexico (Parrado & Flippen, 2005; Parrado et al., 2005). Drawing on resource and social exchange perspectives and incorporating ideas about the larger socio-cultural context, their findings highlighted similarities and differences in the correlates of relationship power for migrant vs. non-migrant Mexican women. Social support from friends, for example, was linked to greater relationship power, with stronger associations emerging for migrant than for non-migrant women. Instrumental and social support from women's friendship networks may be a key factor that empowers women to seek greater balance in gendered aspects of their relationships, particularly among women who have recently migrated and may have more limited opportunities for social support. Contact with extended family, in contrast, was less common among migrant than non-migrant women and was associated with less relational power among migrant women in the U.S., but more relational power among non-migrant women in Mexico. The authors propose that, among migrant women, contact with extended family may have resulted in more domestic work for women (e.g., household work, meal provision) and in a greater emphasis on a

traditional division of gendered roles and responsibilities (Parrado & Flippen, 2005). Together, these findings highlight important differences across socio-cultural contexts in the correlates of the division of paid and unpaid family work. More detailed information about the types of social support family members and friends provide (e.g., instrumental, financial, emotional support) will further enhance our understanding of the associations between support and gendered relationship processes in these different socio-cultural contexts.

Gender and Parent–Child Relationships

Turning to parent–child relationships in Latino families, the role of gender dynamics also has received some attention. Building on ideas about traditional gender role norms and socialization processes in Latino families, a number of scholars have compared the roles of mothers vs. fathers and the parenting of daughters vs. sons. At the most general level, traditional roles emphasizing mothers' greater involvement in caretaking of children as compared to fathers' have been noted (e.g., Bronstein, 1984, 1988; Crockett, Brown, Russell, & Shen, 2007; Gamble, Ramakumar, & Diaz, 2007; Taylor & Behnke, 2005). Furthermore, in a comparative study of Latino fathers' beliefs in Mexico vs. the U.S., Taylor and Behnke (2005) found that the emphasis on mothers' responsibilities for raising children was more pronounced in Mexico than in the U.S. More specific differences between mothers' and fathers' parenting are largely consistent with differences noted in European American families. For example, self-report and observational data revealed that Latino mothers provided more physical nurturance (Bronstein, 1984, 1988) and more support and responsiveness to their children (Gamble et al., 2007) than did fathers, and that fathers tended to spend more time in play and companionate activities than did mothers (Bronstein, 1984, 1988).

Gender differences in Latino families also are apparent in comparisons of the family roles and responsibilities of daughters vs. sons (Azmitia & Brown, 2002; Raffaelli & Ontai, 2004; Valenzuela, 1999). In accordance with the premise that females assume primary responsibility for chil-

drearing in Latino families, there is evidence that girls describe greater participation in housework than boys, and similarly, that parents report assigning more housework to girls than to boys (e.g., Raffaelli & Ontai, 2004; Valenzuela, 1999). In addition, girls are more likely than boys to serve as translators for parents who have limited English proficiency (Buriel, Love, & DeMent, 2006; Chao, 2006).

In addition to girls' greater family responsibilities, there also is evidence that girls are granted less freedom to spend time away from home and more closely monitored and supervised than are boys (e.g., Azmitia & Brown, 2002; Bulcroft, Carmody, & Bulcroft, 1996; Raffaelli & Ontai, 2004). In qualitative studies by Brown et al. focused on parents' strategies for managing youth's involvement with peers (Brown, Alvarez, & Quijada, 1999; Brown, Hamm, & Meyerson, 1996), for example, Brown noted that Latino parents place greater restrictions on daughters' time outside of the household and involvement with peers as compared to sons', and that mothers describe proactive strategies to closely monitor daughters' peer relationships (e.g., volunteering in their daughters' schools to see with whom daughters were affiliating), but little direct involvement in sons' peer relationships. Similar results emerged in Raffaelli and Ontai's (2004) work with Latino youth. When asked to compare themselves to other-sex siblings or relatives, girls described greater restrictions outside the home (e.g., curfews, involvement in afterschool activities, driving, holding a job) than did boys.

Collectively, this body of work highlights average differences in the roles of mothers vs. fathers and in the parenting of girls vs. boys in Latino families. However, scholarship on Latino families also has highlighted significant variability with respect to the degree to which parents adopt traditional gender-typed attitudes and behaviors (Baca Zinn, 1990; Coltrane & Valdez, 1993; Updegraff & Umaña-Taylor, 2010). Drawing from ecological (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and cultural ecological models (Garcia Coll et al., 1996; McAdoo, 1993; Ogbu, 1981), an important next step is to identify the socio-cultural processes that explain variability among Latino families in the degree to

which parents display gender-differentiated parenting. Toward this end, a recent study by McHale, Updegraff, Shanahan, Crouter, and Killoren (2005) examined the associations between parents' differential treatment of sons vs. daughters and their cultural orientations. McHale et al. (2005) found that parents assigned more family responsibilities to their daughters than to their sons when they had strong Mexican cultural orientations (and weaker ties to U.S. culture). In contrast, among parents who had strong orientations to U.S. culture (and weaker ties to Mexican culture), no differences were found in the household responsibilities assigned to daughters vs. sons. Additional research is needed to gain a more in-depth understanding of the socio-cultural processes that are linked to gender-typed parenting in Latino families (e.g., traditionality of parents' attitudes, familism values).

Equally important are efforts to understand the processes through which gender-differentiated parenting has implications for children's and adolescents' gender development and well being. According to social learning (Mischel, 1966) and gender socialization perspectives (e.g., Maccoby, 1990, 1998), gender-differentiated family and parenting roles provide opportunities for girls and boys to learn about and model gender-typed behaviors. In European American families, there is evidence that youth whose fathers endorse more traditional gender role attitudes display more gender-typed behaviors (e.g., activities, interests) than youth whose parents hold less traditional gender role attitudes (e.g., McHale, Crouter, & Tucker, 1999). Parents' gender-typed attitudes and practices may be particularly salient in early adolescence, to the extent that pressures to behave in accordance with traditional gender roles increase during this developmental period (Hill & Lynch, 1983). Evidence of gender-intensified parenting processes (i.e., time spent with same-sex offspring, participation in household tasks) has been documented in European American families (e.g., Crouter, Manke, & McHale, 1995). Increases in the time mothers and fathers spent with their same-sex offspring, for example, were apparent in European American families with mixed-sex sibling pairs (Crouter

et al.). In Latino families, Raffaelli and Ontai (2004) noted that girls and boys described their same-sex parents as most likely to encourage sex-typed behaviors. An important next step is to examine the connections between Latino parents' gendered parenting and youth's gender-typed development and to identify the mechanisms underlying potential associations (e.g., modeling, observational learning).

Key Variables that Introduce Variability in Family Experiences

Although existing research on Latino families has been informative, a majority of existing studies have not completely attended to the diversity that exists within the Latino population. The Latino population in the U.S. is considerably diverse with respect to national origin, with members of this panethnic group coming from various countries such as Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela, Uruguay, Peru, Guatemala, and El Salvador, to name a few. Latinos also include Puerto Ricans living in the continental U.S. and other Caribbean islanders (e.g., Cubans, Dominicans). Beyond national origin differences, variations in family histories such as the circumstances or reasons leading to immigration to the U.S. (e.g., political upheavals, lack of employment opportunities), length of time (i.e., years and generations) in the U.S., and the nature of the communities in which families reside (e.g., ethnic enclaves vs. more integrated communities) enhance the diversity of the U.S. Latino population (Knight et al., 2009). Thus, the Latino population is not comprised of a homogenous group and any analyses or findings based on the panethnic population should be generalized with caution. In the sections that follow, we discuss key constructs that introduce variability into family life and, thus, must be considered when conducting research with Latinos.

From a theoretical standpoint, ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1989) is particularly useful for understanding the importance of examining this variability when studying Latino families. According to ecological theory, individual and family development can best be understood and

interpreted when examined contextually. Because individuals' lives are embedded in broader social and cultural systems and these systems uniquely inform the experiences of children and their families (Parke & Kellam, 1994), it is not possible to fully understand development without a keen understanding of the contexts within which such development is taking place. As such, an ecological framework provides an important contextual backdrop from which to understand how individual characteristics interact with broader contexts and ideologies to inform family experiences (Umaña-Taylor & Bámaca, 2004). As outlined below, several characteristics of individuals and families inform the cultural ecological contexts that introduce significant variability into Latino family life. Because of the group's diverse nature, characteristics such as national origin, generational status, nativity, immigration history, cultural orientation, and socioeconomic status must be considered when attempting to understand Latino families in the U.S. Within the sections that follow, we present studies that have illuminated the diversity that exists within Latinos with respect to each of these characteristics and, within each section, discuss the implications of *not* acknowledging such diversity when studying Latino families.

National Origin

As introduced above, the term Latino refers to a group that includes individuals from numerous national origin backgrounds. In the United States, the largest Latino subgroup is of Mexican origin (59.3%), with Puerto Ricans (9.7%) and Cubans (3.5%) comprising the next largest national origin groups within this large panethnic population (Ramirez, 2004). The national origin of a large percentage of Latinos (15.7%) is unknown because these individuals choose to identify with a panethnic term such as Latino, Hispanic, or Spanish, rather than indicating a specific national origin (Ramirez). With respect to family demographic characteristics, for example, statistics for Latinos mirror those of the general population when the Latino population is examined as a

monolithic group. For instance, examination of Census 2000 data (see Ramirez) indicates that 51.3% of Latinos over the age of 15 were married, which is comparable to the figure for the general population (i.e., 54.4%). However, when examined by specific Latino national origin, it is evident that there is significant variability within Latinos. Specifically, these figures are representative of the rates for Cuban (55.3%), Mexican (53.4%), South American (53.6%), and Spaniard Latinos (53.5%), but statistics indicate much lower percentages for Puerto Rican (42.3%), Dominican (44.6%), and Central American (49.3%) Latinos over the age of 15 who were married in 2000. Rates for those who are separated, widowed, or divorced show the same diversity across Latino groups, with Mexican (12.1%) and Central American (12.8%) Latinos demonstrating the lowest rates, and Latinos of Puerto Rican (19.8%), Dominican (21%), and Cuban (22.9%) descent demonstrating much higher rates. Similarly, although 59.9% of Mexican households are married couple households, only 41.7 and 42.4% of Puerto Rican and Dominican households, respectively, are married couple households. Somewhat related to these figures, 14.7% of Mexican households are female-headed, compared to 26.2 and 33.5% of Puerto Rican and Dominican households, respectively.

The statistics presented above demonstrate the vast diversity that exists within the Latino population with respect to general demographic characteristics that pertain to family life (e.g., marriage, divorce). In addition, existing empirical work has demonstrated considerable diversity among Latino national origin groups with respect to parenting behaviors. For example, Umaña-Taylor and Bámaca (2004) found that Mexican, Puerto Rican, Guatemalan, and Colombian mothers varied significantly with respect to their ethnic socialization efforts toward their adolescent children. Consistent with notions from ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1989), the sociohistorical context could explain some of the differences that emerged among the national origin groups due to the different histories that the groups had in the U.S. (e.g., Colombians and Guatemalans have a shorter history in the U.S. when compared

to Mexicans and Puerto Ricans) and other differences could be explained by the relatively larger representation of one ethnic group compared to another (e.g., Mexican-origin Latinos are more heavily represented in the media and other mediums due to their significantly larger population size than Guatemalan Latinos). Regardless of the reasons for the differences that emerge across national origin groups, the variability evidenced in demographic statistics and empirical studies underscores the need for researchers studying Latino families to (a) be aware of the variability in family demographics among Latino national origin groups, (b) acknowledge that national origin is a key descriptive variable that must be presented when describing the sample of an empirical study, and (c) consider that, just as demographics vary significantly based on national origin, family processes and outcomes also may vary and, thus, national origin must be examined as a potential moderator of the relations under study if a sample includes participants that represent multiple national origin groups.

An illustration of the importance of accounting for national origin differences is evident in findings of a study linking parenting behaviors to child outcomes among low-income Latino families from Salvadoran, Mexican, and Puerto Rican backgrounds (i.e., Figueroa-Moseley, Ramey, Keltner, & Lanzi, 2006). Figueroa-Moseley et al. (2006) found significant differences among national origin groups in parenting behaviors, with Puerto Rican parents reporting significantly more nurturance and consistency than Mexican American and Salvadoran parents. Beyond these mean level differences, they also found that although parental responsiveness was positively associated with children's academic achievement for all three national origin groups, this association was only evident in concurrent assessments for Puerto Rican families; in contrast, parental responsiveness predicted *future* levels of academic achievement for Mexican American and Salvadoran families. These findings suggest that the predictive power of parental responsiveness on child academic achievement may be stronger for some national origin groups than for others. If the data had been analyzed by pooling all national

origin groups, the findings may have been masked and the researchers could have erroneously concluded that responsiveness predicted future academic achievement for Latinos, in general.

Generational Status and Nativity

It also is essential to acknowledge the tremendous variability that exists *within* specific national origin groups. Put differently, although Mexican-origin families share a common national origin (i.e., Mexican heritage), they do not comprise a homogenous group—there is much diversity within Mexican-origin families. One way in which Mexican-origin families are diverse is by their generational status in the U.S., which is determined by the country of birth for an individual, his or her parents, and grandparents. Those who have been in the U.S. for relatively greater number of generations may be further removed from the culture of origin and, thus, their values, beliefs, and experiences may more closely mirror those of ethnic majority individuals. Although generational status and nativity are sometimes used synonymously with the construct of acculturation, we distinguish these constructs in the current chapter by viewing acculturation as one of several indicators of Latinos' cultural orientation and considering generational status and nativity as *demographic* characteristics that, in part, inform individuals' acculturation. Thus, in the current section we focus on demographic correlates (i.e., generational status and nativity), and in the section that follows, we discuss variability as a function of cultural orientation (i.e., acculturation, enculturation, and biculturalism).

Maintenance of cultural norms and values with respect to parenting across generations of Latinos in the U.S. is an understudied phenomenon and, in fact, many studies mix generational status within the same sample (Harwood et al., 2002). Nevertheless, theoretical work by Knight et al. (1993) suggests that families' social ecologies, such as their generation of immigration in the U.S., inform the socialization practices that occur within the family context. In fact, existing findings have provided support for this notion

such that Latino adolescents from families who have been in the U.S. for more generations tend to report lower levels of familial ethnic socialization relative to their counterparts whose families have been in the U.S. for fewer generations (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2009). Mothers of Puerto Rican and Mexican origin also tend to report different socialization strategies based on their generational status (Umaña-Taylor & Yazedjian, 2006). Furthermore, scholars have found that adherence to cultural practices and values change such that those whose families have been in the U.S. for more generations exhibit more change in adherence to traditional practices and values than those whose families have been in the U.S. for fewer generations (Sabogal, Marín, Otero-Sabogal, Marín, & Perez-Stable, 1987). Because values inform individual behavior and, in turn, family experiences, it is not surprising that studies have documented significant variability in family experiences as a result of generational status.

In a study examining childrearing styles, Buriel (1993) found significant differences among parents of first, second, and third generation Mexican American adolescents. Specifically, in families that had been in the U.S. the longest (i.e., third generation adolescents), parents demonstrated a more concern-oriented childrearing style (i.e., high maternal support, high expectations for the child at home and school, and encouraging parent-child dialogue), whereas parents in the other two groups reported a more responsibility-oriented parenting style (i.e., socializing children to assume responsibility for their actions). Furthermore, mothers of first and second generation adolescents stressed earlier autonomy, more productive use of time, more strictness, and more permissiveness than mothers of third generation adolescents. The author concluded that parents of first and second generation adolescents were likely more similar to one another in their parenting styles than to parents of third generation adolescents because parents in the first two groups had both been born in Mexico and likely had similar parenting socialization experiences, whereas parents of third generation adolescents may have been less connected to Mexico because they were

born and raised in the U.S. In addition, Buriel (1993) suggested that U.S. born parents may have a greater awareness of the disadvantageous nature of their ethnic minority status in the U.S. and, thus, this may motivate them to be more supportive of their children and encourage proper behavior as a means of overcoming their socially disadvantaged status. Regardless of the mechanism by which generational status may introduce variability into parenting experiences, these findings demonstrate the critical need for researchers to account for variability in family processes by generational status.

Also related to parenting behaviors, Planos, Zayas, and Busch-Rossnagel (1995) examined differences in teaching behaviors among Dominican and Puerto Rican mothers. A strength of this study was the attention to potential variability based on national origin; however, a significant confound was that 69% of Puerto Rican mothers were born on the mainland U.S., whereas only 4% of the Dominican sample of mothers were U.S. born. Thus, it was not possible to decipher whether differences that emerged between the two groups resulted from variability in national origin or nativity. For example, Planos et al. indicated that Puerto Rican mothers made significantly more use of teaching strategies of inquiry and praise, whereas Dominican mothers made more use of modeling behaviors. To partially account for differences in nativity between the two groups, the authors tested acculturation as a potential covariate. Introducing this covariate eliminated significant differences with respect to inquiry and praise; however, significant differences between the two groups in the use of modeling remained even after controlling for acculturation level (assessed with an acculturation measure tapping behavioral indices of acculturation such as language proficiency and media use), suggesting that Dominicans and Puerto Ricans differed significantly in their use of modeling behaviors and this difference was not a function of their degree of acculturation. It is important to note that although acculturation and nativity tend to be highly interrelated such that those born in the U.S. tend to be more acculturated than those born outside the U.S., the two

constructs (i.e., nativity and acculturation) are not synonymous. Thus, although it is useful to control for level of acculturation, it does not completely account for the variability that may have been introduced into these processes as a result of nativity. Because it is possible that significant variability in levels of acculturation may be found within nativity groups (e.g., variability in acculturation within the U.S. born group), an ideal study would include large numbers of both U.S. born and foreign born participants, which would allow for an examination of the impact of *both* nativity and acculturation level on the processes of interest. A more detailed discussion of variability as a result of acculturation is presented below.

Another aspect of family life in which generational status plays a defining role is in the process of child language brokering (CLB). CLB refers to children translating for their parents or other adult family members and can involve translation for simple transactions such as translating what a store clerk is saying, to more formal transactions such as translating during a visit to the doctor or translating legally binding documents (e.g., apartment rental contract). Findings from existing studies on CLB among Latino families imply that CLB is a salient issue for immigrant Latino youth and their families (e.g., Buriel et al., 2006; Martinez, McClure, & Eddy, 2009), which is not surprising given that many immigrant Latino adults have limited English language proficiency (Knight et al., 2009) and, thus, likely require the assistance of their more language-accultured children to understand transactions that are conducted in English. In fact, in a study of Mexican, Korean, and Chinese adolescents and their families, a significant difference in the prevalence of language brokering emerged among the three ethnic groups, with Mexican-origin adolescents being the most likely to have provided translation for their parents (Chao, 2006).

Due to the strong link between generational status and language proficiency, it is not surprising that the amount of translation that children do for their parents varies greatly by generational status. For instance, in a study of language brokering among immigrant families, Chao (2006)

found that first generation Mexican-origin youth reported translating for their parents significantly more than their second generation counterparts. Furthermore, generational status interacted significantly with adolescent gender in determining the amount of translation children did for their parents. Specifically, being a female was associated with more translation for both mothers and fathers, but this was particularly the case for first generation, compared to second generation, immigrant adolescents (Chao). This finding is consistent with notions from ecological theory, which suggest that individual characteristics (e.g., gender) interact with contextual factors (e.g., generational status) to inform individual and family experiences. Thus, generational status not only introduced important variability into the amount of translation in which children participated, but it also interacted with child characteristics (e.g., gender) in shaping family experiences.

Immigration History

There are a number of cross-cultural studies that point to the need to understand the impact of immigration on family processes. Using the literature on relationship dissolution as an example, findings from cross-cultural studies (i.e., study participants in the U.S. and their counterparts in the native country of origin) indicate that second and third generation immigrants are more similar to those living in the native country than are first generation immigrants, suggesting that the experiences of first generation immigrants may be largely the result of family adaptation strategies or survival mechanisms unique to immigration (e.g., economic and social circumstances) rather than any indication of a cultural difference (Umaña-Taylor & Alfaro, 2006). Put differently, comparative studies in which first generation Latinos are compared to European Americans should not conclude that any differences observed are the result of different cultural characteristics or patterns, as the results could be an artifact of immigration processes, rather than culture (Umaña-Taylor & Alfaro).

Thus, it is essential to consider the conditions of immigration and how this may inform the experiences that family members have upon entering and settling in the U.S. Those who enter the U.S. with more resources and those who have access to more resources after immigration naturally fare better than their counterparts with fewer advantages. As described by Baca Zinn and Wells (2000), the sociohistorical context and the structure of economic opportunity in the receiving country at the time of immigration are both critical in defining families' experiences upon immigration. Using Latinos from Cuba as an example, Cubans who immigrated to the U.S. as part of the exodus from Cuba in the late 1950s in an effort to flee a socialist regime received a relatively positive reception in the U.S. as evidenced by an abundance of social welfare programs designed to help Cuban immigrants succeed upon entry into the U.S. (Suro, 2002). The relocation assistance Cuban immigrants received included things such as formal education training, healthcare, housing, and educational scholarships. Because those who were highly educated and came from wealthy families had the most to lose from the implementation of a socialist government in Cuba, the Cuban immigrants who comprised this initial wave of immigration tended to be relatively wealthy, successful, and educated. These strengths were further enhanced by additional privileges afforded to Cuban immigrants in the form of generous relocation assistance. With respect to the sociohistorical context, because the U.S. was in opposition of the political decisions taking place in Cuba at the time, the U.S. government organized a relocation program that provided many Cuban immigrants with the tools necessary to make a successful transition into the U.S. In terms of the structure of economic opportunity in the U.S., the employment and educational opportunities available to Cuban immigrants at the time generally positioned them in professional or managerial jobs, which facilitated their entry into a solid middle-class socioeconomic status. Furthermore, the Cuban ethnic enclaves and communities that formed in the Miami Dade County area, where most Cubans settled, provided an immediate network that facilitated

employment and educational opportunities (Suro). Thus, Cuban immigrants from this initial large wave of immigration received a relatively positive reception into the U.S. and the privileges afforded to individual members and their families provided resources that facilitated their adjustment and outcomes in the U.S.

In stark contrast, a second wave of Cuban migration to the U.S. took place in the early 1980s and this group of Cuban immigrants did not benefit from the same advantages as their counterparts who immigrated two decades prior. The latter group of immigrants was quite different demographically from those who migrated in the late 1950s in that they tended to be less educated, highly impoverished, and generally less advantaged. Their reception into the U.S. was relatively negative; there was limited relocation assistance provided and, furthermore, this was not a prosperous time for the U.S., as the U.S. was entering an economic recession. Thus, this group of Cuban immigrants tended to be viewed as a drain on the U.S. economy and, thus, was not welcomed as positively as the group that arrived in the late 1950s. These differences in the conditions of immigration illustrate how individuals who share a common national origin (i.e., Cuban) may have significantly different economic opportunities and, thus, divergent family experiences once they are settled in the U.S.

Importantly, the political climate of the U.S. at the time of immigration can largely impact immigrant families' experiences as they are transitioning into life in a new country. Ecological theory suggests that the political ideologies of a society, which would be considered part of the macrosystem, can greatly inform individuals' and families' experiences (Bronfenbrenner, 1989). This notion is well-illustrated in the case of Salvadorans and Guatemalans who fled to the U.S. in the late 1970s to escape civil war in their respective countries. Due to political alliances at the time, the U.S. refused to give immigrants from these countries refugee status or asylum, which would have granted them legal resident status in the U.S. As a result, many came to the U.S. as undocumented immigrants and, thus, had restricted access to the labor market, could not rely upon social services,

and lived in constant apprehension and fear of deportation to a country where their lives could be at risk (Dorrington, 1995). Families and children from these communities faced significant psychosocial problems such as depression, anxiety, and posttraumatic stress (Dorrington). Furthermore, there is evidence that family members have sometimes resorted to maladaptive coping strategies such as substance abuse or domestic violence to cope with their severe stress (Dorrington). Thus, national origin combined with the historical timing of immigration to the U.S. can work together to impact the type of immigration experience children and parents have and, in turn, their adjustment to life in the new country.

Cultural Orientation: Acculturation, Enculturation, and Biculturalism

Regardless of their generation of immigration to the U.S. or the history of a family's immigration, Latino families in the U.S. experience a process of dual cultural adaptation in which they balance and negotiate the processes of acculturation and enculturation (Knight et al., 2009). Acculturation refers to the degree to which individuals adhere to the values and behaviors of mainstream culture (Olmedo, 1979), whereas enculturation refers to adherence to values and behaviors of the native culture (Gonzales, Fabrett, & Knight, 2009; Matsumoto, 1996). Finally, biculturalism refers to individuals' dual involvement in *both* the mainstream and native cultures (Gonzales et al., 2009; Szapocznik & Kurtines, 1980). As evidenced below, existing research has documented that these indices of cultural orientation introduce significant variability into family experiences and, in particular, function as significant moderators for many relations. From an ecological perspective, individuals' cultural orientation and, importantly, the constellation of cultural orientations within the family unit, provide an important backdrop for understanding individuals' experiences within families.

Acculturation

A large number of studies have examined how family processes or outcomes vary as a function

of individual members' *acculturation* (e.g., Hill et al., 2003; Ispa et al., 2004). In some studies, researchers assess acculturation with established measures, and in other studies, researchers utilize proxies for acculturation such as language preference, nativity, or length of time in the U.S. The expectation in the latter studies is that individuals who (a) prefer and/or feel more comfortable speaking in English (than in Spanish), (b) were born in the U.S., and (c) have been in the U.S. for a longer period of time, are relatively more acculturated than their respective counterparts. Within this body of work, researchers have found evidence suggesting that although processes may be similar, the strength of the association between variables is sometimes stronger or weaker for families based on level of acculturation. For instance, in a study of Mexican American mothers and children, Hill et al. (2003) used language preference as a proxy for acculturation and found that the relation between maternal acceptance and child conduct behaviors was significantly stronger for Spanish speaking (i.e., less acculturated) mothers than for English speaking mothers. Upon further exploration of parenting behaviors, they found that for Spanish speaking mothers, maternal acceptance and hostile control were positively and significantly associated, whereas these parenting behaviors were not significantly related among English speaking mothers. Hill et al. (2003) concluded that the use of hostile control seemed to co-occur with maternal acceptance for Spanish speaking Mexican American mothers; thus, maternal acceptance may play a greater role in reducing conduct problems in the context of hostile control for less acculturated Mexican American mothers than their more acculturated counterparts.

As another example, in a sample of low-income Mexican American mothers, Ispa et al. (2004) found that the longitudinal association between maternal intrusiveness and child outcomes was more similar among more acculturated Mexican American mothers and European American mothers, than among less acculturated Mexican American mothers and European American mothers. Specifically, among European American mothers, intrusiveness was significantly associated with all three child outcomes examined, and

among more acculturated Mexican American mothers intrusiveness was significantly associated with two of the three outcomes examined; however, intrusiveness was significantly associated with only one of the three outcomes among the *least* acculturated Mexican American mothers. These findings suggest that there is significant variability in how parenting behaviors such as maternal intrusiveness are linked to child outcomes based on families' level of acculturation; furthermore, parenting variables that have consistently been associated with child maladjustment in largely European American middle-class samples may not be linked to negative outcomes among children from families that display low levels of acculturation. In line with this notion, Gonzales, Pitts, Hill, and Roosa (2000) suggested that their inability to find a significant association between parents' hostile control and child depression or conduct problems in a sample of Mexican American families was likely due to the relatively low levels of acculturation for the families in their sample.

Individuals' behaviors and the meanings that they make of their day-to-day experiences are largely informed by their values and beliefs, which are culturally rooted (Umaña-Taylor & Yazedjian, 2006). Put differently, individuals' adherence and/or attachment to mainstream culture likely dictates their parenting behaviors and, importantly, the degree to which these behaviors are linked to outcomes. Thus, it is not surprising that researchers have repeatedly found family processes and outcomes to vary as a function of individuals' level of acculturation (e.g., see Grau et al., 2009, for a review of variability in parenting behaviors as a function of acculturation). As demonstrated by findings from Ispa and colleagues' (2004) work, those who are more connected to mainstream culture are likely going to evidence similar patterns to European Americans because their beliefs and experiences are more in line with those of European Americans'. On the other hand, for families who are not as acculturated, behaviors and experiences that have been commonly linked to negative outcomes (e.g., intrusiveness) may not have the same negative effect on children because the interpretation of these behaviors may be different in these families. Interestingly, with

respect to parenting behaviors, there appears to be a progression toward mainstream values, beliefs, and experiences and, furthermore, the relations between variables appear to function more similarly to how they function among individuals from the ethnic majority culture as individuals acculturate.

Enculturation

A smaller number of studies have examined how family members' enculturation, or degree of engagement in the native culture, may impact individual and/or family processes. It has been suggested that maintaining a strong attachment to the culture of origin can be beneficial for individuals, as it can provide them with a source of strength and can minimize the negative effects of risk factors (Organista, Organista, & Kurasaki, 2003; Umaña-Taylor & Updegraff, 2007); however, few studies have examined the potentially protective role that cultural orientation toward the native culture may have on *family* processes and outcomes and most of this work has focused on individual development and outcomes. The few existing studies that have examined characteristics of families have focused primarily on one index of enculturation: the cultural value of familism.

Latinos have been characterized as espousing *familism values* that emphasize support, interdependence, and obligations (Garcia-Preto, 1996; Sabogal et al., 1987). Using familism as an indicator of enculturation, McHale et al. examined the degree to which adherence to familism values moderated the link between parenting behaviors and youth adjustment. In their study of Mexican American parents and adolescents, they found that the negative effects of parents' differential treatment on youth adjustment were mitigated by strong familism values for youth in middle/late adolescence (McHale et al., 2005). Similarly, with a sample comprised of Mexican American parents and adolescents, German, Gonzales, and Dumka (2009) found that adolescents', mothers', and fathers' reports of familism values each served a protective function by minimizing the risk of deviant peer affiliations on adolescents' externalizing behaviors. As adolescents reported more deviant peer affiliations, they also tended to

report higher levels of externalizing behaviors; however, this association was significantly stronger among those with low levels of familism than for those with relatively higher levels of familism. Finally, familism also has been linked to Mexican American adolescents' sibling relationship qualities (e.g., sisters' emotional closeness and dyadic involvement) such that those reporting higher levels of familism tended to report closer and more involved sibling relationships (Updegraff, McHale, Whiteman, Thayer, & Delgado, 2005).

Because existing studies that have examined enculturation as a moderator have focused primarily on one index of enculturation (i.e., familism values), it will be important to examine other Latino cultural values that serve as indices of enculturation. Furthermore, it will be useful for future studies to examine adherence to native cultural values in combination with behavioral indices of enculturation such as Spanish language use, given scholars' recommendations that both behavioral and attitudinal indices of enculturation should be assessed to represent the multidimensional nature of cultural processes (Cabassa, 2003; Cuéllar, Arnold, & González, 1995). Despite these limitations, the existing work provides initial evidence supporting the recommendation to consider enculturation as a key variable, in addition to acculturation, that may introduce variability into families' experiences and, specifically, may modify the links between family processes and outcomes.

Biculturalism

Finally, scholars have recommended that researchers examine acculturation and enculturation in combination with one another (see Szapocznik & Kurtines, 1980) and, importantly, existing findings suggest that a bicultural orientation, in which individuals are comfortable in both cultures, appears to be most adaptable for Latino children, adults, and families (see Gonzales et al., 2009, for a review). For example, Gutierrez and Sameroff (1990) examined Mexican American mothers' biculturalism and the degree to which it interacted with mothers' acculturation levels to predict parenting concepts. Biculturalism was assessed with a measure designed to capture the

degree to which individuals feel comfortable and involved in Hispanic and Anglo American cultures, independently; the measure is then scored in a manner that produces a continuous scale ranging from monoculturalism to biculturalism. Acculturation was assessed with a measure tapping behavioral indices of acculturation such as English language preference. Findings indicated that bicultural mothers who were highly acculturated scored higher on adaptive parenting concepts of development than bicultural mothers who were moderately acculturated. However, highly acculturated and moderately acculturated *bicultural* mothers both scored higher than highly or moderately acculturated *monocultural* mothers, which underscores the value of biculturalism, at least with respect to adaptive parenting beliefs. In fact, almost 50% of the unique variance in mothers' parental concepts of development was explained by mothers' levels of biculturalism. Thus, Gutierrez and Sameroff (1990) argue that although acculturation facilitates individuals' abilities to function in the host culture, their ability to function in *both* the host and native culture (i.e., biculturalism) makes them more flexible in their interpretation of and reaction to variations in their children's behavior, and this cognitive flexibility is ideal for parenting.

Biculturalism also has been linked to positive child outcomes such that children from homes in which mothers had an integrated style of acculturation (i.e., bicultural—American cultural orientation and Latino cultural orientation both high) demonstrated the best literacy outcomes (Farver et al., 2006). In addition, biculturalism was linked to better family functioning in a study of Latinos from Mexican, Central American, and South American backgrounds (i.e., Miranda, Estrada, & Firpo-Jimenez, 2000). Specifically, Miranda et al. found that families in their study who were classified as bicultural scored significantly lower on family conflict than families characterized at either extreme of acculturation (i.e., high or low). Interestingly, existing research also suggests that the family environments of bicultural adolescents tend to be characterized by increased parental monitoring, family support, parental involvement, and positive

parenting practices (Gonzales et al., 2009). Given that biculturalism in youth is associated with positive psychosocial functioning (e.g., higher academic achievement, better psychological adjustment, and lower externalizing behaviors; see Gonzales et al., for a review), it is not surprising that adaptive parenting behaviors, which also have been linked to positive youth outcomes, have been linked with biculturalism. Thus, whether assessed at the individual or family level, biculturalism is consistently associated with more positive adaptation and adjustment among individuals and families.

An important gap in this research is that the constellation of biculturalism within the family unit has not been examined. Put differently, we have limited knowledge regarding how individual family members' cultural orientations work together to inform the family-level cultural orientation. Updegraff and Umaña-Taylor (2010) provided one of the first examinations of within-family patterns of acculturation, enculturation, and biculturalism with a sample of Mexican American families (i.e., mother, father, and two children in each family). They assessed involvement in both the host and ethnic culture (e.g., language use, affiliations, ethnic label identification, food preferences) and created profiles that represented the four family members' acculturation and enculturation experiences, recognizing that each family member's cultural involvement must be understood within the broader context of other family members' cultural involvement. In their study, three family types emerged: Anglo-oriented (all four family members reported strong ties to Anglo culture and relatively weaker ties to Mexican culture), Mexican-oriented (all four family members reported strong ties to Mexican culture and relatively weaker ties to Anglo culture), and Mexican/dual-involvement (parents had relatively stronger ties to Mexican culture and youth reported strong ties to *both* Mexican and Anglo culture) families. Their findings highlighted the intersection of unique family members' experiences and the cultural context of the family. For instance, they found that older sisters in Mexican-oriented families not only reported the highest levels of expected educational attain-

ment, but also the highest levels of depressive symptoms. Updegraff and Umaña-Taylor (2010) suggest that perhaps the combination of holding high expectations for their future education and being in a family context characterized by traditional gender roles, increased family responsibilities for older sisters, and limited economic and neighborhood resources that can potentially restrict future educational opportunities (all characteristics of Mexican-oriented families in their study) may, in part, explain the higher levels of depressive symptoms found among older sisters in Mexican-oriented families. Importantly, findings from this work highlight the value in examining multiple family members' experiences and how the *constellation* of acculturation and enculturation profiles *within* the family may help to inform individuals' outcomes and adjustment.

Examining patterns of cultural orientation within the family is an important area for future research, as it will help to answer an important question—Is the family in which individuals are all bicultural the most well adjusted? Or is it the degree of similarity in cultural orientations across family members that will determine more positive adjustment? Yet another possibility is that it may depend on both the constellation of family members' cultural orientation and the specific outcome of interest, as suggested by the findings of Updegraff and Umaña-Taylor (2010). Overall, findings from studies that have examined acculturation, enculturation, and/or biculturalism suggest that these are important indicators of individuals' cultural orientations and are necessary to examine in combination, given that biculturalism (i.e., high levels of both acculturation and enculturation) appears to be uniquely linked with positive family functioning and adaptation, as well as positive outcomes among individual family members.

Socioeconomic Status

A final demographic characteristic that has significant implications for families and children is socioeconomic status. In existing work with ethnic minority populations, of which Latinos

make up a significant group, most studies confound socioeconomic status and ethnicity/race (McLoyd, 1998). Often times conclusions are drawn and attributed to ethnic differences between groups when, in fact, the underlying cause of differences may be socioeconomic status. Studies that confound socioeconomic status and ethnicity make it extremely difficult to have confidence in any conclusions drawn. For example, Chavez and Buriel (1986) compared European American mothers recruited from a college day care center in southern California to Mexican American (immigrant and U.S.-born) mothers recruited from a neighborhood community center in East Los Angeles, where all mothers had to be at or below the poverty level to qualify for services. According to the authors, the European American mothers' income reflected a middle-class standard, and the Mexican American mothers' income reflected that of an unskilled or semiskilled laborer. Similarly, in a study by Delgado-Gaitan (1993), immigrant Mexican mothers were compared with first generation Mexican American mothers. Those in the immigrant cohort spoke only Spanish and had attended school in Mexico; all but one had stopped their schooling after elementary school. In the first generation cohort, occupations ranged from clerical jobs to professional positions and all mothers had attended school in the U.S. Delgado-Gaitan explained that there was very little overlap between the educational attainment of the two groups. Although SES disparities were noted in the description of each of these samples, what conclusions can be drawn from this research? How can we conclude that any differences observed were the result of cultural orientation or generational status and not the result of a socioeconomic difference between the groups?

A few existing studies, however, have sampled and recruited participants in a manner that has introduced variability in socioeconomic status into their ethnic homogenous samples and has allowed them to examine the potential role of socioeconomic status on family processes. Findings from these studies have supported the notion that family experiences vary considerably by socioeconomic status and, thus, it is imperative

to take this variable into consideration when studying Latino families. For instance, in a study of Mexican American families, Updegraff, Killoren, and Thayer's (2007) findings provided evidence suggesting that parents' involvement in their adolescents' peer relationships varied significantly as a function of the family's socioeconomic status. Specifically, using cluster analysis, three groups of families were identified based on mothers' and fathers' education levels and their Mexican and Anglo cultural orientations: (1) Anglo-oriented, more educated parents; (2) Mexican-oriented, more educated parents; and (3) Mexican-oriented, less educated parents. The latter group had the most limited economic resources and lived in neighborhoods that included higher percentages of families in poverty as compared to the other two groups and also described the most restrictions on their adolescents' peer relationships (Updegraff et al.). Consistent with an ecological perspective, Updegraff et al. (2007) suggest that the broader context must be considered in understanding the role of socioeconomic status on family processes, given that the families in their study with the most limited economic resources also tended to live in neighborhoods characterized by higher levels of poverty and lower perceived safety; thus, it seems consistent that these parents may be most restrictive with respect to their children's peer relationships in an effort to keep their children safe.

In another study that examined variability by socioeconomic status, Harwood, Scholmerich, Ventura-Cook, Schulze, and Wilson (1996) examined the long-term socialization goals that Puerto Rican and Anglo mothers from diverse social class groups had for their children. Among the Puerto Rican mothers in their sample, they found that socialization goals varied significantly based on socioeconomic status. Specifically, middle-class Puerto Rican mothers referenced socialization goals focused on self-maximization more frequently than their lower-class counterparts. Self-maximization involves children being self-confident, independent, and developing their talents and abilities as an individual (Harwood et al.). Although Harwood et al. found significant within group differences based on socioeconomic

status, they also noted that the socioeconomic differences found within Puerto Rican mothers were less pronounced than the differences that emerged when Puerto Rican mothers of varied socioeconomic statuses were compared to their European American counterparts. Put differently, although significant socioeconomic differences emerged, ethnic group differences were even stronger. Thus, their findings emphasize the importance of examining variability by both socioeconomic status and ethnic group membership.

Because Latinos are disproportionately represented among families living in poverty, it is critical that researchers take into account socioeconomic status when studying Latino families and consider the unique implications of limited economic resources for Latino families who are suffering extreme deprivation. Again, there is considerable diversity within the Latino population, with only 14.6 and 15% of Cubans and South Americans, respectively, living in poverty, compared to 23.5%, 25.8%, and 27.5% of Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Dominican Latinos, respectively (Ramirez, 2004). Overall, 22.6% of Latinos in the U.S. are living in poverty, which compares unfavorably to the 12.4% of the general population that lives in poverty (Ramirez). When statistics for children under the age of 18 living in poverty are examined, conclusions are even bleaker with 28.4%, 32.9%, and 35.2% of Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Dominican children, respectively, living in poverty, compared to 16.6% of children in the general population who live in poverty. Poverty has significant consequences for children and families. The extreme lack of resources that accompanies poverty status can lead to risk factors, such as chronic stress, that place families and their members at risk for negative outcomes (García Coll, 1990). In fact, the family process model of economic hardship (Conger et al., 1992) suggests that adverse financial circumstances lead to higher levels of stress resulting from perceived economic hardship, and in turn, to poorer parent psychological functioning, which can impact parenting, family relationships, and child outcomes. A study of Mexican American families has provided empiri-

cal support for this model such that economic hardship was significantly associated with both parents' reports of economic pressure, which in turn was significantly associated with paternal and maternal depression; importantly, paternal depression significantly predicted marital problems, which in turn predicted child adjustment problems (Parke et al., 2004). From an ecological perspective, socioeconomic status provides an additional contextual factor to consider when attempting to understand Latino families' experiences and the potential variability that exists within this considerably heterogeneous group.

A final consideration with respect to socioeconomic status among Latinos is that it is important to consider the potential interaction between socioeconomic status and cultural processes (e.g., acculturation, enculturation, biculturalism) and how these variables may work together to inform family experiences. More highly acculturated families tend to have a higher socioeconomic status and also are more likely to have been educated in U.S. schools, both of which could partially explain their similarities in terms of parenting behaviors and experiences to middle-class European American parents (Grau et al., 2009). Thus, studies should consider both cultural orientation and socioeconomic status when studying family processes and, importantly, prior to concluding that differences between groups are the result of socioeconomic status or cultural orientation, it will be important to disentangle the potential variability explained by each of these characteristics in the processes being examined.

Conclusion and Suggestions for Future Research

Our review of Latino family scholarship revealed that the research areas with the most concentrated efforts appeared to focus on parenting behaviors (general and culture-specific) and gender dynamics in Latino families. Although these areas appear to have generated the most research, given the diversity of the Latino population, it is not yet possible to draw generalizable conclusions from this work. For example, the conclusions

that can be drawn regarding general parenting behaviors must be made specific to certain national origin groups (e.g., most research on parenting behaviors has focused on families of Mexican or Puerto Rican descent, and we know little about the family experiences of Central and South American families). Further, attention to gender dynamics in Latino families has been limited primarily to qualitative data from relatively small samples and a particular focus on gender dynamics in marriage. Thus, our concluding comments are focused more on suggestions for future research, as we believe there are many ways in which the scholarship on Latino families can move forward.

The significant diversity that exists within the Latino population with respect to national origin, generational status, nativity, immigration history, cultural orientation, and socioeconomic status, as described above, must be taken into account in research focused on Latino families. Harwood et al. (2002) made a number of recommendations with respect to future research on Latino parenting: be specific with regard to the country of origin, control for the effects of socioeconomic status, control for generational status, and consider the effects of acculturation on parents' beliefs and practices. We take their recommendations one step further by suggesting that researchers not only acknowledge the country of origin of the Latino population they are studying, but, rather, that they make considerable efforts to include multiple national origin groups in their studies. There is a significant need to increase the field's understanding of family experiences of Latinos from Central and South American backgrounds, given the rapid growth of these populations in the U.S. (Guzmán, 2001). Thus, a concerted effort is needed to recruit Latinos from these underrepresented groups into research studies.

In addition, we recommend that future researchers recruit and stratify their samples in a manner that provides sufficient variability with respect to national origin, generational status, nativity, cultural orientation, and socioeconomic status to enable researchers to examine these variables as moderators, rather than simply controlling for their effects. To move the field for-

ward, it will be necessary to understand how these variables modify family processes and outcomes among Latino families, especially given the vast diversity that exists among these families. As noted in several studies described in our review, the associations between family processes and child adjustment sometimes varied significantly by demographics such as national origin (e.g., Figueroa-Moseley et al., 2006) and acculturation level (e.g., Hill et al., 2003). To better understand the processes for different groups based on these demographic characteristics, we must move beyond controlling for the impact of such demographics and toward an understanding of how processes differ for these different subgroups of families.

Beyond the need to examine key demographic characteristics as moderators, we also noted several methodological issues that should be considered in designing future studies on Latino families. First, among the most significant gaps that we observed in the literature was the limited number of studies that used a multiple informant design. Most studies relied on data gathered from a single informant (e.g., parent reports or child reports); furthermore, studies that did include multiple informants typically included one parent/caregiver and a target child, but it was rare to find a study that included multiple caregivers. Underscoring the value and need to conduct research with multiple caregivers in order to more completely understand the association between parenting and child outcomes, Domenech Rodríguez et al. (2006) found that it was the interaction of both parents' parenting practices that significantly predicted child outcomes, rather than a single parent's parenting behaviors. Although time consuming and expensive, there is a significant need for studies that gather data from multiple family members, and particularly those that account for the perspectives of multiple caregivers, rather than just the primary caregiver. Importantly, we are not suggesting that researchers only study two-parent families, as that would limit the broader generalizability of findings from this work. Rather, we suggest that multiple caregivers be included in studies; in some cases this would involve gathering data from a parent

and a grandparent, in other cases it may involve gathering data from a parent and an older sibling. Latino families are diverse in family constellation and it will be important for future studies to capture this diversity by expanding the definition of caregiver to include someone other than a biological mother or father, and moreover, capturing the multiple perspectives of caregivers within families. This recommendation is consistent with notions from ecological theory, which suggest that considering the impact of multiple systems and how they interact with one another is necessary to more completely understand the processes of human and family development.

Somewhat related, we also noted that no studies, to our knowledge, have examined how differing generational statuses or differing levels of acculturation/enculturation within the marital dyad impact family functioning. Put differently, it is unclear how family dynamics play out in families in which one partner is a recent immigrant to the U.S. and the second partner has been in the U.S. for many generations. How do differing levels of acculturation/enculturation impact spousal relationships and, in turn, parenting experiences? Are there similarities in the family processes of these families as compared to the processes of biethnic families in which a Latino marries a European American? What role do social networks play in these relationships? Does family have the same meaning? There has been some theoretical work that discusses the potential impact of differing levels of acculturation/enculturation between parents and children (Birman, 2006); however, few studies have examined this parent-child discrepancy in acculturation among Latino families (Gonzales, Knight, Morgan-Lopez, Saenz, & Sirolli, 2002; Updegraff & Umaña-Taylor, 2010), and we know even less about whether differing levels of acculturation impact the couple relationship.

Finally, we would like to close by noting that, although we present many limitations in our review of the existing work and make several recommendations for how this research can be improved, we believe that the efforts of previous researchers are laudable, particularly given that much of this work has been conducted with lim-

ited research funds, staff, and additional challenges that are unique to the study of Latino families (e.g., language barriers, translation issues; Knight et al., 2009). To overcome some of these constraints, researchers should consider increasing collaborative efforts and, particularly, increasing collaborations across disciplines. Scholars from diverse disciplines (e.g., Family Studies, Psychology, Sociology, Women's Studies) are increasingly interested in studying the family experiences of Latinos. Future researchers should attempt to make interdisciplinary connections that will help ease some of the cost and time burdens of this work. Such interdisciplinary collaborations will help to ensure that the multiple meanings and experiences of family life are captured across this rapidly growing and diverse population.

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Part V

Application of Family Social Science

Bethany L. Letiecq, Elaine A. Anderson,
and Alfred L. Joseph

Introduction

Since the last Handbook was published a decade ago, the United States (U.S.) has experienced numerous challenges—all of which have social policy consequences for families. Perhaps the most profound issues to date are the two wars waged after the September 11, 2001 attacks, and the ensuing economic downturn. The banking industry's misuse of subprime loans, the bursting housing bubble, and the resulting foreclosures across the U.S. have also left many families economically insecure. Moreover, due to the dismantling of federal social safety nets, many families have been left to fend for themselves during a time when unemployment rates have been on the rise. Needless to say, there is great unease as we write this chapter and consider the ways social policies affect families.

B.L. Letiecq, PhD (✉)
Department of Health & Human Development,
Montana State University, 316 Herrick Hall,
Bozeman, MT 59717, USA
e-mail: bletiecq@montana.edu

E.A. Anderson, PhD
Department of Family Science, University of Maryland,
College Park, School of Public Health, 1204 Marie
Mount Hall, MD 20742, USA
e-mail: eanders@umd.edu

A.L. Joseph, PhD
Department of Family Studies and Social Work,
Miami University, McGuffey Hall 101, Oxford,
OH 45056, USA
e-mail: josepha@muohio.edu

The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have cost families here in the U.S. and abroad in immeasurable ways. As this chapter goes to press, the U.S. Department of Defense (2012) reports 1,992 U.S. servicemen and women have lost their lives in Afghanistan and 4,422 soldiers have died in Iraq. Nearly 50,000 soldiers have been wounded, many losing limbs and suffering traumatic brain injuries, with many thousands more suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. Families in Iraq and Afghanistan have also suffered the effects of wars fought on their soil. Those killed and wounded and their families have endured the most direct effects of the U.S. policymakers' decisions.

Yet, the wars have also affected families in indirect ways. For example, the economic costs of the wars—which have been estimated at over \$1 trillion—transformed a Clinton era budget surplus of \$710 billion into a \$1.6 trillion deficit during the George W. Bush Administration, a swing of \$2.3 trillion (Congressional Budget Office, 2009). The deficit is not only the result of two costly wars but is also a product of key deregulation policies during the Clinton Administration and tax cuts passed during the Bush Administration, which largely benefited the wealthiest Americans. Ettlinger and Linden (2009) estimated that the tax cuts reduced government revenue collections by \$231 billion in 2009 alone. These economic costs, coupled with the banking and housing crises, have resulted in one of the most significant recessions in history (Elliott & Bailly, 2009).

Indeed, some have likened the current economic recession to the Great Depression. An examination of economic data reveals that wealth disparity—the gap between the wealthiest and the poorest—is the largest it has been since 1929. As Di (2007) reports, in 2004, the top quartile of the U.S. households held 87% of the net wealth distribution (defined as all assets minus all debts) or \$43.6 trillion, while the bottom quartile had no wealth accumulated at all. In 2006, the top 0.01% of our population averaged 976 times more income than the bottom 90% (The Nation, 2008). In 2008, the official poverty rate was 13.2%, comprising 39.8 million people. That same year, the poverty rate for children under 18 years of age was 19.0%, where nearly 1 in 5 children experienced poverty (DeNavas-Walt, Proctor, & Smith, 2009).

A Decade of Shifting Ideologies, Political Polarization, and Dismantled Social Policies

But the two wars, economic woes, and tax policies were not the only transformative factors influencing the U.S. social policy over the last decade. We have also seen a significant shift in cultural ideology resulting in a polarization of communities and dramatic changes in social policies affecting families. When the Bush Administration took office, they ushered in a “compassionate conservatism” favoring marriage promotion, abstinence-only sex education, faith-based initiatives, and deep cuts to social programs in order to promote individual responsibility and familism. The Administration also favored partnering with private companies, charities, and religious institutions to address such social problems as poverty. As Bush speechwriter Michael Gerson stated, “Compassionate conservatism is the theory that the government should encourage the effective provision of social services without providing the service itself” (Riley, 2006).

During this time, proponents of the two wars and shrinking “big government” also fought to increase government regulation over family life, especially among poor and nontraditional families. Government involvement in promoting marriage

among the poor while denying marriage to same-sex couples was often justified through moral arguments, religious directives, and Christian doctrine (Cahill, 2005). This commingling of church and state was the source of significant criticism, mainly among progressives (Hardisty, 2008). However, the Bush Administration’s legislative actions also drew fire from conservatives as the Administration veered away from traditional conservative bedrock principles and grew government during its two terms (Viguerie, 2006). Policies, such as the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act, increased the size of Medicare by more than \$500 billion. As noted by the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think-tank, the prescription drug bill was one of the largest expansions of entitlement programs in the U.S. history (John & Moffit, 2006). Indeed, federal spending rose 19.2% in President Bush’s first term, compared to 4.7% in President Clinton’s first term, and 3.7% in Clinton’s second term (Viguerie, 2006).

In 2008, Barack Obama was elected President and vowed to set a new course for the nation. Obama’s platform included ending the two wars, imposing new banking regulations, overhauling health care, and overturning the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA). To date, the Obama Administration has succeeded in passing health care reform and has made progress toward its other goals; however, it is too early to tell if the U.S. is moving in a new policy direction. What we do know is that families will be affected both directly and indirectly by policymakers’ decisions at all levels of government.

The Purpose of This Chapter

The purpose of this chapter is to examine how policymakers’ decisions have influenced families—all families—and their ability to carry out their functions within a diverse society. Throughout the chapter, we explore our history, cultural values, and political practices. We focus on three issues—family poverty, family formation, and family health—to better understand the genesis of certain social policies and how they have influenced families over time. We draw

upon an ecological perspective to structure our analysis, considering the ways in which social policies promote family well-being among some while hindering the very survival of others (Bubolz & Sontag, 1993; Trzcinski, 1995). We conclude with a call for a new policy direction that accounts for and values all families under the law (Polikoff, 2008). To contextualize this policy discourse, we begin with a brief overview of the historical roots of social policies affecting families. (For more in-depth reviews, see Kamerman & Kahn, 1997; Mason, 1994; and Skocpol, 1992, 1995).

Historical Roots of Social Policies and Families: Individualism Trumps Family Focus

As reflected in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, the very beginnings of the U.S. social policy reveal an adherence to “family as private” ideology, the separation of church and state, and natural rights individualism (Bogenschneider, 2006). Indeed, the word “family” is absent from the Constitution, which upholds and protects individual liberties against the “tyranny of the state” (Kamerman & Kahn, 2001, p. 77). These founding documents espousing individual rights, coupled with Puritan and Protestant religious teachings of individual responsibility and a strict work ethic, have made it difficult for the U.S. to implement an explicit family policy agenda or a coherent package of social policies aimed at promoting the well-being and functioning of all children and their families (Bogenschneider, 2006; Kamerman & Kahn, 2001). Instead, the U.S. has limited policies targeting specific subgroups of the population. These social policies are not comprehensive, and in total, comprise less than 1% of the U.S. gross domestic product (Gornick & Meyers, 2003). In contrast, the U.S. spends over \$650 billion in military expenditures (approximately 4% of GDP, excluding spending for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, Homeland Security, and Veteran’s Affairs; Stalenheim, Kelly, Perdomo, Perlo-Freeman, & Skons, 2009). The U.S. invests a

much smaller share of GDP in families than any other industrialized nation (Kamerman & Kahn, 2001).

Such a lack of investment in family life has proven to be quite costly in the U.S. As mentioned, nearly 20% of the U.S. children are living in families with incomes below the federal poverty line, and children of color are particularly at risk (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). This rate of child poverty is significantly higher than poverty rates of any other industrialized nation in the world (Rodgers & Payne, 2007). A cross-national comparison of other outcomes quickly paints a gloomy U.S. picture. For example, the U.S. holds the highest percentage of low-birth-weight babies and the highest rate of infant mortality and young-child mortality when compared to the richest nations (UNICEF, 2008). U.S. teen pregnancy, birth rates, and abortion rates are also among the highest of all developed countries (Singh & Darroch, 2000). In terms of parental leave, the U.S. is the only industrialized nation that does not offer paid maternity leave. U.S. workers work longer hours than any other industrialized nation, yet work does not guarantee a living wage. Indeed, among two-parent families in which both parents are employed, 8% have incomes at or below one-half of the median income. The picture is grimmer for single-parent families in which the parent is employed. Nearly one-half of employed single parents in the U.S. are poor, despite their attachment to the labor market (Gornick & Meyers, 2003).

Perhaps because of our failure to implement an explicit, national family policy agenda, the U.S. has developed a complex web of state and federal policies to address the needs of families. Historically, under the Tenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, powers not assigned to the federal government were delegated to the states (Mason, Fine, & Carnochan, 2001). Issues traditionally considered the purview of the family such as marriage, divorce, property distribution, and child welfare were relegated to the states. Thus, state laws and judicial actions, differing from state to state, created the structure that regulated families and were, in effect, the first family policies.

Most of these policies remain “solidly within states’ jurisdiction” (Mason et al., p. 860).

However, the federal government also plays a role. When state regulation fails to resolve certain family-based challenges, the federal government has stepped in (Bogenschneider, 2006). For example, the federal government has assumed responsibility for the care of children and dependents who could not be cared for properly by their own families, but the guiding norm for this intervention has focused on the individual rather than the family unit. Federal policies have also been enacted to accommodate such family trends as women entering the workplace, the need for child care, and the growth of elderly dependents (Gornick & Meyers, 2003). In 1980, the White House Conference on Families was one of the first federal efforts to focus specific attention on the relationship between government and family life, yet this conference, stymied by efforts to define “family,” also failed to establish a clear U.S. family policy agenda (Bogenschneider, 2006).

The Cultural War over “Family Values”

Although the 1980s did not witness the development of any cohesive and comprehensive family policy, political dialogue increasingly included discussion of the potential impact of proposed legislation on family life (Ooms, 1995). And it was during this time that the “neo-family values campaign” erupted (Stacey, 1996). Social conservatives and “family communitarians” concerned about the changing family landscape began to argue that the ill-effects of women entering the labor market, high divorce rates, decreasing fertility, and out-of-wedlock births, particularly among teenagers, were destabilizing the family and threatening the well-being of society (Popenoe, 1993; Struening, 2002). These themes were echoed in the White House, as Dan Quayle critiqued a fictional TV character—Murphy Brown—for having a child out of wedlock (Whitehead, 1993). Numbers of evangelical organizations joined in the debate and gained prominence for

their traditional family values and anti-gay platform (Cahill, 2005; Coltrane, 2001).

At the heart of the “family in decline” critique was the argument that individuals had lost their moral compass and had become irresponsible and self-centered—choosing to meet their own needs of personal fulfillment rather than sacrificing for their families (Bogenschneider, 2006; Struening, 2002; Whitehead, 1993). This argument, according to Hays (2003), blamed the individual and ignored systemic and structural inequalities based on race, social class, gender, and family structure (among other variables). Thus, individual moral failings explained the decline of the nuclear family rather than changes in the economic landscape or social policies that failed to address racial, social class, and gender inequalities and the emergent needs of working mothers.

Myths, Scapegoating, and the Cultural Divide

Powerful myths, such as the myth of meritocracy, were frequently promulgated by proponents of individual responsibility, private market solutions, and Reagan-era “trickle-down” economic policies that favored the wealthy and large corporations (McNamee & Miller, 2009). These myths provided social conservatives a rationale for the Reagan Administration’s dismantling of many “New Deal” and “Great Society” welfare programs developed to eradicate poverty. President Reagan himself frequently conjured up images of “the welfare queen,” a powerful image of a poor African American mother of illegitimate children who drove a Cadillac while she was defrauding the government (and tax payers) by abusing welfare programs (Douglas, 2005). Demonizing welfare mothers, labeling their values and behaviors as immoral and deviant (and thus distinct from the American “mainstream”) provided the perfect scapegoat for the social, cultural, and economic troubles of the times (Douglas, 2005; Hays, 2003; Heath, 2009). This racial and class-based scapegoating allowed policymakers and pundits to shift the blame to the individual level and justify more punitive policy

measures against the poor, immigrants, and non-traditional families.

These overly-simplistic tactics and media sound-bites only grew in popularity during the Clinton and George W. Bush years (Collins, 2000). Other scapegoats—teen parents, absent fathers, gays and lesbians, undocumented immigrants—all served to characterize the genesis of social problems related to family life. To address these social problems, conservative policymakers and rightist think-tanks in the 1980s through the 2000s looked to “remoralize” wayward and deviant Americans (Coltrane & Adams, 2003). Thus, as European and Scandinavian countries implemented universal social welfare policies, including universal health care, paid leave, child allowances, and early childhood education and care (Gornick & Meyers, 2003), the U.S. dismantled the welfare system and instituted abstinence-only, marriage promotion, and responsible fatherhood policies. Such policies moved poor single mothers with young children off of welfare and into the workforce, encouraged young adults to be sexually chaste until marriage, and promoted heterosexual, two-parent married families as “best” for children and for society (Cahill, 2005; Mink, 2003).

While progressives attempted to reframe the “family values” discourse, the war of ideologies only fueled the growing culture clash (Stacey, 1996; Struening, 2002). Today, the U.S. continues to experience a deep cultural divide and this polarization is now institutionalized in the policymaking arena (Coltrane & Adams, 2003). Marriage, divorce, child custody, reproductive technologies, embryonic research, adoption, family leave, health care, abortion, and immigration policies (among others) have come under scrutiny in the current culture clash (Polikoff, 2008). As Hays (2003) asserts, this war over family values is meaningful as a nation’s values dictate its laws. Indeed, the policymaking process relies on the values discourse more than scientific discovery (Bogenschneider, 2006). Thus, laws targeting the poor, minority groups, women, and children reflect American majority cultural values and reinforce a system of beliefs about how we should behave.

Our Guiding Framework: An Ecological Perspective on Family Policy

From an ecological perspective, a limitation of the arguments made by “family values” ideologues is the failure to consider the ways in which individuals and families are situated within and influenced by other ecologies or social systems (Trzcinski, 1995). The myth of meritocracy is a myth precisely because individuals cannot control all the external forces bearing down on them. As McNamee and Miller (2009) discuss, individuals are not independent “self-made” actors pulling themselves up from their proverbial bootstraps. In reality, how hard (or smart) one works will not guarantee one’s success in a capitalistic economy. Individuals are also affected by—and differentially privileged by—inheritance, social capital (or who they know), cultural capital (or how well they fit in to the majority culture), luck, unequal access to education, and discrimination (McNamee & Miller). Moreover, individuals are located within a “matrix of domination,” where race, social class, gender, and other socially constructed variables intersect, resulting in disparate experiences that privilege some and disadvantage others (Andersen & Collins, 2007).

The ecological perspective defined by Trzcinski (1995) recognizes that policies are human-derived (and thus value-laden) rules that shape social structures and institutions that influence well-being. These human-derived rules create conditions that affect how easy or difficult it is for individuals and families to live and survive. When policymakers ignore the interrelationships among humans and other social systems or assume that absolutes exist for what families are or should be, policy solutions often become exclusionary and fail to account for the realities of *all* families (Trzcinski). Thus, policies create intended and unintended consequences which disparately support healthy functioning among some families while hindering the very survival of others.

As we have learned from anthropologists and family historians (Coontz, 1992, 2005), families are not unchanging. They adapt across time,

space, culture, and region to survive within environments that pose both opportunities and constraints for family members. These adaptations result in different societal conceptions about family life and the ways individuals “do” family (Trzcinski, 1995). As family scholars, we understand that families exist within complex systems, and when families interact with larger systems, family outcomes will undoubtedly vary as a function of a family’s social location or their “situatedness” (Marsiglio, Roy, & Fox, 2005).

Given that families change and adapt to survive within complex social systems and environments that produce disparate outcomes, we recognize that the structure and functions of families are not given and fixed but that they emerge in conjunction with the family’s ecological system (Trzcinski, 1995). From this perspective, there should be no ideological requirement that families must be formed in a certain way or perform all functions traditionally considered within the realm of families to be classified as families. Indeed, and contrary to notions that one family form is best for all, the ecological perspective suggests that a wide range of families must exist to ensure the health and very survival of individuals within families within larger, interrelated ecosystems. Moreover, Trzcinski asserts that humans must be free to define and construct their families to meet their diverse needs in diverse environments. Policymakers can err by either failing to pass policies that facilitate the adaptation of diverse families or implement policies to control and punish some families. These policymakers can go astray by promoting a singular family form as best while marginalizing all other non-conforming families.

Throughout the U.S. history, policymakers have relied on ideologies and family values that are narrow and exclusive rather than universal or inclusive. Based on emergent cultural values, policymakers have determined which family form is best for society and which family forms are deviant and should be punished or eradicated (Hays, 2003). Likewise, policymakers have determined who deserves social aid and who does not, who should be included in legally sanctioned marriages and who should not, and who should be able to access health care and who should not.

An ecological perspective, on the other hand, calls for policies that are supportive of rather than antagonistic toward the healthy development and functioning of all families (Trzcinski, 1995).

Three Case Studies Shed Light on American Family Values

Given the history of the U.S. social policymaking and the current clash of cultures, perhaps it is no surprise to find the country in its current discordant state. However, a closer examination of our social policy roots reveals how entrenched and cyclical American ideology is in the policymaking world. The next three sections of this chapter examine in some detail the histories of three social issues—family poverty, family formation, and family health—and the policies that have emerged over time as social movements propelled certain values to be in favor or to fall out of favor. In the first case study, we tackle the history of welfare and its reform. Second, we examine the institution of marriage and policymakers’ focus on marriage promotion as a solution to family poverty. We contrast marriage promotion policies with contradictory marriage “exclusion” policies, which ban same-sex marriage. In the third case study, we examine briefly the U.S. health care system, with special attention paid to children’s health care, immigrant health, mental health, and traumatic brain injuries, and how these issues affect family well-being. Following each case study, we draw upon an ecological perspective to critique various aspects of the U.S. social policymaking related to family life. Through an ecological lens, we discuss future policymaking opportunities where all families—especially those historically marginalized—are valued under the law.

Case Study 1: Family Poverty

The Undeserving Poor and Government’s Role from Colonial Times to Present

Colonial America often conjures up images of horses and buggies, powdered wigs, and women in flowing dresses. Except for the “savage”

Indians and African Americans entrapped in slavery, most others appeared, on the surface at least, to be members of the upper or middle classes. What we do not see are images of indentured servants, poor farmers, or poor workers struggling to eke out a living (Katz, 1996). Then, like now, significant segments of the population had a very difficult time trying to make a living and survive. As Abramovitz (1996) describes:

Poverty was a problem for the colonial social order. In the harsh and isolated wilderness, where survival and success depended on the strength and productivity of each individual and family unit, the presence of poverty threatened the structure of work, family life, and the general welfare (p. 77).

Without resources, men, women, and children become vulnerable to powerful social, political, and economic forces that oftentimes determine the quality and length of their lives. In some cases these forces can determine if they live or die. As former vice-president Hubert H. Humphrey stated in 1977, "...the moral test of government is how that government treats those who are in the dawn of life, the children; those who are in the twilight of life, the elderly; those who are in the shadows of life, the sick, the needy and the handicapped" (MEDART, 2006, p. 3). A detailed look at the history of policymakers' responses to family poverty is beyond the scope of this chapter; however, we review the salient policies that shape the way America responds to poor families.

Colonial Poor Laws

The early English settlers brought with them a hope for a new life—one that fostered both religious tolerance and democracy. They hoped that the poverty and oppression of the Europe they left behind would give way to a life where hard work would be rewarded and political rights would make them equal to those with more resources. However, as Takaki (2008) writes, "the reality of life in the colonies left many white colonists (along with black indentured servants) frustrated and feeling that they had been duped into coming to America" (p. 58). As Trattner (1999) relates:

Once in America, life was so severe, so full of hardship...that many were forced to live in poverty or so close to it that any misfortune might reduce

them to that state. As a result, despite favorable chances for acquiring land or for earning a living in other ways in the New World, they did not escape poverty and many of the other social ills that plagued them in the Old World (p. 15–16).

In response to these dire conditions, colonial leaders drew upon their experiences from the Old World, their heritage, and their traditions to address the pressing social problems and to avoid serious social unrest (Amrosino, Hefferman, Shuttlesworth, & Amrosino, 2005; Takaki, 2008). Derived from the Elizabethan Poor Laws, the authorities put forth the Colonial Poor Laws.

These laws were founded on four basic ideas: (1) the poor were to be the responsibility of local authorities who would appoint people to "oversee" them; (2) assistance would be determined by local officials who would focus on people who resided in a specific area (outsiders seeking assistance would not be welcomed); (3) people were required to look after family members, thus poor citizens with mothers, fathers, adult children, grandchildren or grandparents would not be eligible for assistance; and (4) overseers would be allowed to remove children from homes deemed inappropriate and place them with artisans or farmers where they would be apprenticed (Katz, 1996). Colonial leaders were concerned about the potential for instability caused by growing poverty. Impoverished people were not viewed as productive and, in the New World, productivity was seen as crucial for survival. It was believed that the male-headed household was key to an orderly productive society. Abramovitz (1996) writes that the "colonial poor laws supported the formation of white families, stable households, and disciplined home life" and that male dominated families were seen as the linchpins for "community well-being and governance" (p. 78).

For those unwilling or unable to meet the dictates and expectations of colonial America in terms of family life and productive behavior, the Poor Laws categorized them into one of two categories: (1) the unfortunate, the handicapped, and others worthy of assistance; and (2) the poor who were unworthy of assistance (Blakemore & Griggs, 2007; Kamerman & Kahn, 2001).

The worthy group, consisting of widows, children and infants, the elderly, and the disabled, were aided by Outdoor Relief. This type of assistance, in the form of money, food, clothing or goods, was provided to alleviate poverty without the requirement that the recipient enter an institution—thus, it was designed to help people in their homes. Private homes and families were “considered to be the foundation of the social order” (Trattner, 1999). The unworthy poor, people seen to be out of compliance with societal norms, were treated more harshly through Indoor Relief, where they were required to enter poor houses and work houses. Children were often sent to orphanages.

Women especially were under scrutiny for their compliance with what Abramovitz (1996) calls the “colonial family ethic.” Women were to be engaged in productive activity in the home under the supervision of her husband. Poor unmarried women were at “high risk of being declared ‘unfit’ and losing the right to take care of her children...some women voluntarily indentured or apprenticed her children” (Abramovitz, p. 92). The message was forthright: poor people and their families were going to be judged and treated differently based on their ability to be productive and on their conformity to community standards of behavior and morality. During this time, a growing voluntary middle-class charitable movement was evolving, where private charities and churches attempted to address the limitations of the poor laws and provide aid to those deemed most deserving and “salvageable” (Kamerma n & Kahn, 2001). The Colonial Poor Laws left a lasting impression on the way this country viewed and still views poor men, women and children.

Progressive Era

The Progressive Era (approximately 1895–1920) brought forth federal legislation to protect citizens from the abuses of big business, to provide for the education of African Americans, and to address the needs of the poor. This era also saw U.S. women gaining a more public presence. Post the Civil War, middle class white women were afforded the leisure to tend to child rearing and the home. As Kamerma n and Kahn (2001)

note, many of these women helped shape reform efforts at all levels of policymaking, creating state legislation protecting female workers and “social policy reforms affecting families and children” (p. 79). Referred to as the “maternalist welfare state,” reform efforts resulted in kindergartens, Juvenile Court, maternal and child health programs, child labor laws, and the U.S. Children’s Bureau (Kamerma n & Kahn, 2001; Skocpol, 1992).

During this period, the Eugenics movement grew in size and influence and was felt in a number of arenas, including immigration (Duster, 1990). Followers successfully lobbied the federal government to restrict the number of immigrants originating from southern and Eastern Europe coming to America. It was believed that people from that part of the world possessed undesirable traits that would weaken the native genetic stock of the U.S. In fact, upon signing the Immigration and Restriction Act of 1924, President Coolidge commented that “America must be kept American,” that is, free of contaminants (Duster, p. 12). The Eugenics movement also influenced society’s response to poverty. Katz (1996) claims “eugenics supplied a scientific basis with which to write the old distinction between the worthy and unworthy poor into social policy” (p. 188).

The distinction between worthy and unworthy can be seen in the Progressive Era “pensions” for widows and their children; by 1920, at least 40 states had them in place. These programs were essentially limited to single women who were white, had been married and who were seen by the authorities as exhibiting proper behavior (Day, 2009). Opposition to these programs came from many quarters, including social workers, who claimed pensions “would spread the contagion of pauperism to the next generation” (Day, p. 262). Initially, wives and mothers who had been abandoned by their husbands were excluded from pensions for fear that abandonment would only increase with payments. Yet over time coverage was expanded to include those destitute families with fathers who were incapacitated, imprisoned, or mentally ill (Day). Like relief in the colonial period, recipients of aid were closely monitored by officials. Eugenics clearly laid out

the rationale for this approach. Katz (1996) reports that a leading eugenics supporter of the early twentieth century stated “the story of the poor is best read in the annals of cases of mental defect, affective deviation and all the other psychopathic reactions of conduct” (p. 191). In other words, these people are poor, defective and in need of close supervision, especially in light of the fact that public money was used to assist them. With the passage of time, these sentiments showed little signs of waning.

A New Deal: Aid to Dependent Children

The Great Depression exposed how vulnerable most Americans were in times of economic duress and led to the establishment of social reforms, social services, and regulatory activity. This “minimalist welfare state” created by the New Deal included social insurance programs, survivors’ benefits, unemployment insurance, and a “partial safety net” for the poor elderly, the blind, and the disabled (Kamerman & Kahn, 2001, p. 79). However, as reflected throughout U.S. history, policies providing aid to poor women and children continued to be divisive. Of the many programs created by the Roosevelt administration, by far the most controversial was Aid to Dependent Children (ADC)—commonly referred to as “welfare.” The passage of time did not weaken the fears, the myths, and the anger associated with policies aimed at assisting poor families, especially those headed by “unworthy” women. The reluctance to aid the poor that characterized the Colonial and Progressive Eras, was very much present in the 1930s. While other groups, such as labor and the elderly, had support and/or sympathy among the general population, poor women and children had neither. Except for some of the leaders of the U.S. Children’s Bureau, women and children lacked constituency, support, and political “voice.” Goldberg and Collins (2001) believe that “ADC rode into the Social Security Act on the coattails of popular movements of the elderly and the unemployed” (p. 30). Indeed, while much of Europe began implementing child allowances and universal health care, the U.S. continued its targeted, limited social welfare programs.

While it would be a mistake to equate Mothers’ Pensions with ADC, the two programs did retain some similarities. The racism that so characterized previous helping efforts, also found a home in the ADC program. Neubeck and Cazenave (2001) are quite explicit about this issue. They write, “as was true of mothers pensions programs, the ADC program did not challenge the existing system of white racial hegemony” (p. 46). Goldberg and Collins (2001) suggest that prior to the creation of ADC, black families in 1931 headed by single mothers received only 3% of the resources spent nationally on mothers’ pensions. In the south they report that in some counties and in some states, no black families received assistance. This percentage jumped to 14% shortly after the passage of the Social Security Act of 1935 (Goldberg & Collins).

Another similarity with the Mothers’ Pensions was the time spent on trying to determine if the woman designated to receive aid was indeed worthy of assistance. The perceived morality of the mother could oftentimes determine if her family would receive help or not. A concept that was common to both ADC and Mothers’ Pensions was the “suitable home” (Abramovitz, 1996). Unmarried mothers, almost by definition were labeled as unsuitable and found it very difficult to secure assistance. Federal policy did not explicitly prohibit the use of morality as a factor in determining eligibility for aid. Many states, particularly in the south, used “local standards” to decide who would be covered. Abramovitz notes how this “interpretation” allowed states to limit the number of non-white families, especially black families, receiving assistance. This practice of exclusion characterized the program from its inception in 1935 to the early 1960s. Though black families experienced much higher rates of poverty, they continued to find barriers that impeded their efforts to seek relief.

The War on Poverty

The 1960s Great Society reforms under the Johnson Administration lead to significant changes, especially for children. Head Start and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act were passed. Youth employment programs were

expanded. Medical insurance for both the elderly (Medicare) and the poor (Medicaid) were implemented, as was the Food Stamp program. The 1960s also saw substantial changes in ADC, including a name change to Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) in 1962. Unfortunately, AFDC would soon find itself under more intense scrutiny as the number of African Americans sought and were granted assistance because of the social activism of welfare rights organizations, civil rights activism, and the growth of black families in urban centers (Abramovitz, 1996; Goldberg & Collins, 2001). As the Reagan and Bush Administrations took office in the 1980s, opposition to AFDC, which had been growing for years, finally had a foothold and momentum in the Conservative party. The promulgation of stereotypes, such as the “welfare queen,” had become so ubiquitous that the War on Poverty era gave way to welfare reform.

The Era of Welfare Reform

Clinton won the presidency in November of 1992. Throughout the campaign he ran as a “new kind of Democrat.” Reese (2005) states that during the election of 1992 Clinton ran on the platform of the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC), which favored an end to AFDC. The sole purpose of the DLC, organized by Clinton in 1985 with other Democratic moderates, was to win elections by moving the Democratic Party to the right (Jansson, 2009). If there was any confusion about what that would mean for poor families, all would become clear with the passage of the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act (PRWORA). This law did change welfare “as we knew it,” striking down a 60-year-old entitlement program. To many, this was “the most dramatic restructuring of federal aid to mothers and children since its beginnings in the Great Depression of 1929” (Weikart, 2005, p. 416).

PRWORA dismantled AFDC and created The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, funded by block grants. TANF limited the assistance (except in special circumstances) one could receive to a total of 5 years. States may impose lower limits, but they cannot use federal dollars to offer more than 5 years of aid. The program also was characterized by stiffer

work requirements, harsher penalties for non-compliance with rules and regulations, and severe limits to higher education access (Cherlin, Frogner, Ribar, & Moffitt, 2009; Goldberg & Collins, 2001; Weikart, 2005). Proponents of TANF, like earlier anti-poverty programs, focus on the behaviors of those being “helped.” Thus, PRWORA goals include preventing and reducing out-of-wedlock pregnancies while at the same time encouraging the formation of two-parent families (Slack et al., 2007). Welfare reform was seen by some as a form of “tough love” for those who were “trapped” in a heartless system (Reese, 2005). Many on the right and left believed entry into the labor force was the surest way out of poverty (Neubeck, 2006). Blakemore and Griggs (2007), commenting on the importance of official work in the U.S., state, “this deep rooted idea, that it is only through being in paid work that one can fully demonstrate responsibility as a citizen, is still evident in the aims and values that underlie the policies of workfare” (p. 42).

Critique of the Modern Welfare State Through an Ecological Lens

It has now been over 10 years since the implementation of PRWORA and supporters of the bill are quick to claim success. Neubeck (2006) reports that “since the passage of PRWORA...political elites have regularly trumpeted the success of welfare reform” (p. 45). They focus primarily on two facts: (1) the dramatic decrease in the number of people receiving TANF assistance; and (2) large numbers of former recipients in the labor market (Cherlin et al., 2009; Rodgers, Payne, & Chervachidze, 2006; Seefeldt & Orzol, 2005). Once employed, proponents contend that “welfare-leavers” will acquire habits and skills that will lead to self-sufficiency. They point to the economic downturn early in the twenty-first century that saw depressed welfare participation. It is thought that these women, now with a job, would rather seek other employment than rely on TANF (Neubeck, 2006).

On closer examination, such claims of “success” may at best be a little premature and, at worst, misleading. Wood, Moore, and Rangarajan (2008), who examined TANF recipients over a 5-year span, report that “in spite of this

progress...average income levels for sample members remain fairly low (about \$20,000 per year) at the end of the follow-up period. Almost half [of former recipients] have incomes below the poverty line” (p. 24). Price (2005) writes “in sum, welfare reform has moved poor women into the workforce without bringing about a significant improvement in their economic status” (p. 86). Cherlin et al. (2009), looking at African American and Hispanic families, find that African American families fared the worst, as they experienced “at best a modest decline in poverty, depending on the measure of poverty that is used, and a modest increase in household income” (p. 196).

In 2007, before the Subcommittee on Income Security and Family Support, Father Larry Snyder, president of Catholic Charities USA, painted a rather bleak picture for former TANF recipients. Rev. Snyder, commenting on how responsibility for the poor has shifted from the federal government to the states to local communities and private charities (much like Colonial times), echoed many findings about the “success” of welfare reform: “As the number of individuals on welfare declined, the number of individuals accessing emergency services at agencies like Catholic Charities has steadily increased. In 2005, our agencies experienced a 14 percent increase” (p. 21).

As Joseph (2006) notes, compassionate conservatives are committed to the notion that private markets and faith-based charities are the solutions to poverty and oppose any collective solution using public money. Yet, with the weakened economy, Loprest (2002) has found fewer employed TANF “leavers” and more leavers returning to TANF or disconnecting from government aid altogether. With a national unemployment rate of nearly 10% (U.S. Department of Labor, 2009), states will likely have to do more to support poor mothers’ connections to the labor market.

Guided by an ecological perspective, we question, however, if more support and services will flow to poor women and children, who are disproportionately minorities. As earlier in history, today’s poor families lack the necessary political support and voice in the current policymaking climate, resulting in their continued marginalization

and grave unintended policy consequences (Trzcinski, 1995). For example, while the federal government has failed to extend and expand TANF benefits to poor women and their children who are unlikely to transition from welfare to work in the current employment context, it continues to extend unemployment insurance to laid-off workers (U.S. Department of Labor, 2009). Indeed, current debates about health care and economic reforms suggest—as in the past—that the elderly and the unemployed are valued constituencies “worthy” of support, while poor families and others deemed unworthy can only hope to eke out some assistance.

Moreover, researchers continue to note the intersections of race, class, and gender in their research findings on welfare reform (e.g., Schram, Soss, & Fording, 2003). For example, several researchers have found the disconcerting trend that states with higher African American populations and higher rates of family poverty spend less per capita on TANF and other welfare programs, adopt the most restrictive rules and shortest time limits, apply harsher sanctions, and provide the least generous benefits than states with fewer poor black women and children seeking assistance (Gais & Weaver, 2002; Rodgers & Payne, 2007; Schram et al., 2003).

Case Study 2: Family Formation

Marriage Promotion for the Poor; Marriage Denial for Same-Sex Couples

A major component of welfare reform under Clinton and a major thrust of anti-poverty programming under Bush was marriage promotion. In fact, three of the four TANF provisions include either directly or indirectly the promotion of marriage as a goal for welfare recipients (Greenberg et al., 2002). At the same time that champions of welfare reform were promoting the value of marriage, federal and state governments were arguing against the merits of marriage among same-sex couples. To fully understand what type of marriage was being promoted on the one hand and denied on the other, we provide a brief history of marriage.

A Brief History of the Institution of Marriage

Critics of marriage promotion note that supporters often describe the institutions of marriage and “the family” as if static and monolithic (Struening, 2002). Yet, historians argue that marriages and families have been changing for centuries (Cherlin, 2004; Coontz, 2005). As Coontz (1992) reminds us, the revered traditional nuclear model of the 1950s was not the historical norm or the utopian experience. Indeed, women’s rights within marriage have only recently changed *by law* to accord women more equal standing to men. For hundreds of years, marriage followed the Doctrine of Coverture, where a wife had no independent legal identity (Mason et al., 2001).

Patriarchal Marriage Model

The long-standing patriarchal marriage model assumed that men were heads of households and women and children were property owned by the husband (Cott, 2000; Ferree, 2004). Under Coverture, a woman could not sign a contract, own property or money, or file a lawsuit (Polikoff, 2008). Upon marriage, a woman gained her husband’s surname and often lost her job and control over her body. Polikoff writes that a husband could legally rape his wife because her consent to marry him included “consent to sexual intercourse on his terms” (p. 12). Any injury to his wife caused by a third party was also legally considered injury to him; thus, under loss of consortium, he could sue for the loss of his wife’s services (Polikoff). Spouses could not testify against each other in court, which held troubling consequences for victims of domestic violence, as a wife could not sue her husband for injuries incurred as a result his battery (*Ennis v. Donovan*, 1960).

During the first women’s rights convention in 1848, the focus was largely on a woman’s right to vote; however, the convention also recognized that women’s legal status in marriage affected the rights of all women (Polikoff, 2008). Indeed, unmarried women seeking professional careers could be denied on the basis of “the natural and proper timidity and delicacy” of women which made them unfit for civil occupations and relegated them to the domestic sphere (*Bradwell v. Illinois*, 1873). Women’s struggles for emancipa-

tion were viewed as threats to patriarchal marriage. Social conservatives and religious leaders argued that giving women the right to vote, own property, and earn a living would undermine a man’s authority over his family and destroy the institution of marriage (Cott, 2000). And with industrialization and women’s suffrage, patriarchal marriage did succumb to a new form of marriage—that of the traditional nuclear model.

Traditional Nuclear Marriage Model

As the production of goods and services moved out of the home and women gained more legal rights, a “separate but equal” division of labor became the legal basis for a new kind of marriage—that of husband as provider and wife as homemaker and child care provider (Cott, 2000; Ferree, 2004). Within this formation, both men and women were expected to work in concert to advance the man’s critical bread-winning role and laws sanctioned these gendered efforts. Thus, the wife legally owed her husband domestic support and the husband owed his family financial support, and would pay alimony to the wife upon divorce (Mason et al., 2001; Polikoff, 2008).

This marriage model was securely in place until the second wave of the Women’s Movement began to challenge the separate but equal characteristics of the traditional nuclear model. In 1963, Betty Friedan famously published *The Feminine Mystique*, where she identified the general discontent of white, educated, stay-at-home housewives. In 1966, the National Organization for Women was founded, and began fighting for legal equality between women and men and passage of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), a Constitutional amendment stating that “equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the U.S. or any state on account of sex.” Although the ERA passed Congress, it failed to be ratified by the required 38 states (by 1974, 33 states had ratified). Yet, as Polikoff (2008) notes, “attacking the radically gendered law of marriage...proved fertile grounds for advancing women’s equality” (p. 16).

During the 1960s and 1970s, there were seismic shifts in American culture that were reflected in changes to marriage and family laws. In 1963,

under the Equal Pay Act, it became illegal to pay women less than men for equal work (Mason et al., 2001). It also became illegal to fire a woman upon her entry into marriage (Ferree, 2004). The once socially-condemned behaviors of nonmarital sex and out of wedlock childbirth gave way to a growing acceptance of cohabitation and single-parenthood. Several legal cases, including *King v. Smith* (1968), *Eisenstadt v. Baird* (1972), and *U.S. Department of Agriculture v. Moreno* (1973), demonstrated the Supreme Court's refusal to uphold laws "reflecting disapproval of sex outside marriage" (Polikoff, 2008, p. 31). During this period, the legal distinction between children born to a married mother vs. those born to an unmarried mother was abolished. Thus, "illegitimate" children could no longer be denied inheritance, death benefits, and child support (Polikoff). Divorce laws also shifted from fault-based to no-fault, allowing married couples to legally exit their union without establishing fault (Carbone, 1994). In 1976, husbands were granted the right to collect Social Security based on their wives earnings, and the Equal Credit Act defined both wives and husbands as participating equally in money management. Significantly, nearly all states rewrote family and employment laws to reflect the equal standing now shared by couples (Mason et al., 2001).

The Women's Movement, which played a significant role in shifting marriage models from that of patriarchal to breadwinner-homemaker, was once again uprooting the institution of marriage. For hundreds of years, wives were not the legal equals of their husbands (Mason et al., 2001). Yet within 2 decades, women gained an independent legal voice which changed the very foundation of marriage and family life. These changes are exemplified in *Roe v. Wade* (1973), which empowered women to make independent reproductive choices. The Women's Movement was essential to moving from a dependent marriage model to the current partnership model.

Partnership Model of Marriage Based on Gender Equality Under the Law

Over the past 40 years, a partnership model has emerged where marriage is legally framed as a

contractual relationship between two individuals who enter the relationship by personal choice (Mason et al., 2001). This new marriage model enforces the rights and responsibilities of both partners while respecting their independent legal identities. Thus, support obligations and responsibility for a spouse's debts are now placed equally on men and women. Upon divorce, assets are often split 50-50 and custody of children is typically shared jointly by parents (Carbone, 1994).

Gender roles within family life have also shifted, along with social norms and mores (Cherlin, 2004). No longer does the labor market support a man's "family wage." As corporations moved their operations overseas in the 1980s to find cheaper labor and fewer labor restrictions, real hourly wages in the U.S. dropped by as much as 6% (Fernandez-Kelly, 2008). While middle and upper class women were lured into the labor market "as a culmination of yearnings for emancipation," working-class women entered the workplace out of necessity to enhance family earnings depleted by the decline in men's wages (Fernandez-Kelly, p. 389). By 1988, a majority of single mothers, mothers in dual-parent families, and mothers of young children were in the labor market (Hayghe, 1997). Such employment patterns continued to grow in the 1990s, challenging women (and men) to balance the joint demands of earning and caring (Gornick & Meyers, 2003; Hochschild & Machung, 2003). Such shifts culminated in changed expectations about women's domestic and reproductive responsibilities and calls for men to participate more fully in the rearing of children. As Fernandez-Kelly notes, "People of both sexes now expect everyone to be at least potentially able to support himself or herself and make substantial contributions to the household" (p. 390). And while today's laws reflect gender equality and societal expectations based on gender have changed in work-family spheres, disparities by gender remain. Men continue to earn more (on average) than women in the labor market and women continue to perform the lion's share of domestic and child rearing duties (Fernandez-Kelly, 2008; Gornick & Meyers, 2003).

A New Marriage Movement

With the changes in legal marriage and shifts in marital roles and social mores, we have also seen significant changes in family life—sharp rises in female labor force participation, divorce, and single-parent headed households—triggering concerns about “broken families,” “father absence,” and the “deinstitutionalization” of marriage (Cherlin, 2004; Waite & Gallagher, 2000; Whitehead, 1993). Such concerns about “family decline” have been met with a new marriage movement, largely promoted by some conservatives. These conservative interests tend to advance a pro-marriage agenda by advocating a return to the traditional nuclear marriage model. According to this viewpoint, marriage is defined as being an institution involving one man and one woman as husband and wife and roles within marriage that are clearly gendered (Polikoff, 2008). Inspired by the Christian Right (Coltrane, 2001), this movement has been adopted by many social liberals who argue that marriage promotion is akin to promoting healthy relationships (Heath, 2009). Now led by a coalition of religious and civic leaders, public officials, family therapists, educators, researchers and others, the pro-marriage movement has gained widespread support among advocates seeking to reduce the rate of divorce and single parenting, especially among the poor and communities of color (Heath).

Marriage Promotion Among the Poor and Communities of Color

In proclaiming National Family Week in 2001, President Bush stated that the promotion of marriage would be a focus of his administration (Administration for Children and Families, n.d.):

My Administration is committed to strengthening the American family. Many one-parent families are also a source of comfort and reassurance, yet a family with a mom and dad who are committed to marriage...helps provide children a sound foundation for success. Government can support families by promoting policies that help strengthen the institution of marriage and help parents rear their children in positive and healthy environments.

As noted by the ACF “Healthy Marriage” website, the promotion of heterosexual marriage is

based on their analysis of empirical research, which suggests that “children who grow up in healthy married, two-parent families do better on a host of outcomes than those who do not.” Further, ACF concludes that married couples, on average, appear to build more wealth than single parents or cohabiting couples, “thus decreasing the likelihood that their children will grow up in poverty.”

Under Bush (and Obama), the federal government has committed \$150 million per year in funding to promote heterosexual marriage as a means to ending poverty. Activities include marriage education, marriage-skills training, advertising campaigns, educational programs, and marriage mentoring programs (Pate, 2010). At least 250 organizations—from faith-based organizations and non-profits to academic institutions—have received federal grants to promote marriage (Administration for Children and Families, n.d.). Marriage promotion policies have not just targeted the poor; they have also focused on communities of color, including African American, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Native American communities. These initiatives are inextricably linked to fatherhood programs (Administration for Children and Families, 2005).

Paternity Establishment, Fatherhood Initiatives, and Child Support Enforcement

In partnership with marriage promotion efforts, we saw the implementation of paternity establishment programs and Responsible Fatherhood Initiatives (Mink, 2003). Under the Healthy Marriages and Responsible Fathers Act of 2004, which was included in the 2005 Deficit Reduction Act, Congress allocated \$50 million annually for fiscal years 2006–2010 for fatherhood programs (Pate, 2010). These initiatives have two purposes: (1) to connect fathers with their children to promote father involvement, and (2) to encourage and/or sanction fathers to financially support their children (Anderson, Kohler, & Letiecq, 2002). Many fatherhood initiatives also support participants’ economic viability by providing educational programming and job training.

Under welfare reform, child support efforts were also revamped. PRWORA revised rules governing the distribution of child support collection

among federal and state governments and welfare families, required states to establish an automated registry of child support cases, and required states to provide information to a federal parent locator service (Lockie, 2009). PRWORA also required states to adopt the Uniform Interstate Family Support Act, which requires all welfare recipients to cooperate with state child support enforcement orders and to hand over their child support rights to the state. Under the new laws, enforcers of child support now have the option to implement harsher penalties, such as jail time, for fathers who refuse to pay child support (Lockie).

The Battle over Same-Sex Marriage

At the same time that the government was changing the rules of welfare, and promoting marriage and responsible fatherhood among the poor and communities of color, it simultaneously moved to ban same-sex marriage. The gay liberation movement had been growing for several decades (alongside the civil rights and women's movements) and with the emergence of partnership marriage, where gender roles within marriage were no longer sanctioned by law, the gay community saw an opening to pursue marriage rights (Polikoff, 2008). Indeed, in the early 1990s, three same-sex couples filed a lawsuit (*Baehr v. Lewin*, 1993) against the state of Hawaii challenging the constitutionality of a "heterosexuals-only" marriage law (Koppelman, 1997). After the Supreme Court of Hawaii found an early ruling in the case to be unconstitutional on the basis of sexual discrimination, the nation waited to see if Hawaii would be the first state to recognize same-sex marriage (Oswald & Kovalanka, 2008).

With the possibility of gay marriage being legalized at the state-level, Congress began debating the DOMA (Zimmerman, 2001). At the federal level, DOMA defined marriage as exclusively heterosexual, that is, between one man and one woman as husband and wife. DOMA also declared, contrary to the Full Faith and Credit Clause (Article IV Section 1 of the U.S. Constitution), that states are not required to recognize same-sex marriages performed in other states. Proponents of same-sex marriage relied mainly on constitutional arguments (e.g., DOMA

violates the Due Process Clause and the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment, Full Faith and Credit, and the separation of church and state), legal arguments (based on *Loving v. Virginia*, *Lawrence v. Texas*, *Brown v. Board of Education*), arguments focused on the rights and benefits of children and families, and social justice and human rights arguments (Croghan & Letiecq, 2009). Opponents employed mainly values-based and religious arguments, including: heterosexual marriage is best for children and society; marriage is a sacred institution sanctioned by a higher authority; marriage was created for procreative purposes; same-sex couples are sinners and thus not deserving of the rights and benefits bestowed upon marriage; same-sex marriage will destroy society; legalizing same-sex marriage will result in other legal forms of marriage, including polygamy; and legalizing same-sex marriage goes against the people's will, given the majority of citizens appear to be anti-gay marriage (Croghan & Letiecq, 2009; Zimmerman, 2001).

After these fierce debates, Congress passed and President Clinton signed DOMA into law. States quickly followed suit passing their own versions of mini-DOMAs. Since the mid-1990s, 40 of the 50 states passed laws banning same-sex marriage and 15 states "adopted even more restrictive laws that threaten or would ban more limited forms of partner recognition, such as domestic partner health benefits and hospital visitation rights" (Cahill, 2005, p. 179). In contrast, gay marriage is now legal in six states and the District of Columbia (2009): Massachusetts (2004), Connecticut (2008), Iowa (2009), Vermont (2009), New Hampshire (2010), and New York (2012). Legislation passed in Washington and Maryland in February 2012 allowing same-sex marriages, but those laws have not yet taken effect as of this chapter's publication and may face ballot initiatives to overturn them in November (National Conference of State Legislatures [NCSL], 2012). In California, a federal appeals court found that state's restriction on same-sex marriage was invalid, but has postponed enforcement pending appeal (NCSL). Voters struck down the legal marriage of same-sex

couples in Maine. In the six states and the District currently recognizing gay marriage, the laws took effect after legislation or court order (NCSL).

Many states (including California, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington) now provide the equivalent of state-level spousal rights to same-sex couples (e.g., domestic partnerships; NCSL, 2012). Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, New Jersey, and Rhode Island allow civil unions for same-sex couples, and both New York and the District recognize out-of-state marriages of gay partners (Human Rights Campaign, 2009). While some are encouraged by the state-level rights granted same-sex couples, Oswald and Kuvalanka (2008) remind us that even if same-sex couples are granted state-level marriage rights, under DOMA, they are not protected by federal laws and not eligible for federal benefits. The U.S. Government Accountability Office (2004) identified 1,138 federal statutory provisions within the U.S. Code where marital status is a factor in determining benefits, rights, and privileges (e.g., death benefits, filing joint tax returns, hospital visitation). It is anticipated that further change is likely as federal and state governments, courts, and voters debate the issues and attitudes change. While a majority of Americans polled in 2009 opposed full marriage rights for same-sex couples, those margins appear to be narrowing (Vestal, 2009). Indeed, in 2012 President Obama and Vice President Biden came out in favor of gay marriage, signaling that an ideological shift may be occurring nationwide.

Critique of the Heterosexual Marriage Movement Through an Ecological Lens

As we discuss, the institution of marriage has seen multiple shifts throughout history—shifts that were sanctioned by laws, or what Trzcinski (1995) calls “human-derived rules.” Marriage rules, such as the Doctrine of Coverture, historically had the intentional goal of promoting male domination and control within a patriarchal society. This marriage model left women particularly vulnerable, especially if they existed outside the institution of marriage. However, as modern marriages emerged in the twentieth century, we saw new laws or rules which intentionally promoted

the independent legal identities of both men and women within marriage and society (e.g., Equal Pay Act, no-fault divorce, abortion laws). This modern marriage model allowed women to exercise their free will to adapt to their circumstances and location within society as independent entities. Women no longer had to tolerate abusive husbands, or husbands seeking to thwart their career and family goals, and they could now exit their marriages to pursue more satisfactory lives (Carbone, 1994).

However, women’s increased and sustained labor force participation coupled with increased rates of divorce and social acceptance of cohabitation, single-parenting, and children born out of wedlock had a destabilizing effect on the institution of marriage (Cherlin, 2004). During the 1980s and 1990s, we saw a growing “feminization of poverty” particularly among single women with children and disproportionately among women of color (Starrels, Bould, & Nicholas, 1994). From an ecological perspective, even though the laws and policies at the time intended to promote gender equity, the realities of the labor market and home life rendered women unequal to men in pay and child care responsibilities (Carbone, 1994; Starrels et al., 1994). It is at this moment historically that policymakers had a choice to make. Like our European counterparts, policymakers could have opted to address the gender (and race and class) inequalities systemically institutionalized and perpetuated in both private and public spheres by implementing child allowances, child care subsidies, paid maternity leave, and use-or-lose paternity leave policies, among others (Cahill, 2005; Gornick & Meyers, 2003). However, U.S. policymakers opted instead to focus their efforts on re-stabilizing the institution of marriage by promoting marriage, especially among the most vulnerable. The intended consequences of these efforts were to reduce divorce rates, single-parenting, and poverty. However, the unintended consequences of diverting funds away from established anti-poverty programs to promote marriage have been persistent poverty rates, especially among women and children, with little evidence, to date, that marriage promotion efforts work at all to stabilize relationships

(Administration for Children and Families, 2005; Pate, 2010).

Moreover, critics of marriage promotion policies question which marriage model is being promoted—a partnership model based on gender equality or a heterosexual, traditional nuclear model (Cahill, 2005; Hardisty, 2008; Heath, 2009; Mink, 2003; Polikoff, 2008). Coupling marriage promotion with paternity establishment, responsible fatherhood initiatives, and child support enforcement paints a complicated picture. On the one hand, proponents argue that these policies are supported by empirical evidence linking heterosexual marriage to positive child outcomes and are thus in the best interests of children (Blankenhorn, 2007; Waite & Gallagher, 2000; Whitehead, 1993). However, others argue that these policies are a step backwards—perhaps even a backlash against gender equality—because they favor a traditional nuclear marriage model where men are the breadwinners and women the caregivers of their children and dependent upon men for their economic well-being (Ferree, 2004; Heath, 2009; Polikoff, 2008).

Critics of marriage promotion also question the assumptions underlying the policy initiatives, especially the assumption that a heterosexual, two-parent marriage is best for children (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010; Coltrane, 2001). Critics have argued that correlational data linking child outcomes to family structure variables were interpreted as if cause and effect relationships were established—in other words, that single-parent-hood “caused” poverty or that marriage “caused” the acquisition of wealth (Hardisty, 2008). Moreover, policymakers assumed that the reasons poor single mothers were not entering the institution of marriage were based on father absence, cultural deviance, immorality or loose sexual values (Edin & Reed, 2005). However, some researchers questioned policymakers’ assumptions that single mothers are not attached to a male (or female) partner. For example, Letiecq (2010) and others (Bzostek, Carlson, & McLanahan, 2007; King, 2006) have reported the existence of “social fathers” in many low-income families, where men take up the family and child care responsibilities when biological fathers are

not present or unavailable. Edin and Reed also found in their study of low-income women with children that these women truly valued marriage; however, their economic insecurity, coupled with their male partners’ economic challenges, were obstacles to entering the institution. Marriage promotion efforts do little to address the structural and systematic barriers to economic self-sufficiency experienced by low-income families, who are disproportionately families of color (Pate, 2010; Trzcinski, 1995). Nor do these policies address the institutionalized sexism, racism, and classism that persist to delegitimize the status of and disenfranchise low-income families of color (Heath, 2009).

Over the past decade, the same logic used to promote marriage among the poor and communities of color was also applied to deny marriage rights among same-sex couples. As we note, arguments against same-sex marriage do not deal with civil rights or liberties guaranteed by the Constitution. DOMA supporters base their arguments on their faith and their values (Croghan & Letiecq, 2009), and offer little empirical evidence to support claims that legitimizing gay couples will destroy the institution of marriage or that same-sex parents will harm their children (Crowl, Ahn, & Baker, 2008; Meezan & Rauch, 2005; Polikoff, 2008). Indeed, results from Crowl et al.’s study suggest that children raised by same-sex parents fare equally well to children raised by heterosexual parents. As Biblarz and Stacey (2010) note, “At this point no research supports the widely held conviction that the gender of parents matters for child well-being...We predict that even ‘ideal’ research designs will find instead that ideal parenting comes in many different genres and genders” (p. 17). Thus, we argue here (as does Ferree, 2004, and Polikoff, 2008) that legalizing same-sex marriage is a logical next step in the era of partnership marriage, where couples choose the roles they will perform in marriage and family life regardless of their gender. Consistent with an ecological perspective, this model values self-determinism and family diversity and supports broader social goals of gender equality and justice for all.

Case Study 3: U.S. Health Care for the Privileged, But Not for All

The U.S. spends more per capita on health care and as a percentage of GDP (projected to rise to around 20% by 2015) than any other developed nation, but our life expectancy and infant mortality rates (among other outcomes) remain among the poorest of those comparison countries (McLaughlin & McLaughlin, 2008). In 2000, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) published *Healthy People 2010*, with goals of increasing the healthy lifespan, reducing health disparities, and achieving access to preventive services for all Americans. However, to date, we continue to fall short of meeting those goals. African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, and Asian/Pacific Islanders, who represent 25% of the U.S. population, continue to experience striking health disparities, including shorter life expectancy and higher rates of diabetes, cancer, heart disease, stroke, substance abuse, infant mortality and low birth weight than whites (Williams & Dilworth-Anderson, 2006; Zsembik, 2006). These poor health outcomes also have social class and gender determinants (McLaughlin & McLaughlin, 2008). To understand how we have missed the mark so profoundly in health care today, we first review briefly the history of U.S. health care.

A Brief History of the American Health Care System

Today's U.S. health care system grew out of a variety of policy initiatives introduced and passed over the past 100 years. A major shift in U.S. health care occurred during the Great Depression in 1929, when health insurance systems emerged to stabilize the cash flows of providers (McLaughlin & McLaughlin, 2008). Health insurance systems grew during World War II, and a series of reforms followed, including the Hill-Burton Act of 1946, which expanded hospital facilities. As noted by McLaughlin and McLaughlin, the political "give and take" in the development of health care policy over the decades has left us with an incredibly complex system of "federally-financed programs, each of

which has its own often-changing sets of regulations" (p. 39). For this chapter, we have identified several health policy initiatives particularly relevant to families (including Medicare and Medicaid) to illustrate where we have come from, where we are now, and where health care reforms, recently passed under the Obama Administration, are taking us. The selected policies cover both ends of the age spectrum and focus on three emerging at-risk groups: immigrants and their children, the mentally ill, and those with traumatic brain injury (TBI).

Medicare and Long-Term Care

The history of our health care system reflects a focus on individual health rather than the health of family systems or communities. An early example of an individual focus on health care was Medicare, a health policy initiative established under the Johnson Administration with the passage of the Social Security Amendments of 1965 (Ford, 1989; Kerschner & Hirschfield, 1975). Medicare, which mirrored the structure of health insurance in the private sector, was designed to benefit the well-being of the elderly, yet lacked adequate coverage for prevention and long-term care. With 59% the elderly in the U.S. needing long-term care (e.g., assistance with daily living skills; Scanlon, 1991), and 75% of these people receiving this care from family, the burden on families has been extensive. Not surprisingly, family stress arising from long-term caregiving is evident. For example, depression and other mental health symptoms are higher among those caring for the elderly than for the general population (Shields, 1992). In addition, families must respond when long-term care services, such as respite care or home health care assistance, are inaccessible, either because no services exist in the community or because of exorbitant cost.

The legislative framework for policies on elders' long-term care has predominately been based on a crisis approach. Today, long-term care is funded by multiple federal programs, including Medicare and Medicaid, that provide cash, in-kind transfers such as housing and transportation, and/or goods and services (O'Shaughnessy, Price,

& Griffiths, 1987). Family continues to be the mainstay behind policies on elder long-term care. Thus, if one is not privileged with family who can obtain or provide necessary services, disparities may result in elder and family well-being.

One provision of Obama's health care reform under The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) is the Community Living Assistance Services and Supports (CLASS) Act. This Act, originally introduced by the late Senator Ted Kennedy, establishes a national voluntary long-term care payroll deduction insurance program for employed individuals. Workers pay premiums, and when eligible, receive benefits averaging \$50 a day to purchase home and community long-term care assistance (Wiener, Hanley, Clark, & Van Nostrand, 1990). This program allows all workers to become vested after 5 years, regardless of pre-existing conditions. The Act attempts to make long-term care financially accessible to more individuals by having automatic enrollment for workers 18 and older, although employees and employers can choose not to participate. Both low-income individuals and full-time students who are working can pay a monthly premium of only \$5 to be in the program. However, from an equity perspective, the provision does not provide for non-working spouses or other non-working individuals. As with the majority of U.S. health care policies, the CLASS Act is tied to an employment-based health-care system that is exclusionary and discounts coverage for those who are unemployed (McLaughlin & McLaughlin, 2008).

Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program

In addition to policies focused on the elderly, legislation has also attempted to address the health needs of low-income children. The Medicaid program instigated in 1965 (Title XIX of the Social Security Act) was enacted to provide health care for poor children. Families with children whose incomes fall below the federal poverty line, which by 2009 was a little over \$22,000 for a family of four (Federal Register, 2009), were eligible for this assistance. This was a joint federal-state program, predominantly funded by the federal government and implemented by the states.

By the late 1990s, policymakers recognized that millions of low-income children remained uncovered under Medicaid. Thus, in 1997 the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), now known as CHIP (Children's Health Insurance Program), was created. This program was to build on Medicaid by providing federal matching funds to states to provide health insurance coverage for children whose families are not Medicaid eligible and cannot afford insurance (Kenney & Cook, 2007). In the first 6 years of the program, about 3.9 million low-income children were enrolled to receive CHIP (Selden, Hudson, & Banthin, 2004), but the recent economic downturn has produced an enrollment flattening. As a result, the percentage of uninsured low-income children dropped from 22.3 to 14.9%, and despite the initial gains, about nine million children under age 19 remained uninsured (Seldin et al.) On the positive, the insured children received more preventive care and also had fewer asthma-related attacks with significant quality of care improvements (Lambrew, 2007). In addition, their parents reported better access to care and increased communication with providers. Although the health coverage originally was designated for children, a few states have opted to also provide health care for parents, recognizing the potential for greater health equity across family members. However, family care coverage remains sparse under the program and, as monies have become more restricted, parental coverage has not been expanded and in some cases, has disappeared altogether (Artiga & Mann, 2007).

Under health care reform, funding for CHIP has been extended through 2015 and the program has been authorized through 2019, meaning that states will not be able to cut children from the program for most of the next decade. Additionally, legislation prohibits exclusion of coverage from children with pre-existing health conditions, and newly covered benefits include wellness preventive health services such as immunizations for infants, children, and adolescents (Ernst, 2010). Other expanded coverage options are included for children under 24 who were in foster care when they turned 18, and legal child aliens (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2010).

Immigrants and Health Care Access

Children of immigrants comprise a large share of the young child population—in fact, they are the fastest growing component of this population and are at significant risk for health disparities (Hernandez, 1999). Yet, immigrant children still are not adequately covered under CHIP. Because documented and undocumented immigrant parents may be fearful of using health-based services, the children of these immigrants also use public benefits less often (Fix & Zimmerman, 1999). Lower benefit usage for noncitizen children is due to ineligibility for such programs as food stamps or Medicaid. Noncitizen children who are undocumented are ineligible for all benefits except emergency Medicaid (Rodriguez, Hagan, & Capps, 2004).

Immigrant children are more likely to have fair or poor health and to lack health insurance or any usual source of health care than native born children. Children of immigrants are twice as likely to be uninsured despite an increase in coverage through Medicaid between 1999 and 2002 (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2003) and their health is reported to be fair or poor at twice the rate of children of natives (Ku & Blaney, 2000). In 2005, more than 3.2 million Latino children had no access to health coverage (Huang, Yu, & Ledsy, 2006), facing obstacles to accessing both Medicaid and CHIP (Ku, 2007). Federal laws restrict most noncitizens, including children, arriving in the U.S. after 1996 from accessing health programs for the first 5 years they reside here. These deterrents prompted then Senator Hillary Clinton to introduce the “Legal Immigrant Children’s Health Improvement Act of 2007”; however, the legislation did not make it out of committee.

Current immigration policy on children’s health care access is a perfect example of the social injustice of an element of our health care system that determines one’s eligibility or merit for receipt of health care based upon the time-frame within which one entered the country. Few systems of universal health care worldwide determine one’s worthiness of receiving health care assistance utilizing a situated place in time determinant. A positive outcome of health care reform

is the eradication of a time restriction for children’s health care receipt. States can now opt to use federal funds to make Medicaid and CHIP available to otherwise eligible legal immigrant children and all children born in the U.S. even if their parents are undocumented, regardless of their date of entry.

Mental Health Parity

Discussion about health care policy disproportionately focuses on physical health care services and does not attend to mental health care coverage. A debate in the health care arena in recent years has been about mental health care parity, providing the same amount of insurance coverage for mental health benefits as are allowed for medical/surgical benefits. Mental health coverage is important given one-half of the leading causes of disability worldwide are mental disorders and nearly 30% of the U.S. adult population is affected by at least one mental illness during any given year (National Institute of Mental Health, 2009). About 33% of mental illnesses are classified as severe (e.g., schizophrenia, eating disorders, PTSD) and often these illnesses include substance abuse. Severe illnesses tend to be excluded from health benefits because they typically require expensive, long-term treatment (Friedman, n.d.). Mental health coverage becomes a family-centered health policy issue because over 20% of adult Americans provide informal care for a family member with a mental illness (Guarnaccia & Parra, 1996). Further, the mortality rate for some of these disorders such as schizophrenia and eating disorders is much higher than the national average, bringing devastating consequences for many affected families.

Prior to 1996, families did not have equal access to health and mental health care. For medical/surgical benefits there was no annual cap on the amount of coverage that could be provided and there was a \$1 million lifetime benefit cap. In contrast, for mental health benefits, there was a \$5,000 annual cap on the amount of coverage and a \$50,000 lifetime cap on benefits. If one was diagnosed with a severe mental illness, it is possible one could use all their lifetime benefit coverage in 1 year (U.S. Department of Health and

Human Services, 1999). In 1996, the first mental health parity legislation was introduced into Congress and, in 1997, the Mental Health Parity Act of 1996 was signed into law (Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, 1997). Passage of this legislation forced states to revise existing laws or create new parity laws. For the first time, families began to receive assistance with increased inpatient treatment days and more coverage for outpatient treatment and hospitalization. However, employers could choose whether or not to offer mental health benefits, not all mental illnesses were covered, many programs such as Medicare and Medicaid were not required to provide benefits, and great variation remained on the amount, duration, or scope of allowed treatment. Over the ensuing 10 years, Congress introduced revised parity legislation addressing many such shortcomings.

Finally, in 2008, Congress passed the Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act effective January 2010 (Pear, 2008). The Act prohibits employer health plans from imposing caps or limitations on mental health and substance abuse benefits that also are not applied to medical/surgical benefits. For those businesses with 50 or more employees that provide mental health coverage, parity is required. Co-payments, deductibles and number of visits or frequency of treatment limitations can also be no more restrictive on mental health and substance abuse benefits than those imposed on medical and surgical benefits. Under the PPACA reform, mental health benefits are now a mandatory part of basic care and insurance companies are required to provide coverage that is equal to coverage provided for any other medical condition.

Traumatic Brain Injury

Referred to as the “silent epidemic,” TBI is an emergent health care problem (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1999). Although not a newly discovered problem, TBI has gained more visibility as the signature wound of the Iraq war. Advances in body armor and emergency medical care have allowed thousands of U.S. soldiers to survive bomb blasts that have devastated

their brains. It has been estimated that 50% of injured soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan have TBI (Taber, Warren, Hurley, & Hayman, 2006). According to the CDC, every 21 s one person in the U.S. sustains a TBI, and about 5.3 million people currently live with disabilities resulting from a TBI (Langlois, Rutland-Brown, & Thomas, 2004). The cost of TBIs in the U.S. is estimated at \$56.3 billion annually, with many of those expenses not covered by insurance (Langlois et al.).

The impact of TBI on the family is well documented. Individuals suffering from TBI are being discharged from hospital and rehabilitative care quicker and sicker (Connors, 2006) and family members are taking on the brunt of long-term caregiving (Gan, Campbell, Gemeinhardt, & McFadden, 2006). Despite the impacts of TBI on individuals and families, the TBI Act of 1996 is the only legislation passed by Congress specifically to fund TBI initiatives. The Act allocated funds to provide services to those injured and their families and has allowed for more family intervention including respite care, assisted living, medical assistance, and vocational rehabilitation (Kreutzer, Serio, & Bergquist, 1994). Although the reauthorization of the TBI Act of 2008 improves access and coordination of services for survivors and their families, funding for TBI remains scarce.

Several provisions in health care reform also will assist the TBI family. Many with insurance find their expenses are not covered when they experience a TBI, even after they have paid premiums for years. The PPACA legislation bans denial of coverage based on pre-existing conditions. Further under health care reform, patients who reach their lifetime insurance cap after a catastrophic injury or illness will be able to continue treatment in order to regain functionality and have a better chance of returning to work or school. The bill eliminates lifetime insurance limits. These reforms begin to address a consequence of our insurance system that may have marginalized individuals with a TBI and resulted in disparate coverage of their health care needs.

Critique of the Health Care System Through an Ecological Lens

From an ecological perspective, we recognize that there are intended and unintended consequences of U.S. health care policy that have perpetuated health care inequalities and health disparities. However, we also recognize that much of our health is the result of social determinants, such as housing, education, social capital, and the natural and built environment around us (McLaughlin & McLaughlin, 2008). Taken together, social policy decisions have not brought health justice to all, but rather have privileged some groups and disadvantaged others. Indeed, our brief analysis of health care policy over time reveals that individuals and families across the lifespan face myriad challenges in meeting their health care needs, even while the U.S. invests the largest share of GDP in health care of all industrialized nations (McLaughlin & McLaughlin). From inadequate policy attention and funding for preventative care, prescription drugs and long-term care needs of elders to denying care coverage to immigrant children (regardless of their status), our health care system has any number of cracks for individuals and families to fall through. These cracks mean that too many of us will suffer poor health consequences and too many of us will face premature death. And even with greater attention paid to health disparities disproportionately felt by low-income communities and communities of color, the U.S. continues to fail to meet the needs of our most vulnerable members. Indeed, U.S. health care remains a privilege and not a human right.

As family scholars, we acknowledge Wilson's (2006) critique of U.S. health policy analysis, which predominately focuses on individuals and their selective health problems such as presence of diabetes, cholesterol levels, one's body mass index, or presence of other health diseases. Wilson suggests that a focus on family systems and their health related behaviors does not yet exist in the scientific literature when discussing health policy analysis. Health policy texts also often do not attend to families and the ways in which family health influences and is influenced by larger social and economic forces (Longest,

2002; Patel & Rushefsky, 1999). Such lack of attention on the family unit is evident in the major health legislation passed in the last few decades. Thus, we reflect on how our health care system might be different if policymakers shifted their lens from the individual-level to that of the family. What if Healthy People 2010 (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2000) was titled Healthy Families 2010, such that health policies were considered and health goals set within the context of familial and larger social systems?

The National Council on Family Relations was headed in this direction when the organization published, in 1993, *Vision 2010: Families & Health Care*, where they argued "taking the family perspective is essential" and "health care reform must be designed with family considerations" (Price & Elliott, 1993, p. ii). More recently, scholars have begun to advocate for health policies that address five components of family well-being that can be influenced—both directly and indirectly—by policy change (Anderson & Feldman, 1993; Committee on Hospital Care, 2003; Shelton & Stepanek, 1994). These components are family structure, family function, family support, partnership and empowerment, and family diversity. Family structure speaks to who is a family member, while recognizing structure and ensuing family health needs may differ dramatically between families. Family functions focus on the tasks and roles in which families engage to meet the needs of the members. Some of these functions are performed in order to protect vulnerable family members or to promote their physical and mental well-being. Family support emphasizes the notion that the policy strengthens the family but does not undermine a family's responsibilities. A family health partnership respects and trusts families when providing services and empowers families to make informed family health decisions. Finally, family health policy recognizes and addresses the role of family diversity in providing care. All of these family-centered policy elements are consistent with an ecological lens suggesting that health care reform must address barriers to care for all family members.

While the latest round of health care reforms failed to integrate an explicit family focus, we are heartened that many of the reforms will likely better support a family's ability to meet the health care needs of its members. Moreover, during the health care debates, many articulated the basic tenets of an ecological frame (Trzcinski, 1996)—that we are all interconnected, and not only are the most vulnerable uninsured in our health system disadvantaged, but those with health care coverage also are negatively impacted when some among us do not have access to care. Although health care reforms have yet to be implemented nationwide, the reforms hold the potential to equalize some of the health care disadvantages, bring more health power to all, and address some of the extant health disparities and inequalities in the U.S. However, health care reforms that continue to be individually-focused will likely miss the mark in ameliorating our long-standing health care challenges. So too will reforms that do not address the unintended consequences of policies that disparately affect the functioning of families and their ability to care for their members. Guided by an ecological perspective, it is critical that health care policymakers consider a family-centered model of health care, but perhaps more importantly, establish an equitable system benefited by all.

Conclusion

To write a chapter on social policies and families is a daunting task. There are myriad social policies that affect U.S. family life both directly and indirectly (Bogenschneider & Corbett, 2010), including marriage, divorce, reproductive technologies, adoption, foster care, early childhood education, child care, paid leave, child custody, visitation, stepparent rights, domestic violence, housing, unemployment, and, as we noted in our opening paragraphs, a nation's decision to enter war. Which policies are most meaningful and most salient to highlight in a review about American families? Clearly, we could not adequately address all policies affecting families. Thus, we chose to take a different tack: to focus

on a three connected topics—poverty, family formation, and health—and examine policies relevant to these topics through an ecological lens (Trzcinski, 1995).

Using an ecological perspective challenged us in at least three ways. First, we were challenged to consider the historical, cultural and value roots undergirding current and emerging social policies. Our analysis suggests that, when it comes to families, policy decisions are rooted in strongly-held U.S. values of individualism, a Puritan-inspired work ethic based on meritocracy, and a moral code that determines who is and who is not worthy of government assistance and the rights, protections and benefits granted under the law (Kammerman & Kahn, 2001). Throughout history, when confronted with family poverty, for example, policymakers have often responded with individually-based solutions requiring individuals to change their behaviors to accord to the accepted standards of the majority culture rather than addressing the systemic and structural inequalities that exist based on race, social class, and gender, among others (Hays, 2003). Today's welfare system, now aptly referred to as workfare, requires recipients with young children to work for government assistance rather than stay at home as caregivers. While some argue this system teaches poor mothers, disproportionately women of color, the value of hard work and the dignity of self-sufficiency (Neubeck, 2006), others critique the system as punitive, unjust, and falling far short of addressing extant inequalities and lifting women and children out of poverty (Mink, 2003).

Secondly, thinking ecologically challenged us to consider the interconnectedness of individuals and families to other institutions and social systems. The interconnections occur in ways through which these systems disparately exert forces on families, resulting in different levels of opportunity, social capital, cultural capital, luck, access to education, and discrimination (McNamee & Miller, 2009). When policymakers implement family policies (or human-derived rules), it is not surprising that such policies differentially affect families, privileging some while disadvantaging others. Trzcinski (1995) posits that, in order to

adapt and survive, individuals must be free to define and construct their families to meet their needs within diverse environments. From this standpoint, we wonder how future family policies could be shaped. What if policymakers found value in and supported the different family structures that have emerged over time—for example, the “single” mother partnered with a “social father” to raise their collective children outside the institution of marriage?

When policymakers fail to facilitate the positive adaptation of all families, and promote a singular family form as best—in our culture, the heterosexual traditional nuclear model—they effectively marginalize non-conforming families (Trzcinski, 1995). Under marriage promotion and responsible fatherhood initiatives, there is little to no support or funding for alternative families who wish to form and structure their families in unique ways to best meet the needs of their members. Indeed, heterosexual couples choosing to create non-marital committed unions with or without children surrender many of their rights for the financial and legal protections and benefits offered through marriage (Polikoff, 2008). Same-sex couples wishing to enter the institution of marriage are likewise denied these rights and protections (in most states and at the federal level) on values-based ideology upholding heterosexual marriage as the only structure worthy of social recognition and privilege (Cahill, 2005). In each case, family diversity in structure and function is trumped by policies and laws that attempt to control family life and rebuke non-conformity (Polikoff).

Lastly, employing Trzcinski’s (1995) ecological perspective on family policy, we were challenged to examine how U.S. policies and laws, that are narrowly defined and exclusive rather than universal or inclusive, have influenced the well-being of all families. Based on emergent cultural values, policymakers determine who deserves to fully participate in social systems, such as our health care system, and who does not. Researchers have found that such policy decisions, in conjunction with other social determinants of health, are linked to persistent health disparities in the U.S. that disproportionately affect low-income communities and communities of color (McLaughlin

& McLaughlin, 2008). While recently passed health care reforms may ameliorate some of these disparities, an ecological frame suggests that our failure to implement universal health care will likely result in a perpetuation of health disparities, where those less privileged will continue to experience shorter, less healthy life spans. As we conclude, it is our hope that our review of social policies and families using an ecological perspective encourages the future development and implementation of laws and policies that value all families. As Polikoff writes (2008), “It remains part of imagining the U.S. as a place of both equality and justice for all” (p. 214).

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Families and Communities: A Social Organization Theory of Action and Change

32

Jay A. Mancini and Gary L. Bowen

Families are embedded in multiple contexts that reflect community structure and process. Though families influence those contexts to some degree, in the main families are the recipients of events, values, and norms that comprise community collective life. Families are rarely isolated, and their boundaries are permeable, whether by the media, neighbors, confidants, or social institutions. Community *social organization* is a comprehensive descriptor of the contexts in which families live. “Social organization is how people in a community interrelate, cooperate, and provide mutual support; it includes social support norms, social controls that regulate behavior and interaction patterns, and networks that operate in a community” (Mancini & Bowen, 2005; Mancini, Bowen, & Martin, 2004; Mancini, Martin, & Bowen, 2003). From a social action and change perspective, social organization supports building community capacity, in effect, shared responsibility and collective competence as primary situations and processes that enable communities to provide desired supports to families (Bowen, Martin, Mancini, & Nelson, 2000; Mancini & Bowen, 2009).

Our focus in this expansive chapter on families and communities locates families as the pivot-point in the discussion, and assembles community structures and processes around them, mirroring what occurs in everyday life. Our discussion seeks to answer several primary questions. First, to what extent have family social scientists included aspects of community structure and process in their analysis of family-related processes and outcomes? Second, in what ways does our work inform efforts to conceptualize ways in which communities influence families? Our aim is to offer a conceptual model as a heuristic for theory development and future research efforts. Although community can be defined from multiple perspectives (Coulton, 1995; Moge, 1964), we focus primarily on community as providing a geographic context in which families function and interrelate.

Our discussion is informed by two sources of data. First, we look back in the family science literature at key discussions of families and communities, and in particular, we retrieve ideas from early theories and discussions about families. We assume that to move the discipline forward toward a more nuanced examination of families and communities, it is instructive to revisit important ideas and approaches from the past. Second, we analyze certain characteristics of the family science discipline through a focus on three pivotal professional journals and their contents from 2000 to 2009: *Journal of Marriage and Family* (JMF), *Family Relations* (FR), and the *Journal of Family Issues* (JFI). As explained in detail later,

J.A. Mancini, PhD (✉)
Department of Human Development and Family Science,
University of Georgia, Dawson Hall,
Athens, GA 30602, USA
e-mail: mancini@uga.edu

G.L. Bowen, PhD
School of Social Work, The University of North Carolina
at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC 27599, USA
e-mail: glbowen@email.unc.edu

we chart the use of theory and the dominant research approaches used in qualitative and quantitative investigations. Along the way we critique theory and method, and ultimately suggest a roadmap for understanding the relationships between families and their communities.

Summary Reviews and Theoretical Volumes in Family Studies

The family science discipline has benefitted from major works designed to efficiently capture the nature of scientific thinking and study of family structure, systems, and dynamics. In this current chapter we are treating these works as data that speak to how the discipline has examined families and communities, and as complementary to our later review of major family science journals for the period of 2000–2009. They include three earlier handbooks on marriages and families (Christensen, 1964; Sussman & Steinmetz, 1987; Sussman, Steinmetz, & Peterson, 1999), five comprehensive books on family theories and methods (Bengtson, Acock, Allen, Dilworth-Anderson, & Klein, 2005; Boss, Doherty, LaRossa, Schumm, & Steinmetz, 1993; Burr, Hill, Nye, & Reiss, 1979a, 1979b; Nye & Berardo, 1966), and five decade reviews of the literature as published in *JMF* (decades of the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, as well as 2000–2009). These reference materials constitute reviews broad in nature, rather than having much focus on the details of individual theoretical or research articles. These data provide a sense of how much interest was shown in examining the relationships between families and their communities, as well as what family scientists were examining and what they were discovering.

Handbook of Marriage and the Family

Handbook of Marriage and the Family (1964). Christensen's (1964) handbook was the first major compilation on what was known about families, and gave broad coverage to family science theories, methods, and substantive content

areas. Explicit discussions of community appeared in several chapters, most particularly in Moge's (1964) chapter on family and community in urban-industrial societies. Sirjamaki's (1964) chapter on the institutional theoretical approach invoked the term community, as did Pitts' (1964) discussion of social class and neighborhoods, in the course of outlining the structural-functional theoretical approach. Dager (1964) discussed how systems external to families play into socialization and personality development in the child. However, it is only Moge's chapter that gave full treatment to families and communities, and so the following extraction from this handbook is only from that chapter. As an aside, though we review several other handbooks and sourcebooks, we found no other chapter so focused on families and communities.

Moge's chapter begins with a discussion on family and kin relations (parenthetically, for many years it seems that discussions of networks that surrounded the nuclear family were limited to kin, rather than neighbors and other network components). In part, this reflected the significant influence of the work of Eugene Litwak on the family field in the early 1960s (Litwak, 1960a, 1960b). Moge speaks about social norms and their role in regulating internal family dynamics and decisions, such as that governing marriage and sexual behavior. At that time, over 100 definitions of community were documented and common elements across definitions included culture and social interaction. Of note is the separation of community from society, the former considered a subculture, and consistent with how we view community (that is, community with a lower case "c," and focused on social interaction and neighborhood structures and processes). There was a substantial focus on the structural aspects of community rather than on the interactional (neighborhood relations and friendship cliques). The association that individuals and families had with formal organizations was a greater focus, principally because functions of the family in the society were a primary concern. Moge's discussion often went along anthropological lines, where lineage was discussed in the context of Western and non-Western societies and cultures.

The chapter is rich in comparative culture information and research findings.

Several concepts are presented in the chapter to facilitate capturing the essence and character of a community. *Closed community* describes collections of families centered on common beliefs and traditions, homogeneous in culture values, and said to be closed against nonmembers. Members of an *open community* have a much broader range of associations and attachments to other groups of people. Research in that day indicated that when comparing closed and open communities, the former had a greater impact on childhood socialization, parental roles, and marital roles.

Three hypotheses were suggested to explain what Mogeley called neighboring relations among families. The *phase hypothesis* states there is considerable initial interaction between newly settled families but that interaction declines as families learn more about their neighbors' values and practices. The *status hypothesis* is especially centered on United Kingdom working class families, using the terms "respectables" and "roughs," the former seemingly desiring to keep distance between them and their neighbors and focusing their attention within the family, and the latter developing more expansive and intense relationships with other families; when asked to identify a friend, respectables chose each other, whereas roughs chose a neighbor as a friend. The *siteing hypothesis* involves propinquity as an explanation for how neighbors interact, particularly in homogeneous communities. Community and neighborhood cohesion is also addressed, with research indicating that satisfaction with housing and community is largely influenced by having a sense of cohesion with neighbors. Neighbors are identified as alternative kin, being available for practical support. The strain of being close to neighbors but not too close is also discussed. It is pointed out that the similarities and differences between neighbor, kindred, and friend roles were not then adequately explored by researchers. Some attention is given to the idea of neighborhood and its meaning; it being a "place" and a social system where neighboring occurs. When discussing families and mobility, Mogeley notes

that "since family mobility is an essential consequence of the social structure of industrial societies, the sociology of neighbor relations offers virtually untrodden ground for the testing of propositions about family roles, behavior, and belief" (p. 522).

Toward the end of this chapter, Mogeley presents a community typology. The first dimension was called closed or open (somewhat synonymous with isolated or non-isolated, and corporate or noncorporate). The second was homogeneous or heterogeneous regarding values, and the third element was social structure, either based on hierarchy of statuses or on collective action. Much of the discussion in that day about families seemed to be about comparing extended families vs. nuclear families. When discussing family well-being, Mogeley concluded unstable families were more likely to be where community structures, other than family and peer groups, are absent. In many respects, Mogeley's handbook chapter parallels contemporary research and theorizing, which is often focused on either community structures or processes, and seeking to demonstrate effects on families. Though he did not use the term social organization, a great deal of his discussion was consonant with that umbrella for describing the multiple layers that comprise collective life.

Handbook of Marriage and the Family (1987). The first edition of the current *Handbook of Marriage and the Family* series contained a greater number of chapters in which either community or neighborhood was explicitly discussed. However, unlike the 1964 handbook no chapter was dedicated to linking families and communities, although invoking the term *community* appeared in various forms. For example, Withers-Osmond (1987), in her chapter on radical-critical theories as applied to families, stated "if survey methods were designed to provide data not only on individuals but also on their family and community contexts, the data could be linked with macrosociological information (on organizations, classes, ethnic groups and societies) in an effort to understand the reciprocal influences between behavior in families and behavior in the larger

contexts" (p. 121). Settles (1987), in discussing the future of families, stated that, "Shaping life around an industry (such as high tech), an enterprise (like farming), or a service (like government or education) gives a common meaning and destiny to the families in a community" (p. 170), and Wilkinson (1987), as part of a larger focus on ethnicity and families, discussed micro-communities of immigrants that inhabit blocks within communities. Boss (1987) presents a contextual model of family stress, which includes forces external to families, such as historical (when the event takes place), economic (state of the overall economy), developmental (stage of the life cycle of the family), constitutional (health of family members), religious (role of God in family), and cultural (provides the mores and canons by which families define events of stress and their coping resources). She notes the larger culture provides the rules by which families operate on a microlevel. Peterson and Rollins (1987) discuss the multidimensional nature of socialization, noting it occurs through indirect as well as face-to-face relationships (therefore including what occurs in neighborhoods). Gongla and Thompson (1987) discuss single-parent families, noting that the community redefines its response to a family when it becomes a single-parent family, including the changes in informal networks of friends and even with relatives. These authors question whether there are cultural norms that would reduce this ambiguity and help to determine the nature of relationships after a person becomes a single parent. Little research information at that time addressed how informal networks affect the single-parent family.

Settles (1987, p. 175) presented a very interesting and in-depth discussion of linkages between families and society (social institutions) within the context of change. She offered four mechanisms of change: brokerage, participation, isolation and/or privacy, and incentives and disincentives. As an example pertaining to *brokerage*, she said, "Family representatives may form interest groups to deal with institutions, e.g., PTA, Parents without Partners, Parents Anonymous."

"Institutions may attempt to bring families or individuals together as populations to be handled as groups, e.g., community organizations." As an example pertaining to *participation*, "Individuals from the family may become involved in other institutions, e.g., go to school or out to work." "Institutions may become involved with family, e.g., family therapy, parent support groups." Throughout her discussion and examples, formal organization relationships with families are the focus, rather than extra-family informal network relationships.

Handbook of Marriage and the Family (1999). Sussman et al. (1999) organized the second edition of the handbook series, a comprehensive book elucidating theories and substantive areas of family research. In this book no particular focus is included on families and communities, and fewer chapter authors, compared to those in the 1987 handbook, discussed family-community connections. Settles (1999), in her chapter on the future of families, states a community is "defined as an interactive process, and whether or not a locality is considered a community may vary as different actors see it" (p. 148). Miller and Knudson (1999), in their discussion of family abuse and violence, stated this premise: "Cultural and societal norms define, legitimate or invalidate, and encourage or punish the many forms of control, including the use of force, that family members use in their social relationships and interactions" (p. 712). Peterson and Hann (1999) are more intentional about exploring relationships between families and communities, as they discuss extra-familial elements that affect socialization. Provided is an extensive example of social contexts that surround parenting, and parent-child relationships. They include neighbors and friends as part of these immediate social networks, using the example of information that parents receive from neighbors and friends that helps them in their parenting roles and responsibilities. Other social contexts these authors discuss include the workplace, school, peer groups, churches, and neighborhoods.

Theoretical Volumes in Family Studies

Emerging Conceptual Frameworks in Family Analysis (1966). Nye and Berardo's (1966) book was the first comprehensive volume focused solely on theoretical frameworks. Eleven frameworks were delineated in this volume that addressed some aspect of family structure and dynamics. None were explicitly centered on families and communities, though throughout this volume reference was made to related aspects, including social networks, social systems, social organization, and so on. We selectively extract material from the chapters on anthropological (Berardo), structural-functional (McIntyre), institutional (Koenig & Bayer), and situational (Rallings) theoretical approaches.

Berardo (1966) offers a vast discussion of concepts employed from an anthropological perspective. Of note is a primary definition of community, which includes recognition that it pertains to group (collective) life, and emphasizes "living together" in space and time. The idea of a collective sharing of activities and being connected by multiple relationships is also present, as is a very important function of community life, that is, how participation in collective life furthers individual achievement and success, which closely resembles current discussions of social capital (Bowen, Martin, et al., 2000).

McIntyre's (1966) discussion of the structural-functional framework also has implications for understanding families and communities (though we acknowledge the problem this framework had with explaining pivotal aspects of family life, such as role differentiation, and with family diversities). According to this approach, "To the community the nuclear family gives adherence and group participation and from it receives support and identity" (McIntyre, p. 68). An important underlying aspect of this framework was the interchange between the family as an institution, and primary societal systems such as the economy and the community. Another primary idea is that the functional interchanges between the family and societal subsystems would balance out in the long run, and that change occurs when there is an imbalance.

In McIntyre's (1966) analysis, important networks were mainly defined as kin networks. In simpler societies, families were seen as more responsible for societal functions but in complex societies families are more specialized and therefore less responsible for these other functions. A function more relevant for exploring families and communities was termed *integration*, and pertains to blending parts and activities of a system. This is said to be accomplished by creating and maintaining patterns of accepted behavior and employing social controls to lead people toward conformity. This functional subsystem is termed "community" (networks of diffuse affective relationships, see p. 68). While we do not intend to revive the structure-functional approach to families, its intentionality about how families are affected by external systems is applicable for understanding families and communities.

The institutional and situational approaches were not the theories of choice even in that day (the 1960s), though each has a bearing on understanding families and communities. Koenig and Bayer (1966) suggested the institutional approach was one of the earliest family studies frameworks. It, too, had a strong comparative/cross-cultural element. This framework is rich in locating families in an historical perspective. Mainly families were viewed in terms of their reproductive and socialization functions, and this framework was often concerned with whether the family was losing its essential functions. The lesson from this framework is found in its examples of capturing historical events and trends in order to understand contemporary family experiences. A value attributed to the institutional approach is that society and social institutions are of greater importance than the individual (therefore valuing family stability over happiness of the individual).

As the name implies, the situational approach examined situations in which individuals find themselves, and that lead to overt behavior. According to our friend and mentor Bud Rallings (1966, p. 132), "A social situation is made up of stimuli which are external to the organism, which have a special relatedness to each other, and which operate as a unit." Note that very often this approach went no further than family situations

which impacted individual behavior, rather than broader situations that impacted families as a group. However, scholars began to expand the framework to account for more collective influences on individual behavior, if not on family behavior (for example, Rallings notes that W. I. Thomas maintained that situational studies should be discovering how relationships with others affect individual behavior). A basic assumption of the situational approach was that “each social situation is the result of the interaction of social, physical, and cultural elements” (Rallings, 1966, p. 140). At best, these early theoretical references to community represented mere footings from which to build a more intentional discussion of the interface of families and communities.

Contemporary Theories About the Family, Volumes 1 and 2 (1979). Burr et al. (1979a, 1979b) embarked on an ambitious analysis of family theories, with volume 1 focused on research-based theories, and volume 2 on general theories and theoretical orientations. Lee’s (1979) chapter in volume 1 on effects of social networks on the family contains the preponderance of information related to families and communities, though much of what is included in that chapter is focused on kin networks rather than broader networks. Lewis and Spanier (1979) discuss marital relations in a community context but otherwise this volume does not elevate the relationships between families and communities.

Our colleague, Lee (1979) points out a number of propositions supported by the literature on social networks. Within several models that Lee presents, the following network concepts are cited: strength of network ties, integration into monosex networks, participation in voluntary associations, participation in kin and friend networks, interaction with friends, connectedness of friendship network, and service assistance from neighbors. Socioeconomic status appears in all the models, reflecting its prominence in research on social networks, whether the criterion variable is conjugal power, marital solidarity, migration, or assistance from kin and neighbors. Lee has a substantial discussion grounded in the work of

Bott (1957), that examines strength and intensity of connectedness and effects on marriage; these data on marital relations suggest how values in the larger social system, as reflected in closer associations, have some play. Lee suggests further work be done on how monosex groups influence marital roles, including values that approve of sex role segregation, and moreover how this varies according to socioeconomic status. Lee’s comprehensive chapter includes these research findings that also reflect the relationships between families and communities: how couples make decisions is related to participation in extra-family networks and associations; in lower socioeconomic status groups primary participation is the informal neighborhood and friendships, where in middle socioeconomic status groups a primary avenue for time spent outside of the family is the voluntary association. Lee also reports that marital solidarity is enhanced when the social networks of spouses are conjunctive or overlapping (the homogeneity of networks), and that friends and neighbors are especially important for short-term problems families may face but less so for long-term problems.

In Lewis and Spanier’s (1979) chapter on the stability and quality of marriage, the relationship between social and economic characteristics, marital quality, and community embeddedness is explored. From their perspective, the research literature suggests that marital quality is higher the more that friends (and relatives) approve of the marriage, the larger the network of a couple’s friends, the more that a couple participates in the community, and the less dense the residential population. Their general proposition is that the more a couple is embedded in a community, the higher the marital quality. These authors also offer a caveat, noting that strong networks external to the couple relationship can also undermine the relationship.

The second volume of Burr et al. (1979b) applies five conceptual frameworks to family life: exchange, symbolic interaction, general systems, conflict, and phenomenology. Community and neighborhood are not terms explicitly used in these theory discussions, though social network is prominent in the discussion of symbolic

interaction (Burr, Leigh, Day, & Constantine, 1979). They base their discussion on Lee's review of the social network research in volume 1, and contend that the study of external social networks and families has less relevance to symbolic interaction (as compared to other theories) but then proceed to provide examples where the framework does have some importance. For example, they note that how situations are defined can serve as an important intervening variable between family outcomes and external network phenomena. These authors also delineate assumptions of symbolic interaction, one of which is that "society precedes individuals" (p. 48). From this perspective society and culture are rich in meaning and values, and into this milieu all of us are born. They further state that a dynamic social context influences individual learning, and consequently how learners respond is partly due to what they encounter in the social milieu.

Nye (1979) presents choice and exchange theory, and uses the term social life when describing how individuals are located in their surroundings. Among the assumptions he attributes to choice and exchange theory are that social life requires reciprocity, and that "Humans are capable of conceptualizing a generalized reciprocity between themselves and society and its social institutions. Without investments in social organization, social life with its rewards would cease" (p. 7). There are many touch-points between choice and exchange theory, and more contemporary presentations of social capital (Putnam, 2000). Nye does speak to exchange at a societal level, invoking the term norm. Generally, however, his discussion does not explicitly involve immediate contexts that include neighborhoods and communities, and their social organization. The discussion is directed more at a broad, societal level (Big "C"). Nye also applies choice and exchange principles to Lee's (1979) chapter on social networks, in particular to family recreation and the costs a couple may encounter by being part of external networks.

In Broderick and Smith's (1979) chapter on general systems theory, the term social organization is used (a primary term in our own conceptualization of understanding families and

communities) but these authors do not provide detailed descriptors of it and which of its elements affects families. This is surprising given that systems theory provides ready concepts for conceptualizing a dynamic interface between families and the broader context in which they are embedded. By inference the reader can see where systems and social organization touch, for example, with regard to family boundaries; a perfect lead toward discussions of how community forces impact families.

These theory chapters can accommodate discussions of families in the contexts of communities; however, like Nye and Berardo's (1966) earlier volume, an intentional extension in that direction is mainly absent. In a sense this is not surprising because general theories are just that, however, most use "instances" to inform the theorizing. Those instances have not typically included the intersection of families and communities, or how collective entities may influence family processes and dynamics. What we have done in this section is to interject along the way several logical connections between general theorizing and the families/communities interface.

Sourcebooks

Sourcebook of Family Theories and Methods: A Contextual Approach (1993). Although this 1993 publication by Boss et al. does not include community or neighborhood in its index, some of the chapter contributions included in it enlighten our understanding of the multiple levels of relationships between families and communities. Note that the term contextual in this volume mainly pertains to researchers and theorists recognizing the contexts in which they are doing their work, rather than families and community contexts (though a few authors do explicitly discuss those relationships).

Schvaneveldt, Pickett, and Young (1993), when discussing historical methods in family research, offer that, "one of the most productive sources of contemporary work in family history has been the so-called community study." They are referring to studies of nineteenth century

families in the contexts in which they lived and worked. Bretherton's (1993) discussion of developmental psychology theory invokes ecological theory of human development to discuss research on attachment, and cites several studies that account for contexts outside of the family, such as social support and social networks. McAdoo (1993), in a chapter focused on social cultural contexts of ecological developmental family models, speaks to the importance of considering the mesosystem—the concept that captures what occurs when families interact with other important societal systems, such as schools and communities. Whitchurch and Constantine's (1993) chapter on systems theory, discusses the suprasystem, that is, how family systems interact with other systems, such as community; this is especially important from their perspective for understanding changes in families. Bengtson and Allen (1993) presented a comprehensive exploration of a life course perspective, and state that the life course approach accounts for social context or social ecology as essential for understanding individual lives and development. The life course perspective accounts for context but less so at the small "c" community level, but rather seems to look more at large societal waves that influence all families in some way (e.g., historical and economic shifts). The contexts Bengtson and Allen discuss really seem more individual, such as gender and socioeconomic status, though by extrapolation we can see where research from this perspective can account for community structure and processes because it places a premium on "history," and also accounts for process over time.

In this same volume Bubolz and Sontag (1993) discuss human ecology theory that focuses on how individuals interact with their environments. Human ecology theory recognizes the significance of interdependence that families have with the environment, defined broadly. From this approach, the quality of human life and quality of the environment are interdependent. One assumption is that families are semi-open, goal directed, dynamic, and adaptive systems. Environments are said to pose limitations and constraints, as well as possibilities and opportunities for families. Included in

the social-cultural environment are other human beings, such as neighbors, semiformal groups that neighbors might form, norms and cultural values and patterns, and social institutions.

Sourcebook of Family Theory and Research (2005). The most recent sourcebook (Bengtson et al., 2005) also gives limited attention to intentionally exploring relationships between families and communities. A methods chapter by Sayer and Klute (2005) focused on analyzing couple data, our own brief discussion of families in community contexts that accompanies that chapter, (Mancini, Bowen, & Martin, 2005) and a brief discussion of the Sayer and Klute chapter by White and Teachman (2005) provide the most intentionality. White and Teachman (2005) discuss the role of multilevel methods in family research noting that micro- and macrolevel variables are often not independent (for example, individual socioeconomic status determines where a person lives or can live). They also raise the important issue of how we define a neighborhood. For example, we might use census data to define a neighborhood but our definition may not be one to which people actually think about or respond to or that has any conceptual meaning, such as census tract boundaries. They note two companion fallacies in conducting research, the individualistic fallacy, in which observations of individuals are generalized to the group level, and the ecological fallacy, in which observations at a group level are generalized to individuals. White and Teachman ask, "Do communities think and form opinions?" They conclude by calling for better multilevel theory—theories that account for variations in individual outcomes by calling attention to variables at the individual level and to larger group-level processes, including those at the collective family and community levels.

Chatters and Taylor's (2005) chapter on religion and families discussed the role of social networks, and provide their view of networks as they relate to religion. Social networks are the collections of relationships that surround people and seem to matter with regard to their size, whether they are diverse or not, their proximity to an

individual or a family, and what they provide and require. The chapter on stepfamilies by Crosbie-Burnett et al. (2005) is focused on extrusion, which pertains to a person being pushed from their household earlier than what is considered typical. What is relevant to our review is their discussion of adolescent extrusion from the family and community responses. In this discussion they identify these community elements: community center, mental health professionals, peer culture, citizens, police, and extended family.

Our discussion on families in community contexts (Mancini, Bowen, & Martin, 2005) uses *social organization* as the pivotal concept for understanding family transactions with its surroundings. We also discuss an important related concept, community capacity (shared responsibility and collective competence) as a key process in promoting positive change in communities. We outline a research agenda that relates family structures and processes with community structures and processes.

Decade Reviews of the Journal of Marriage and Family

As a supplement to our review of family studies handbooks and sourcebooks, we also reviewed the *Journal of Marriage and the Family* decade reviews; these reviews focus on the decades of the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, and the most recent review of the period 2000–2009. Across the reviews only one article had an intentional focus on families and communities (Burton & Jarrett, 2000). Other reviews may have had some material pointing toward relationships between families and communities but the focus was so slight it did not warrant inclusion. More surprising in the context of the increasing attention in the behavioral and social sciences to community context, articles in the most recent decade review generally neglect the connections between families and communities, although the topic areas clearly lend themselves to such a review focus (e.g., critical race, poverty, immigrant families, war and terrorism, marriage, socioeconomic

status, and biosocial influences on families). However, in no instance did articles in the more recent decade review address the range of community contexts and processes that have a bearing on various family situations, dynamics, and processes. Although the absence in these articles of such a focus on community context and process may reflect the state of literature in these topic areas (these were review articles), it is more likely that the focus on families in the context of communities did not make priority in the chapter outline. In honesty, we just don't know the answer to this question but we do find it worthy of further consideration.

The exceptional article by Burton and Jarrett is instructive for how family researchers could intentionally account for community influences, mediators, and moderators. Burton and Jarrett (2000) reviewed the literature between 1990 and 1999 with regard to linkages between neighborhoods, families, and outcomes for children and youth. Much of their focus was on the place of families and how neighborhoods affected children and youth, thereby placing families as mediating or moderating those effects. They include quantitative and qualitative studies in building their review. Their work is especially instructive because their critique encompasses issues of theorizing and of research designs. Of particular note is their conclusion, at least for that decade of research, that family-related variables often were vaguely specified and researched. They note the preponderance of studies using family structure and socioeconomic indicators, to the exclusion of more nuanced indicators of family processes (an argument aligned with our own discussion of community structure rather than social organizational processes in communities). The significance of the Burton and Jarrett review lies in its attention to marking how theory was accessed in the decade, how research was conducted, and what was learned as a result. Our view is that they gave average marks to all of them, in effect, exposing how that most important of social groups, families, were at the margins of theoretical development and research advances as they involved the multiple contexts that influence families.

A Review of Three Principal Journals in Family Studies

The second component of our data analysis included an identification of peer-reviewed journal articles in family studies addressing aspects of the influence of communities on families. Although the boundaries of the family science field are not fixed, the review included three core family journals which included basic and applied research journals: JMF, FR, and JFI. Two additional journals were considered for inclusion: the *Journal of Family Psychology* (JFP) and *Family Process* (FP). However, in the first stage of review, these journals were found to have fewer articles than the ones selected for review that addressed the community and family interface, especially the *JFP*. This review focused on articles published between 2000 and 2009 and the review sought to identify empirical articles as well as theoretical and conceptual articles that addressed some aspect of the interface between families and communities. Empirical articles were defined as articles that included results based on the manipulation of data (see Taylor & Bagd, 2005), including those using quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methodologies.

We focused our attention on articles addressing community as a single construct or articles in which some aspect of community was used as a primary independent construct in examining variation in family behavior. As discussed by Lee (1979) 30 years ago, the decision to focus on families as the dependent construct does not imply that we do not appreciate that families and family members may also exert an influence on larger social processes at the community level. However, reviews require explicit boundaries, and our interest centered on the effects of communities on families.

As a starting framework for the review, we defined community from a little “c” perspective as the proximal setting in which families live and work, which may be in the form of blocks, neighborhoods, communities, census tracts, zip codes, towns, cities, and counties. However, we attempted to identify all community-related

articles, including those that addressed the nature of the family–community interface in the context of larger, nonlocal, institutional contexts that include federal and state policies—the big “C” perspective (Arum, 2000).

We developed two data extraction forms for purposes of the review: one for review/theoretical articles and the other for quantitative or qualitative empirical articles. The forms included a category to identify the use of an explicit theory or theories to frame and inform the authors’ perspective or approach, the specification of an empirical model for testing, the formulation of research hypotheses or expectations, the identification of relevant concepts for measurement, the method for analyzing data, or to explain results. The forms also included a category to identify the level at which community was discussed or captured: little “c” (e.g., zip code, census tract, block) or big “C.”

For empirical articles, we identified the research design (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods), the source(s) of data, and the approach for measuring community context and/or community process. The analysis included extracting which community-level independent variables, control variables, and dependent family-level variables were used in the quantitative empirical articles. Themes from the qualitative articles were included instead of variables. Articles using a mixed methods approach (qualitative and quantitative) were included and both quantitative and qualitative methods were cataloged (variables and themes).

On the basis of earlier work by Mancini et al. (2005), three measurement approaches were identified for classification purposes of articles incorporating quantitative and mixed methods research designs: *microlevel* (relies on individual reports and perceptions of community characteristics, such as the perceptions of individual residents about neighborhood safety within one or across a number of different census tracts); *compositional* (attempts to account for community effects with aggregate social structural measures of the community’s social, demographic, and institutional infrastructure, such as administrative data on the violent crime rate for a defined

period of time within each census tract for a number of census tracts in a geographic area); and *social organizational* (attempts to assess directly or input macrolevel processes and mechanisms from survey or administrative data at the community level, such as the average perception of individual residents about neighborhood safety within each census tract for a number of census tracts in a geographic area). These classification types are neither exhaustive nor necessarily independent. Compositional approaches may also include microlevel community-related variables. Social organizational measurement models may use a combination of compositional and social organizational (process) macro-variables. Social organizational strategies include contextual effect approaches. In addition, empirical studies may include only group-level variables or code variables at an ecological level (both independent and dependent variables), although we did not identify any studies in the three journals that used this approach, which fails to account for variance at the individual level.

These reviews were conducted in an emergent and iterative process to ensure that the articles were being analyzed reliably and that relevant articles were included in the search. Selection criteria excluded book reviews, commentaries, or responses to previously published material. Despite the special care that we took in conducting this review, the likelihood that we missed an article or two or misclassified an article or two in one or more ways looms large. We offer this caution not necessarily to dismiss our review but to reflect the realities and some of the challenges we faced in conducting the review and coming to agreement about particular articles.

Number and Types of Articles

In total, we identified 89 articles that addressed some aspect of community factors on various aspects of family functioning and interaction: JMF ($N=26$), FR ($N=31$), and JFI ($N=32$). The total number of articles was increased as a consequence of a special issue of FR that was published in December 2005. This issue included

eight full-length articles, including an opening article by Mancini, Bowen, and Martin entitled: "Community social organization: A conceptual linchpin in examining families in the context of communities." In addition, the special issue contained an extensive review and annotation of key articles, books, and book chapters (Brossoie, Graham, & Lee, 2005). Three additional articles from the special issue were published in the April 2006 issue of FR, which focused on qualitative approaches to community research.

The vast majority of articles involved the manipulation of empirical data ($N=81$); relatively few were summary reviews or theoretical articles ($N=8$). However, the review articles were important in offering guidance in ways that community variables could be more effectively integrated into the family research and practice literature. In addition to the seminal review by Burton and Jarrett (2000), which was discussed above, Voydanoff (2005) offered a broad and heuristic conceptual framework for integrating community demands, resources, and strategies into future research examining the work and family interface. Review articles by Mancini et al. (2005), Scanzoni (2001), and Doherty (2000) challenged family scientists to bring a community focus to their understanding of families and to their professional practice with families.

Research Designs

A greater proportion of the articles that we identified in these journals included quantitative research designs ($N=57$), as compared to either qualitative methodologies ($N=17$) or mixed methods approaches ($N=7$). The dominant quantitative method involved a cross-sectional survey design; experimental or quasi-experimental designs were comparably uncommon ($N=5$). Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn's (2005) evaluation of the "Moving to Opportunity" (MTO) program is a notable example of the use of an experimental design. The MTO program is centered in five urban areas and focused on housing relocation. Families were assigned randomly to one of three situations: a treatment group that received Section

8 vouchers and other assistance to move only to a low-poverty neighborhood; a comparison group that received Section 8 vouchers but were not constrained regarding where they could relocate, and received no other assistance; and a control group that received neither vouchers nor other special assistance (called the in-place controls). The substantive focus was on family processes relative to parent-child interactions. This study serves as an example of an intervention that accounts for multiple levels of influences on family outcomes, with particular attention on family processes.

Qualitative and mixed methods approaches most typically used open-ended interviews and focus groups as data collection strategies. Reibolt's (2001) ethnographic investigation of two Mexican American Families living in impoverished urban neighborhoods, Letiecq and Koblinsky's (2004) focus group interviews with African American fathers of preschoolers about ways in which they protect their children in violent neighborhoods, and MacTavish and Salamon's (2006) exploration of "Pathways of Youth Development in a Rural Trailer Park" demonstrate the descriptive power of focus groups and open-ended interviews in research on community and family linkages.

Dependent Variables

The quantitative and mixed-method empirical articles ($N=64$ articles combined) addressed a range of dependent variables. Sixty different dependent variables were identified across these empirical investigations. The majority of articles focused on some aspect of child and adolescent behavior, including teenage sexual behavior (e.g., timing of first intercourse, pregnancy experience), adolescent school success and failure (e.g., high school dropout, school engagement, grades), child and adolescent well-being (e.g., depressive symptoms, internalizing/externalizing behavior), adolescent risk taking (e.g., problem behavior, severity of violence and conflict), and adolescent social networks and social support (e.g., friendship networks, mentoring). Dependent variables

associated with some aspect of parenting were also well represented in these articles, including a focus on parenting warmth, discipline, harsh interactions, and support and nurturing. Other dependent variables included a focus on fathers (e.g., psychological distress, job-role quality), marriage (e.g., dissolution), family adaptation (e.g., military family adaptation), community (e.g., family friendliness), living arrangements, and service delivery.

Theories

The majority of the empirical articles appearing in the journals were theoretically informed, although we had to dig deep in some cases to identify the underlying theory or theories. Approximately 3 in 4 articles (74 %) had one or more explicit theories, perspectives, or models. In the context of the many theories and perspectives used to anchor these empirical articles, this body of literature reflects a theoretical pluralism rather than the domination of any single theory or perspective.

More than 25 different theories were identified, although in most cases the theory was cited in only one or two of the articles. The two theories used with greatest frequency included some form or version of ecological theory and social disorganization theory. Social capital theory, the life course perspective, and family stress theory were used less frequently, followed by social control theory, symbolic interaction, and a risk and resilience perspective. A brief overview of ecological theory and social disorganization theory is provided below in the context of their importance as frameworks in studies on the influence of communities on family-related outcomes. Both theories have their historical roots in the Chicago School, which is sometimes described as the Chicago school of human ecology (White & Klein, 2002). The Chicago School included, but was not limited to, the University of Chicago's sociology department. In the 1920s and 1930s, the Chicago School conducted a number of research projects focused on the urban environment in the city of Chicago.

Ecological theory. The conceptual foundation of ecological theory can be traced back to the early work of Robert Ezra Park and Ernest Burgess of the Chicago Ecological School in the early 1920s, including the concept of the “natural area” (ecological niches where people of similar history, situation, or circumstance group geographically) (Bursik & Grasmick, 1993). Kurt Lewin’s field theory, which focused on person and environment interactions, was also an important forerunner to current ecological approaches, including Bronfenbrenner’s ecological framework (White & Klein, 2002).

Although journal authors used a variety of labels to reflect their particular ecological perspective (ecological-transactional, ecological-developmental, eco-interactional development model, ecological systems theory, social ecology model), the discussion of ecological theory in the articles reviewed was anchored in some aspect of the work of Urie Bronfenbrenner. Sample articles from our review included Bowen, Rose, Powers, and Glennie (2008), Pinderhughes, Nix, Foster, & Jones (2001), and Bamaca, Umana-Taylor, Shin, and Alfaro (2005). This ranged from his earlier ecological theory of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) to his more recent bioecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 2005) which includes attention to biological influences and to the role of proximal processes in development (see Tudge, Mokrova, Hatfield, & Karnik, 2009, for an excellent overview of the history and development of Bronfenbrenner’s theory, which informed our current review).

Bronfenbrenner’s earlier work drew particular attention to the reciprocal process between individuals and their social environments over time, including the neighborhood, the school, the family, and the peer group. These primary social contexts or microsystems overlap and are nested within each other and are encompassed and influenced by a larger social and cultural context (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Strong, positive, and complementary connections both within (e.g., neighborhood) and between (e.g., neighborhood and family) these social environments increase the probability that individuals will experience positive outcomes over time.

Bronfenbrenner’s (2005) bioecological theory of human development directs primary attention to *proximal processes* in the social environment. Bronfenbrenner defined proximal processes as “progressively more complex reciprocal interaction[s] between an active, evolving biopsychosocial human organism and the persons, objects, and symbols in [the child’s] immediate environment . . . over extended periods of time” (p. 6). These processes may either promote or constrain individuals’ goodness of fit and their ability to achieve desired results. According to Bowen et al. (2008), “these proximal processes may include people, in the form of interpersonal relationships and social support, or places, in the form of safety, satisfaction, and opportunity” (p. 505). At any one time, individuals both influence and are influenced by multiple proximal processes within and between social environments.

In the articles we reviewed, the community or neighborhood was most often captured as a microsystem of interest. For the most part, the research that cited Bronfenbrenner’s theory was informed more by his earlier theoretical work, which focused more on context, than by his more recent theorizing, which includes the central concept of proximal processes and his more nuanced attention to time (see Tudge et al., 2009, for a similar conclusion on a more general review of empirical work in family studies). In some cases, a life course perspective (e.g., Sweet, Swisher, & Moen, 2005) or a risk and resilience perspective (e.g., Woolley & Grogan-Kaylor, 2006) was used in conjunction with ecological theory. Bronfenbrenner’s inclusion of the micro- and meso-time in this theory brings attention to the timing and patterning of events in the lives of individuals. His attention to macro-time (or what he referred to earlier as the chronosystem) captures the importance of socio-historical context and makes the fit between ecological theory and the life course perspective relatively seamless. A risk and resilience perspective was used to specify the operation of risk and protective factors largely within the setting in which individuals interact and function.

Social disorganization theory. Social disorganization theory or a derivative from this theory

(e.g., collective efficacy theory, Wilson's model of neighborhood decline) was used next most frequently as a guiding framework in these articles. Sample articles from our review included Roche, Ensminger, and Cherlin (2007), Browning and Olinger-Wilbon (2003), and Knoester and Haynie (2005).

A criminological theory, social disorganization is linked with the seminal work of Shaw and McKay (1969, revised edition) in their studies of juvenile delinquency in Chicago neighborhoods in the 1930s and 1940s. Forerunners of this theory can be traced to the work of Robert Ezra Park and Ernest Burgess of the Chicago Ecological School in the 1920s on the concept of concentric zones in the American city, which they called "natural areas" (Park & Burgess, 1925). The concept of social disorganization, according to Bursik and Grasmick (1993, p. 33), was derived from the classic sociological work by Thomas and Znaniecki (1920): *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, and the concept was used to describe situations in neighborhoods where residents had difficulty solving problems of common interest. As stated by Shaw and McKay:

Thomas and Znaniecki have analyzed the effectively organized community in terms of the presence of social opinion with regard to problems of common interest, identical or at least consistent attitudes with reference to these problems, the ability to reach approximate unanimity on the question on how a problem should be dealt with, and the ability to carry this solution into action through harmonious co-operation (p. 184).

Ernest W. Burgess, in summarizing Shaw and McKay's findings in his introduction to the first edition of the book, also linked the concept of social disorganization to the community's inability to organize itself to deal with conditions that increase delinquency (cited in Short, 1969).

From the perspective of social disorganization theory, structural deficits in urban neighborhoods create the conditions for the breakdown of positive social organizational processes between neighbors, which increase the probability of problem behavior among youth. Shaw and McKay focused on three structural conditions: low economic status, ethnic heterogeneity, and

residential mobility. In chapter VII of their book, "Differences in Social Values and Organization among Local Communities," Shaw and McKay discussed some of the mechanisms and problems that link structure (community characteristics and conditions) and action (differential rates of delinquency) in the context of the literature and through case studies of youths living in areas with high rates of delinquency.

The publication of William Julius Wilson's book, *The Truly Disadvantaged*, in 1987, in combination with a number of highly influential publications by Robert Sampson and colleagues using social disorganization theory as their foundation (e.g., Sampson & Groves, 1989; Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997), has led to a significant resurgence of social disorganization theory in the behavioral and social sciences since the early 1990s, including its use in family studies. Sampson et al.'s (1997) concept of collective efficacy, which involves components of both social cohesion and informal social control, has added clarity to the concept of social disorganization, and Wilson's concept of social isolation provides a conceptual bridge between ecological theory as advanced by Park and Burgess and social disorganization theory. The development of multilevel analysis also has made it possible to disentangle effects due to the clustering of individuals within areas from effects at the individual level (Teachman & Crowder, 2002).

For the most part researchers have pursued community problems (social disorganization) to the partial exclusion of a broader focus on social organization, an approach that elevates a more complex array of elements involved with understanding families and the community contexts that influence them, an approach that leads itself to comprehensive studies of processes. Earlier we have argued for this social organization approach, stating, "We support the emancipation of social organization thinking from social disorganization and from research on delinquency and community disadvantage, and contend social organization has a fundamental role in explaining broader family phenomena" (Mancini et al., 2005, p. 573). Our concluding section to this chapter elaborates this social organization approach.

Measurement Approach

Three measurement strategies had been used to capture the community as an independent variable in the quantitative and mixed method articles reviewed. By measurement approach we include measures and instrumentation, the concepts that are behind them, and also how studies are designed to get at, for example, macrolevel processes. As we discussed earlier in this chapter, the first strategy, a microlevel approach, relies on individual reports and perceptions of community characteristics; the second strategy, a compositional approach, attempts to account for community effects with aggregate social structural measures of the community's social, demographic, and institutional infrastructure; the third strategy, a social organizational approach, attempts to directly assess macrolevel processes and mechanisms at the community level. By far, the majority of the quantitative and mixed methods articles in the three journals used either a microlevel approach or a compositional approach in the specification of community variables; relatively few articles incorporated a social organization approach to measurement and instrumentation of community variables. Each of these strategies is reviewed below, which draws from an earlier summary by Mancini et al. (2005) and prior work by Bowen and Pittman (1995) in discussing the merits of contextual effects models in family science.

A microlevel approach. The most common approach in these studies was to rely on the individual as the unit of analysis—a microlevel approach. Any grouping or clustering of these individuals within communities or other units is neglected. Mancini et al. (2005), in an earlier article, referred to a microlevel approach as the contextual approach. However, the use of this descriptor may be confusing given that all three approaches have an orientation to context. Consequently, we have chosen to relabel this approach.

These investigations were often framed by an ecological perspective, which addresses the microsystems in which individuals and families are embedded (e.g., neighborhood). Individual

reports or perceptions about these environments were used as independent variables to examine variation in individual and family outcomes and often were analyzed in the context of other influences at the individual level, such as background characteristics, attitudes, and experiences. In such cases, respondents report on their own situation (e.g., self-reported personal friendship networks in the neighborhood); the situation of significant others (e.g., parents' views of children's friendship networks in the neighborhood); or more general perceptions of the situation (e.g., the nature of relationships among residents in the neighborhood).

A recent article by Bowen et al. (2008) appearing in *Family Relations* is a case in point. Using an eco-interactional developmental model of school success, the authors assessed various neighborhood, school, peer, and family variables on the basis of the self-reports of adolescent respondents. In the analysis, Time 2 school success measures were regressed on the same Time 1 school success measures, demographics, and social environment scores. Although such studies make a contribution to our understanding of the relationship between families and the communities in which they are embedded, they do not contribute to our understanding of how communities as synergetic clusters of individuals and families in interaction influence individual and family outcomes beyond respondents' perceptions.

A compositional approach. A second approach used in these articles to capture community was what Mancini et al. (2005) described as a compositional approach. This approach uses proxy variables to reflect the community's physical and demographic infrastructure—an approach that is strong on predictive validity but weak on explanatory potential.

Community-level markers (e.g., neighborhood poverty rate or joblessness) are used as estimates of potential social organizational (actually social disorganizational) processes. These “omnibus variables,” in the words of Burton and Jarrett (2000, p. 1119), typically are captured at the zip code, census tract, or block-group level and are entered into analyses as a summary index

(e.g., Baumer & South, 2001). These “omnibus variables” function in models as proxies for social (dis)organizational processes that are associated with the particular variable or index and related to variation in the dependent variable of interest (cf., Firebaugh, 1979). Multilevel analysis typically is used to account for clustering effects, which allows sources of error to be disaggregated into two components: individual (level one) and cluster (level two). An intraclass correlation (ICC) can be calculated to estimate the proportion of variance explained in a dependent outcome at the community level. The ICC reflects the variance in the dependent variable at the community level (between clusters) relative to the sum total of variance between communities and the variance between people within communities (Merlo, Chaix, Yang, Lynch, & Rastam, 2005).

An article by South and Baumer (2001), which appeared in the *JFI*, is a case in point. Using the longitudinal National Survey of Children, the authors examined both the risk of premarital pregnancy and the outcome of the pregnancy in the context of an aggregate measure of neighborhood disadvantage that was comprised of variables from the 1980 census data and assigned to respondents at the zip code level. Although the use of such structural variables may uncover contextual noise, their influence on dependent outcomes often is indirect and mediated by social process variables that account for the link between the structural variables and dependent outcomes.

In this approach, social organizational processes are left unexamined and researchers attach meaning to contextual effects largely by conjecture rather than by examination (Bowen & Pittman, 1995). Investigators are left searching for the process mechanisms linking community structure with outcomes. Billy, Brewster, and Grady (1994), in their examination of contextual effects on the sexual behavior of adolescent women, drew the following conclusion about the use of nonmetric group effects:

Although many researchers continue to use crude measures such as urban–rural or metropolitan–non-metropolitan residence as indicators of social context, the present study demonstrates that communities affect early sexual behavior along a

number of separate structural dimensions, measured at multiple levels of aggregation. Our findings suggest, then, not only the importance of the community context in shaping adolescent sexual behavior, but also the inadequacy of simple categorical distinctions for capturing the complexity of a community’s social context (p. 402).

Nevertheless, studies, such as the one by South and Baumer, have heuristic implications in the process of identifying social organizational mechanisms that may account for the link between structure and action. Thus, the use of “omnibus variables” may be useful in the process of identifying potentially important social organizational processes that require further specification and testing (cf., Blalock, 1985).

A social organizational approach. The third approach used in these articles to capture community reflects a social organizational approach. In our earlier work (Mancini et al., 2005), we referred to this measurement strategy as a *contextual effects* approach, which remains a descriptive label for this approach and is considered synonymous by us with a social organizational approach. However, in an attempt to align our theoretical perspective with our measurement perspective, we have evolved to this new label for this measurement approach.

As described by Blalock (1984), “the essential feature of all contextual-effects models is an allowance for macro processes that are presumed to have an impact on the individual actor over and above the effects of any individual-level variables that may be operating” (Blalock, p. 354). Consequently, a hierarchical data structure is used to order variables, including those that describe individuals and those that capture the properties and social organizational features of groups in which they are located (Bryk & Raudenbush, 1992). These group-level variables may be aggregates of data collected at the individual level (e. g., average attributes) or may be information that is not wholly dependent on individual reports—what Blalock (1984) refers to conceptually as “global variables” (e.g., ratio of formal child care slots to children under the age of 4 within counties across all counties in a

specified state). Unlike the compositional approach, one or more of these aggregate variables capture social organizational processes.

For example, using social disorganization and social control perspectives as theoretical anchors, Wickrama and Bryant (2003) examined the joint effects of community- and family-level processes on adolescent depression. Their model included two blocks of variables at the community level: structural community adversity (concentration of poverty and ethnic heterogeneity) and community social resources (social integration and collective socialization). Aggregate, higher-order measures of social integration and collective socialization were captured across census tract areas by averaging survey responses from parent sample members.

Using adolescent depressive symptoms as the dependent variable, Wickrama and Bryant (2003) examined the direct effects of community-level factors, the indirect effects of community-level factors via family-level factors (called cross-level mediation), and the interactive effects of community-level and family-level effects (called cross-level moderation). The data were examined in the context of statistical controls and using multilevel regression models (individual, family, and community characteristics). The results support the importance of accounting for community effects in research examining the relationship between family-level factors and adolescent outcomes. Equally important, the study represents the increasing sophistication of research that examines the influence of community context on individual and family outcomes, and it serves as a model for other researchers who are interested in assessing the effects of social organizational processes on families and individuals.

Families and Communities: Representative Findings (2000–2009)

In this section we organize representative findings from the 89 articles from *JMF*, *FR*, and *JFI* in order to indicate overall themes portrayed in this literature. As is often the case in the social and behavioral sciences, there is no lack of approaches,

definitions, methods, and so on in this literature. A primary limitation is the few agreed-upon definitions in the literature focused on families and communities. In fact it seems from our review of these articles that very little has changed since the 1950s and 1960s regarding the multiple ways communities are conceptualized and defined, and then investigated (see Moge, 1964).

Neighborhood Risk

Very often research has attended to neighborhood risk as a primary influence on how well families experience their surroundings. For example, Henry, Merten, Plunkett, and Sands (2008) reported that perceptions of neighborhood risk negatively affect student grades, more than structural neighborhood adversity (poverty measures). When Casper and Smith (2002) examined self-care arrangements of children, they discovered that children were less likely to care for themselves when parents viewed the neighborhood as less safe. Roche et al. (2007) reported that in higher risk neighborhoods, there are more negative outcomes for youth from families where parents are either uninvolved or permissive. Bowen et al. (2008) reported that perceptions of neighborhood safety have a positive influence on grades, as well as on trouble-avoidance.

The exposure of children to neighborhood violence has been found to be associated with their symptoms of psychological distress (Ceballo, Dahl, Aretakis, & Ramirez, 2001). Kotchick, Dorsey, and Heller (2005), for example, reported a path involving neighborhood risk and stress which indicates that exposure to neighborhood problems leads to greater psychological distress among mothers, which in turn leads to being less engaged with their children. Another study by Roosa et al. (2005) also focused on how mothers mediate children's experiences and reported that when mothers perceive neighborhoods as high risk, children report more stress. Finally, Luster and Oh (2001) reported on an exceptionally dangerous outcome from exposure to neighborhood risk and violence; youth who were frequently exposed to hearing gunshots,

those exposed to neighborhood violence, and those who perceive their surroundings as dangerous are more likely to carry a handgun.

How parents respond in “bad” neighborhoods has also been examined. Hofferth (2003) reported, for example, that in higher risk neighborhoods, where Black families are more likely to reside, fathers demonstrate more responsibility for the welfare and well-being of their children. Letiecq and Koblinsky (2004) reported that father’s strategies for protecting their young children included careful monitoring of the child’s activities, and restricting child’s involvement with neighborhood life. Father’s also reported directly confronting neighborhood troublemakers. Another angle on external factors that influence family processes is reported by Simons et al. (2002), who report that children in high crime neighborhoods may accept greater physical types of discipline as necessary or legitimate, compared with those in low crime neighborhoods, who in turn are more likely to be antisocial as a result.

Community Connections

Community connections and how well families are embedded in the community have also been on the radar of investigators. The idea is that families with more substantial ties to their neighbors and neighborhoods are strengthened and supported (but note that this assumption implies much about the nature of the surrounding community, as well as the willingness of families to be permeable). Terms invoked in these studies include social capital, social capacity, civic engagement, social isolation, and social ties. Houseknecht and Lewis (2005) reported that social capital produced from ties with the community is related to reduced teen births and reduced cohabitation incidence. McBride, Sherraden, and Pritzker (2006) examined civic engagement among low-income families, finding that, while these families are engaged, there are substantial obstacles to that engagement. These impediments include a lack of community groups, problem neighbors, or isolation because of moving or inadequate transportation.

Social isolation not only pertains to informal networks but extends to formal support services. McGuigan, Katzev, and Pratt (2003) reported that overall isolation of mothers also precluded them from participating in important home visitation services. The extent to which a family feels that their community is “friendly” has been found to be associated with the social capital of communities, including community events and the willingness of neighbors to interact, or in effect, to be friendly (Sweet et al., 2005). This research team also reports that when residents report a higher number of neighbors are also their friends, their view of the neighborhood as friendly increases (Swisher, Sweet, & Moen, 2004).

Marshall, Noonan, McCartner, Marx, and Keefe (2001) studied the strength of parental neighborhood social ties, finding relationships with greater social competence and fewer depression indicators among their children; these children were also reported to be more successful in school. The approach taken by Bowen, Mancini, Martin, Ware, and Nelson (2003) examined informal networks, formal systems, and sense of community as primary modes of supporting family adaptation, finding that sense of community played a major part in mediating how networks influenced family well-being.

Formal Systems

Several studies bring in more formal system variables into discussing families and communities (by formal system we mean agencies, organizations, and the education, prevention, and intervention activities they develop and implement). For example, Anderson, Sabatelli, and Kosutic (2007) reported that adolescent adjustment was related to neighborhood youth center involvement, and particularly significant was the degree of youth participation in activities. Doherty, Jacob, and Cutting’s (2009) discussion argues the importance of community engagement as a modality for teaching parent education. Mancini and Marek (2004), in developing a multifactor assessment of program sustainability, isolated several elements related to community contexts

and involvement as important for successful prevention and intervention. Birch, Weed, and Olsen (2004) reported that divorce rates appear to decline more rapidly following the signing of a community marriage policy than would be expected (a community marriage policy reflects a commitment on the part of helping professionals to intentionally enact programs and policies that revitalize marriages).

Moderators

Several important moderators are also found in this literature, including gender, ethnicity, and culture. Bamaca et al. (2005) found that the positive relationship between parental support and self-esteem among boys was stronger for boys who perceived their neighborhood as lower in risks. However, there were no comparable relationships found among girls, nor was neighborhood risk an independent predictor of self-esteem among the girls like it was among boys in the study. Brisson and Usher (2005) reported that women compared to men experience lower levels of bonding social capital (the capital that exists within a neighborhood, that is, what Putnam (2000) calls a sociological superglue; bonding social capital promotes in-group cohesion and loyalty). However, they also noted that as the wealth of a neighborhood increases, women experience higher levels of bonding social capital (thus showing the role poverty has among oppressed groups). White, Roosa, Weaver, and Nair (2009) found that perceptions of living in a dangerous neighborhood were associated with higher levels of depression and less positive parenting for fathers but not for mothers.

Even as gender is associated with different social organization process experiences, so is culture and ethnicity. Gingrich and Lightman (2006) studied a Mennonite community, noting that, for this particular subculture mutual aid groups mitigate mobility and rootlessness, and provide balance in an age of narcissism. In another study on a different sort of subcultural group, residents in trailer parks, MacTavish and

Salamon (2006) found how little the limited control and influence that parents could exercise had on neighborhood conditions and their ability to improve the lives of their youth. Ornelas, Perreira, Beeber, and Maxwell (2009) studied the adjustment of Mexican immigrant mothers and reported the positive significance of their reliance on social networks and on community resources.

Subculture is defined in diverse ways. For example, Reibolt (2001) found that youth gangs offer family-like ties to adolescents and also offer protection of the new immigrant youth and his family. Rural life and its characteristics are also a focus. Ames, Brosi, and Damiano-Teixeira (2006) examined the costs and reward of rural living, noting that viewing the rural environment as a safe place is a primary positive factor in how life is viewed. However, rurality represents other processes as well. For example, Pinderhughes et al. (2001) found that rural families engage in harsher parental practices.

Though we have erred on the side of highlighting findings showing important relationships between families and communities, the literature remains equivocal. For example, South and Baumer (2001) addressed the question of how neighborhoods affected marital disruption, focusing on SES disadvantage, and concluded that effects are due to the low incomes of husbands in distressed neighborhoods rather than to neighborhood SES per se. They add rather that neighborhood SES seems to increase the prevalence of single-parent families via out-of-wedlock child-bearing, and tends not to disrupt extant marriage relationships. There is still much to be accomplished to establish the relationships between families and communities that is not due to other factors, many of them unrecognized.

The recent literature found in the three pivotal family science research and practice journals reflects diverse approaches to the examination of families and communities, as noted earlier. Equally diverse are the substantive areas that investigators are focused upon. While this diversity demonstrates the various ways that families and communities intersect, there are few areas in which multiple investigators are conducting

research in the same or very similar areas; therefore it becomes more difficult to assert particular relationships between families and communities with confidence. What the past decade of research has shown are the multiple layers of individual, family, and community life that intersect, which sets the stage for improved theorizing that captures these layers. Our own approach is to invoke the ideas of social organization theorizing.

Toward an Action Theory of Families and Communities

We present social organization as a framework that not only helps make sense of existing theorizing and research but also provides a way to frame advances in theorizing and in research. Of particular importance of a social organization theory is how easily it lends itself to an action theory, one not only about describing what is but also about touch-points with community and family change.

We began our discussion of families and communities by introducing elements of social organization theory, and by using structure and process as two categories for conceptualizing elements of communities that have importance for understanding families. We have conducted a comprehensive review of theoretical and empirical articles and book chapters, as contained in the major family studies handbooks and sourcebooks published since 1964, and in the front-line family studies empirical journals that began with the decade of the 1960s. Social organization is the operating framework that assists us in categorizing and conceptualizing families and communities. Some years ago we gravitated to this theory due to our work targeted at building community capacity (Bowen, Martin, et al., 2000). We are in debt to our colleagues who apply social organization thinking in their work (Cantillon, Davidson, & Schweitzer, 2003; Freisthler, 2004; Furstenberg & Hughes, 1997; Burk, 1991; Kasarda & Janowitz, 1974; Kornhauser, 1978; Sampson, 1991, 1992; Sampson & Groves, 1989; Sampson, Morenoff, & Gannon-Rowley, 2002; Shaw & McKay, 1969; Small, 2002).

Social Organization and the Community Capacity Model

In the later 1990s we began formulating a model designed to elevate community capacity, which we defined as a sentiment of shared responsibility and behaviors indicating collective competence (Bowen, Martin, et al., 2000). Importantly, the initial model was developed in the context of our policy and practice work with the United States Air Force (USAF) (Bowen, Martin, & Mancini, 1999; Bowen, Martin, & Nelson, 2002; Bowen, Orthner, Martin, & Mancini, 2001). The USAF requested assistance with developing a model to conceptualize the ways in which its formal support agencies for members and families could work together in a more integrative and collaborative fashion and in concert with the informal system of care. Primary assumptions, concepts, and pathways in the model were predicated on a resilience approach, in the tradition of Kretzmann and McKnight (1993). This approach is not solely anchored on deficits that communities and families may have but rather brings into the quality of life equation the assets that are already present, though often unrecognized. As such, this approach is consonant with a well-accepted perspective in the family science discipline.

The recalibration and reconfiguration we present in this current chapter has its origins in earlier versions of our social organization model. The initial model did not invoke social organization as an organizing concept but rather focused more narrowly on community capacity (Bowen, Martin, et al., 2000, p. 6). There were five primary concepts: formal networks, informal networks, social capital, community capacity, and community results. Four of these concepts are all reflected as social organizational processes in Fig. 32.1, which appeared in a subsequent publication (Mancini et al., 2005). The actions of informal (friends, neighbors, and associates, for example) and formal (agencies, organizations, institutions, and those who represent them) networks were seen as developing social capital (information exchange between individuals, reciprocity between people who interact, and resulting levels of trust that may result from those

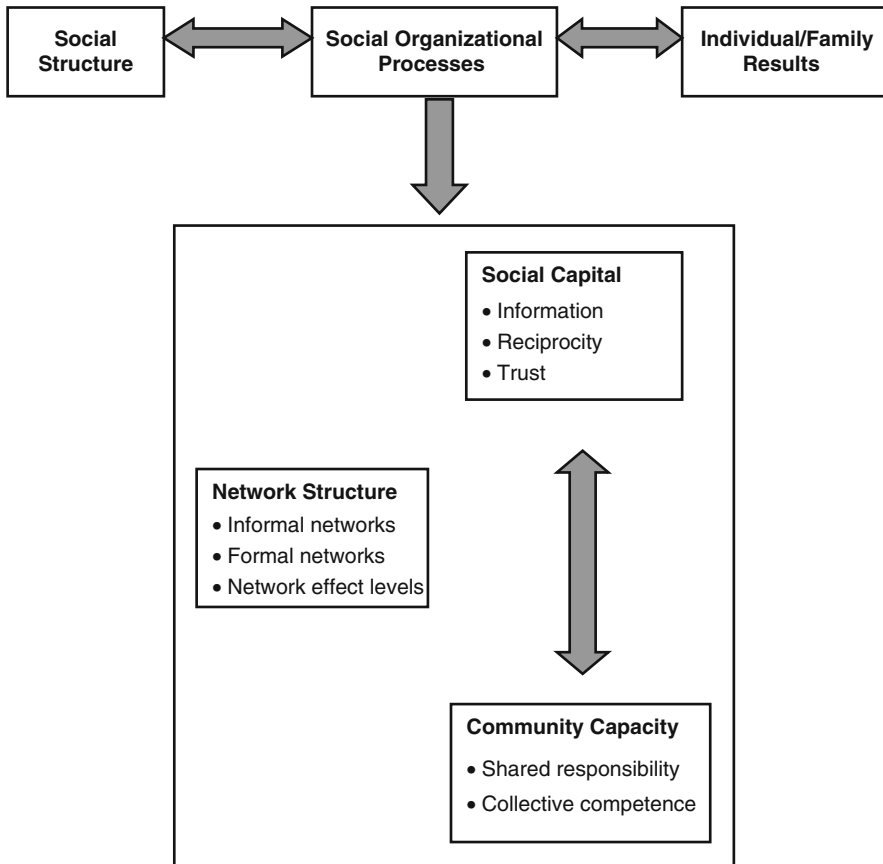


Fig. 32.1 Social organization processes, social structure, and individual family results. Reprinted with permission from Mancini et al. (2005)

interactions), which then becomes the engine for developing community capacity (defined as sense of shared responsibility and collective competence to act on behalf of the community), and this in turn supports desired community results (for example, safety in neighborhoods). We also incorporated the work of Small and Supple (2001) and their discussion of network effects levels (in brief, the idea that disparate networks focused on the same issue increase the odds of change). The model as first described was non-recursive, with little attempt at determining directionality. At that time we directed more attention to formal networks because we were studying military systems, personnel, and their families, and the military unit holds considerable sway in the ecology of the military experience.

Our second iteration of a community capacity approach to understanding communities and families reflected our broadened thinking, and was represented by invoking the social organization term as a primary organizing concept (Mancini et al., 2003, 2005, see p. 574). At that time we discussed individual and family results (outcomes) within the contexts of social structure and social organizational processes (see Fig. 32.1). We positioned network structures, social capital, and community capacity as examples of social organizational processes. Networks were considered to have both formal characteristics that could be described beyond the individuals involved (e.g., effects levels) and more dynamic and fluid features (e.g., evolving types and forms of interaction). We still viewed social

structure, social organizational processes, and individual/family results as dynamically and reciprocally related but stated that social structure and individual/family results were mediated by social organizational processes. And within the social organizational black box we viewed all its elements as more associational rather than causal. Network structures, for example, influence community capacity, even as community capacity influences the nature of formal and informal networks. At that time, we did not elaborate social organizational processes beyond network structures, social capital, and community capacity, which was consistent with our earlier work (Bowen, Martin, et al., 2000).

The next major iteration in our thinking is found in a chapter on community resilience (Mancini & Bowen, 2009).¹ We invoked community antecedents, social action processes, and community consequences as major categories of interest in a social organizational model (Mancini & Bowen, see p. 250). In some sense, although we added new rubrics (e.g., community antecedents), we returned to our earlier thinking about how our primary concepts were positioned and sequenced, with network structures as comprising the community antecedents base of the pyramid, with social action processes in the middle layer (social capital and community capacity), and community consequences (resilience) at the top (see Fig. 32.2).

This 2009 iteration draws attention to introducing how structural characteristics (community as a physical and geographical place) have an influence on family-oriented results (for example, family adjustment and well-being, and relation-

ships with other families in a community or neighborhood). In this 2009 discussion we explicitly uncovered what this community capacity, social organizational model suggested about the nature of change, and marked how each part of the model possessed a leverage point for prevention and intervention. For example, we contend that the “most likely leverage points in communities are associated with networks, both formal and informal. This is so because networks are visible, vibrant, and where most people connect with each other and with formal systems” (p. 259). We then state, “change is also associated with community capacity itself, if capacity is seen as requisite to community members coming together around shared goals and making decisions to take action” (p. 260). Throughout these phases of theorizing, the need to further explore social organizational processes persisted, as did the need to more fully understand the contexts in which these processes occurred and to uncover other intermediate results between social organizational processes and distal results.

Empirical Testing of the Model

Our preliminary research work to date provides support for our expectations from the model. As an example, in an analysis focusing on the link between formal and informal community-based social networks and family adaptation and including a sample of more than 20,000 married Air Force (AF) members across 82 bases, we found that informal community support had both a direct influence on self-reported family adaptation, as well as an indirect influence via perceived sense of community (Bowen et al., 2003). In an investigation with 10,102 married active-duty AF members, positive perceptions of community capacity (shared responsibility and collective competence) had a strong and direct effect on self-reported symptoms of depression. These perceptions were also a significant mediator of the effects of formal and informal networks on depression, including perceptions of agency support, unit leader support, and neighbor support (Bowen, Martin, & Ware, 2004).

¹ In the interim, we had deviated from our 2005 model in an article on preventing intimate partner violence (Mancini, Nelson, Bowen, & Martin, 2006). In this article, we spoke of three intermediate results between community capacity (shared responsibility and collective competence) and community results (safety, health and well-being, sense of community, and family adjustment). These intermediate results were (1) shared norms and values oriented toward reducing social isolation, (2) individual protective factors to reduce risk and to buffer stressors, and (3) mobilization for collective action.

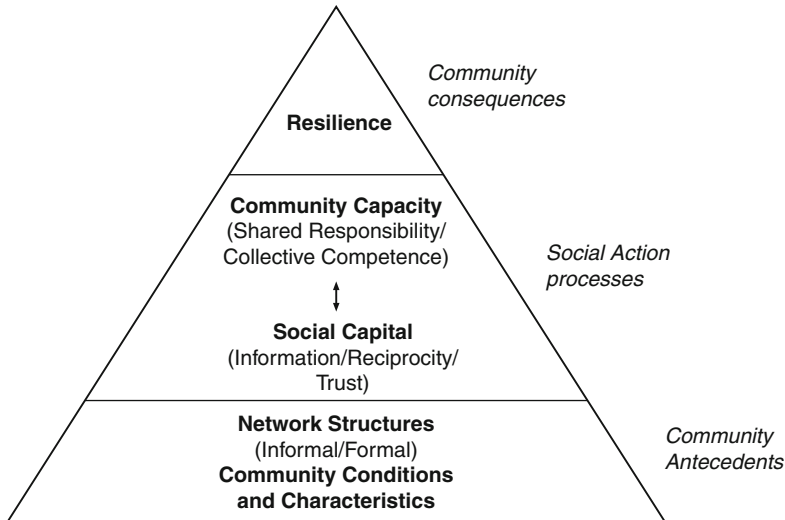


Fig. 32.2 Model of social organization and change. Reprinted with permission from Mancini and Bowen (2009)

A Work in Progress

Each aspect of our work, that is, model development, application of the model to address practice situations and challenges, and empirical testing of key linkages, have been mutually informative. The synergy that has been created, including our ongoing collaboration with colleagues in the field of family studies and community intervention, has resulted in a model that continues to be elaborated. In this process, we have been reminded by our experiences on more than one occasion that theory development is a challenging undertaking. This process includes the occasional breakthrough where the elements of the theory come together to form turrets of conceptual integration and distinction. More often, however, frustration is experienced when confronting conceptual nuances and ambiguities, feeling like the King's architect in the *Far Side* cartoon who suddenly realizes that the moat has been built inside the castle!

In the sections below, we attempt to address two additional components that we believe require our attention. The first involves giving more attention to potential intermediate results between social organizational processes and individual and family results. The second is to give more explicit attention to the physical structure

of communities in our model or what in the literature is labeled, the “built” community. In our most recent work (Mancini & Bowen, 2009), we discussed communities as places but we failed to elaborate on this idea. As we extend our thinking we also sharpen the differentiation between informal networks and formal networks, in fact relabeling the latter as formal systems, on the basis of work by Litwak (1985). While this change adds no additional conceptual meaning, it does recognize a core difference between what is considered informal and what is considered formal; the informal being mainly about friends, neighbors, and other people we come in contact throughout everyday life, and the formal being mainly about agencies and organizations that are established and maintained to support individuals and families in need (in effect, our labels have caught up with our conceptualizations).

Extending Social Organization and a Theory of Action

Sense of Community

In our earlier attempts to conceptualize the ways in which communities influence individuals and families, we have been more implicit than explicit

in specifying the intermediate results that link the exogenous (external and contextual) features of community structure and the endogenous (internal) social organizational processes associated with these structure features with outcomes for individuals and families. In our current model, we propose to open up the social psychological (broadly defined as the relationships between individuals and their social groups) “black box” between our macrolevel social organizational processes and microlevel individual and family outcomes. In doing so, we draw on a particularly provocative and informing metatheoretical analysis by Zelditch (1991) of William Julius Wilson’s, *The Truly Disadvantaged* (1987). Zelditch discusses the “situational social psychology” that mediates the link in Wilson’s theory between macrolevel structure and individual behavior. From this perspective, the social psychological orientations of individuals, which are situationally specific and fluid across different contexts, provide the link between the social organizational opportunities and constraints on individuals and their behavior.

In our proposed theory of community action and change (see Fig. 32.3) we have four elements, including individual and family results, which are necessary to have an actual action theory. We have discussed each of them earlier in the chapter, except for sense of community. We propose sense of community as an intermediate result that mediates between these distal results and social organizational processes. Our core social organizational processes are network structures, social capital, and community capacity. These three aspects of social organization are important drivers for change, especially informal networks and formal systems. We recognize the social infrastructure and the physical infrastructure of the community as two key community antecedents that are foundational to understanding processes because they provide a context for interaction and transaction (discussed in the following section).

As a new construct in our theory of community and action, we define sense of community as a social psychological variable that reflects the degree to which individuals and families feel a

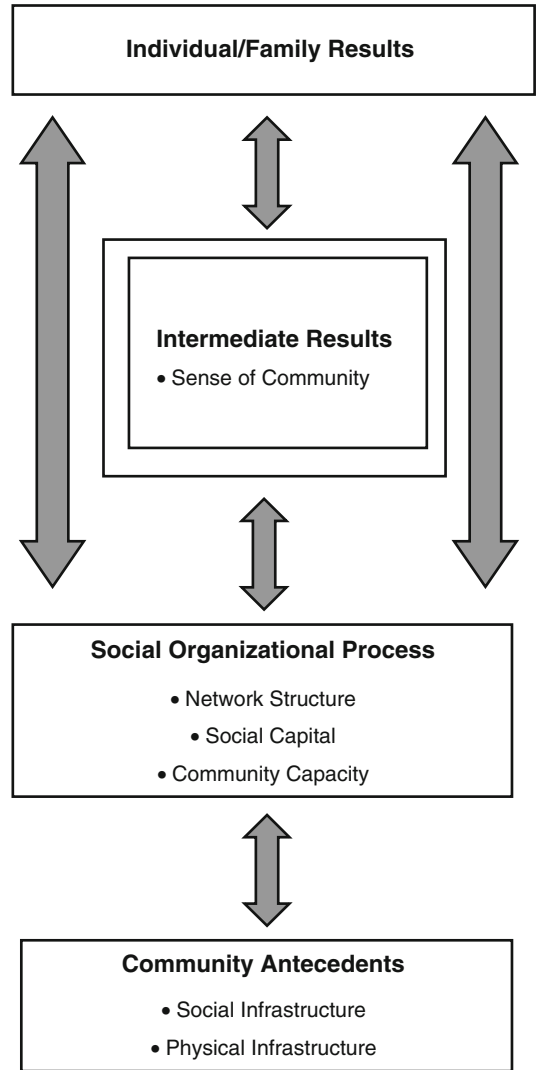


Fig. 32.3 Theory of community action and change

sense of identification, esprit de corps, and attachment with their community (Bowen, Martin, et al., 2000; Van Laar, 1999). Earlier we reported that sense of community was affected by degree of community participation (collective events and activities), the ease of making connections with others in the community, and increased levels of a sense of responsibility for others in the community (Bowen, Martin, et al., 2000). Empirically, sense of community is evidenced by reports of feelings of belonging in the

community, feeling close to other community members, a feeling that one's own circumstances are similar to others in the community, as well as more behavioral indicators including making new friends, spending time with others, and showing concern for others (Mancini, Bowen, Martin, & Ware, 2003). Importantly, we see the operation of formal systems and informal networks as correlates, rather than indicators, of sense of community, which is consistent with research by Pretty, Conroy, Dugay, Fowler, and Williams (1996). Our research in the military sector provides additional support to Pretty et al.'s findings and suggests a direct influence of formal systems and informal networks on sense of community. In turn, sense of community had a positive influence on the family adaptation of married Air Force members (Bowen et al., 2003). In an earlier study with 180 married Air Force members, we found an indirect effect of informal networks on sense of community via community capacity, which included dimensions of shared responsibility and collective competence (Bowen, Martin, et al., 2001). Cantillon et al. (2003) have also recently discussed the significance of sense of community in understanding social organization, also viewing it as an important mediator for understanding community life and effects on individuals and families.

In the context of this review, we propose one's sense of community as a result that partially mediates the link between social organizational processes and the ultimate results that individuals and families achieve. Although our model directs attention at this particular construct, we do not propose it as the only potential intermediate result in our model. However, in the context of high sense of community, we propose that individuals and families have a greater probability of achieving desired individual and family results. In effect, one's sense of community helps to explain the motivation to act and to participate in change. As we continue to apply our theory to the world of practice, we anticipate that additional intermediate results will be identified. In general, the application of theories to practice results in more vs. fewer concepts and more complexity in the nature of proposed linkages.

Community Antecedents

In our more recent work (Mancini & Bowen, 2009), we identified community antecedents as an exogenous component in our model, which included community conditions and characteristics and network structures (formal and informal). Remember we make a distinction between the "structure" of these network connections and the "nature of the relationships" that are contained in these structures. In an earlier work (Mancini et al., 2005), we placed network structures under social organizational processes and identified social structure as the exogenous component in the model, which was defined in a most general way as the organization, configuration, and composition of community members within a geographic area. Our struggle has been about whether to consider formal systems and informal networks as an aspect of social structure or as an aspect of social organizational processes. In reality, networks are a component of both community structure and community process—structural in form and dynamic in function. Although, at any one time, networks have relatively stable patterns (structure), we focus our attention on the more dynamic and fluid nature of formal systems and informal networks (process). From an action model perspective, we see formal systems and informal networks as targets for community intervention. Consequently, in our current model, we have shifted formal systems and informal networks back under social organizational processes.

We have also given consideration to the influence of physical infrastructure of the community on the functioning and operation of the community. Consequently, we now focus our attention on both the social infrastructure and the physical infrastructure of the community. Both are considered under the broader label of community antecedents, and we are indebted to the work of Furstenberg and Hughes (1997) in specifying these two community-level features, which will be discussed below.

The social infrastructure. Communities vary in their social and demographic composition, which

inform the nature of sociocultural risks and opportunities in community settings (Bowen, Richman, & Bowen, 2000). The social infrastructure is an important component of social disorganization theory, and Shaw and McKay (1969, revised edition) identified three such structural conditions of the community in their examination of differential rates of juvenile delinquency in Chicago: economic status, ethnic heterogeneity, and residential mobility. Both Wilson (1987) and Sampson et al. (1997) identified the pernicious influence of concentrated disadvantage in communities (poverty, welfare dependency, joblessness, segregation, crime, and oppression) on supportive social organizational processes. In Sampson et al.'s work, high levels of residential stability were related to supportive patterns of interaction among residents and more effective social control, which they labeled as collective efficacy. Rosenbaum and Friedman (2001) have used the term "chaotic" in describing neighborhoods that are disorganized, suggesting confused and disordered structures and processes. If we see infrastructure as a collection of supports within an area, such as a neighborhood or a central part of the city, then the social infrastructure is mainly about people and their interactions. In neighborhoods where there is more fluidity than stability, more uncertainty than predictability, and more ambiguity than clarity, the odds of chaos increase. If you do not know your neighbors because your neighbors are always turning over, then it is more difficult to achieve or establish connections. In very pragmatic terms, knowing who to go to for assistance is very difficult because you do not know who is there.

The physical infrastructure. Communities also vary by the design of their physical infrastructure or what is more descriptively termed in the literature as the community's built environment (Dannenberg et al., 2003). We began our consideration of physical infrastructure as we discussed prevention of intimate partner violence (Mancini, Nelson, Bowen, & Martin, 2006). The built environment refers to the person-made design of communities that serve as settings for human behavior and interaction, including land use, the

size and spacing of homes, the presence and condition of sidewalks and parks, traffic flow, availability of public transit, lighting, and scenery. On the basis of our review of articles in the *JMF*, *FR*, and the *JFI* addressing linkages between families and communities in the three journals, little attention has been paid to the physical nature of place and its influence on either community process or the health and well-being of community individuals and families.

For a number of years human ecologists have focused on "humans as both biological organisms and social beings in interaction with their environment" (Bubolz & Sontag, 1993). Human ecology theory, as practiced by professionals in the family and consumer sciences discipline (home economics in an earlier incarnation), has included a focus on elements that occupy physical space, including the near environment of home and household, to the more distant environments that are person-made and natural. An emerging literature in the public health field suggests a dynamic association between the physical and social infrastructure of communities and the importance of the built community on social organizational processes, including the nature of social interaction, the development of social capital and community capacity, as well as on health and disease outcomes (Cohen, Inagami, & Finch, 2008; Leyden, 2003; Renalds, Smith, & Hale, 2010; Srinivasan, O'Fallon, & Dearth, 2003). For example, living in walkable neighborhoods has been associated with increased social capital (e.g., knowing neighbors, trust) as compared to living in the suburbs that depend heavily on car usage (Leyden, 2003). In addition, Cohen et al. (2008) found a positive association between neighborhood collective efficacy (i.e., combined measure of social cohesion and informal social control) and the number of parks when controlling for both individual demographic characteristics and neighborhood socioeconomic status. Self-rated health, mental health status, obesity, heavy alcohol use, and risky sexual behavior have all been linked to the nature of the built environment (Cohen et al., 2008; Renalds et al., 2010).

In the context of this literature, we propose that the physical features of communities in

which individual and families reside have a reciprocal relationship with the social infrastructure of the community. Physical features of communities also have a direct influence on social organizational processes in the community, and an indirect influence on individual and family results via both social organizational processes and one's sense of community. In future iterations of our model, we also hope to give attention to the natural environment (e.g., proximity to lakes and rivers), which we believe operate in a dynamic synergy with both the social and physical infrastructure of the community.

Current Status

We see our model as a work in progress. Although with each iteration we tend to extend or revise some aspect of the model, many nuances of the interface between communities and families remain to be integrated in our theory of community action and change. For example, in a recent discussion of skilled support within intimate relationships, Rafaeli and Gleason (2009) propose that misguided or unskilled support may lead to more problems than solutions in the ways in which couples respond to external stressors. This important caveat in the dyadic support literature can be easily extended to the relationship between community support and individual and family results, and raises important questions about the timing (e.g., when is it delivered), the nature (e.g., instrumental vs. expressive), the delivery (e.g., person-focused or situation-focused), and the reciprocation of community support and whether it is viewed as a cost or as a benefit (Rafaeli & Gleason). In another recent article, Fingerman (2009) discusses the important role that peripheral ties, as compared to core ties, may play as support systems for individuals. As a broad-based framework, our theory of community action and change is fully capable of incorporating such refinements. A social organization approach accounts for the multiple permutations and nuances of those processes that surround families, as well as those structures that provide the framing for interaction and transaction.

Conclusions: Intersections of Families and Communities

In this chapter we have covered an expansive literature that links families and communities, beginning with a review of how the family field has intentionally examined the family–community touch-points. We feel our review of the earlier pivotal treatments of family studies is instructive for understanding where more contemporary theorizing and research might profitably focus. Hopefully we have interested family scholars in pursuing research that is more intentional about community influences on families. We have also attempted to provide a set of handles for not only understanding this literature but also moving the study of families and communities toward more intentional theorizing and research. This is not to suggest the existing research and theorizing is that deficient, but rather to argue that much more refinement is needed in order to position the literature to effectively inform social action, those processes that actually help families and the communities in which they live.

The intersections of families and communities have not been high on the radar of family scholars as a group, though several among us have called attention to the importance of this focus to accounting for variations in individual and family outcomes. We do wonder what would have happened if the excellent work summarized by Moge (1964) had become a mainstay of family research and of family researchers. Very many years ago this study of community contexts was eclipsed by a far greater preoccupation with looking inside the family, to the exclusion of looking outside the family. We believe that these two perspectives are complementary and that community contexts, whether studied or not, persist in the lives of all families and their individual members. It is not always clear how the collective influences the familial, yet we know some families struggle with their surroundings, both physical and social, whereas others flourish because of their surroundings, both physical and social.

Toward the end of this chapter we have presented our own trail of examining the intersections

between families and communities. If this part of the chapter seems somewhat disjointed, it does because it is—we have struggled with more fully recognizing the complexity and nuances of the relationship between families and communities with providing a simpler but perhaps more testable model. This is the yin and the yang of theory building, and we appreciate the opportunity to expose the “underbelly” of our efforts. We owe a substantial debt to many of our colleagues, past and present, who both encourage us to go further and who shake their heads when we don’t leave well enough alone.

We have proposed and elaborated a social organizational approach to understanding families and communities; this elaboration has occurred in several ways, including our critique of the published theoretical and empirical literature. In the course of that analysis we proposed a way of understanding measurement approaches, arguing for a social organizational schema and providing the indicators of such an approach. The theorizing we have conducted, substantially informed by earlier theory and research, has set out to provide an umbrella for understanding structure and process, and for parsing interdependent aspects of processes. We hope that the discussion will stimulate a call to action in what we consider to be potentially fruitful area of theory development and scholarship.

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Family Life Education: Issues and Challenges in Professional Practice

33

Charles B. Hennon, M. Elise Radina,
and Stephan M. Wilson

Although not initially called family life education (FLE), the profession and field of study has a rich history dating back to the early 1900s. More than 100 years after the field is said to have begun, Cassidy (2009) argued that, “family life education is a growing and developing field” that continues to face a variety of challenges (p. 11). In this chapter we document the evolution of FLE and offer insights into some of the challenges it faces in a diverse and modern world. Our purpose here is not to provide an exhaustive accounting of the history and professionalization of the field or to review specific contexts for FLE as these areas have been skillfully addressed elsewhere (e.g., Arcus, Schvaneveldt, & Moss, 1993; Duncan & Goddard, 2005; Powell & Cassidy, 2007). Instead, we consider the field of FLE both within histori-

cal and contemporary contexts in order to bring to light issues and challenges currently facing the field. We begin by briefly reviewing the history of FLE with regard to long-standing struggles surrounding how to define the scope, content, and intention of the field. We then briefly focus on the evolving professionalization of FLE, reflecting on how and by whom FLE is practiced, and identifying possible opportunities for enriching professional practice. We then offer insights into the issues and challenges facing two major aspects of professional practice related to ethical and appropriate FLE delivery: (a) the role of family life educators’ philosophies of education in influencing programmatic efforts and (b) approaches to the development of curriculum. We conclude by summarizing areas of challenge identified throughout the chapter and where continuing efforts for developing the field should focus.

C.B. Hennon, PhD, CFLE (✉)
Department of Family Studies and Social Work,
Center for Human Development, Learning,
and Technology, Miami University, 101 McGuffey Hall,
Oxford, OH 45056, USA
e-mail: hennoncb@muohio.edu

M.E. Radina, PhD, CFLE
Department of Family Studies and Social Work,
Miami University, 101 McGuffey Hall,
Oxford, OH 45056, USA
e-mail: radiname@muohio.edu

S.M. Wilson, Dean
Department of Human Development
and Family Science, College of Human Sciences,
Oklahoma State University, 106 HS,
Stillwater, OK 74078, USA
e-mail: stephan.m.wilson@okstate.edu

Issues in Defining Family Life Education

FLE was initiated around the turn of the twentieth century, following the conviction that problems faced by families could be informed and addressed with scientific research (Bredehoft, 2009; Doherty, 2000; Gentry, 2007). The related area of parenting education, which has now developed as a subspecialty of FLE, began even earlier, around 1815 (Doherty, Jacob, & Cutting, 2009). What follows is an historical examination of FLE with regard to the evolving definition of FLE.

Since its inception, FLE has been characterized with a myriad of attempts to define the field, often fraught with ambiguity and lack of focus (e.g., Arcus & Thomas, 1993; Darling, 1987; Duncan & Goddard, 2005; Hennon & Arcus, 1993; Kerckhoff, 1964; Myers-Walls, 2000). The process of defining the field began almost 50 years ago, with Kerckhoff (1964) who recognized many competing definitions. In so doing, he offered a “working definition” of FLE that included the notion of experiences that deliberately and consciously are used to help develop personalities, life choices, and perceptions of people as present and future family members. These capacities equip people for constructively solving problems unique to their family roles. “Deliberately and consciously” point to FLE being intended and not just the incidental consequences of other experiences that influence people’s lives and how they fulfill family role obligations (e.g., various media including television) (Pehlke, Hennon, Radina, & Kuvalanka, 2009). Kerckhoff also noted that other definitions of FLE emphasized developing human relationships, enhancing mental health, creating stronger families, and reforming society.

Kerckhoff concluded it was too early in the development of the field to expect agreement on a definition, but that some trends were emerging that seemed to give the field coherence. One trend was movement toward a more personal and relational approach to FLE and away from a focus on family as an institution. This trend emphasized preparing people for participation in a variety of relationship roles at various stages of the family life cycle. A second trend was an increasing emphasis on teaching younger children about family relationships.

Darling (1987, p. 816), writing almost 25 years after Kerckhoff, indicated that FLE, while overlapping with therapy and other interventions, was “the foremost preventative measure for the avoidance of family problems.” Darling noted that educators and others have espoused several different purposes in assisting families: prevention, education, enrichment, intervention, remediation, and therapy. All of these share common

concern with preserving and improving family life. Preventative services are attempts to keep some condition (e.g., marital discord, abusive parenting, disengaged fathers after divorce) from happening by the use of some previous action (e.g., marital enrichment, parenting skills training) (Braver, Griffin, & Cookston, 2005; Briar-Lawson, Lawson, Hennon, & Jones, 2001; Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2009; Coie et al., 1993; Grych, 2005; Kilpatrick & Holland, 2009). Darling argued that prevention, education, and enrichment programming should happen before some occurrence or incident so as to provide protection, resilience, readiness, or capacity for managing situations as they arise. That is, these types of approaches are intended to prepare a family to manage a possible upcoming issue, transition, event, and so on. Known as primary prevention, this approach is often considered the main focus of FLE (Cassidy, 2009; Darling, 1987).

Arcus and Thomas (1993) asserted that while FLE was becoming fairly well established with a variety of activities, the field of study and professional practice was still problematic. One of the problems identified was lack of consensus. After reviewing various definitions, they concluded that there were some common threads, such as a focus on interpersonal relationships. However, there were many differences, such as the appropriate level of analysis/intervention (i.e., individual or family), the extent to which FLE is functional or having an applied focus vs. an academic subject, whether the focus should be on problem solving vs. the development of potentials, and the tension between a primary concern with knowledge development vs. the inclusion of attitudes and skills.

While indicating the importance of a shared definition for FLE, Arcus and Thomas (1993) argued that three factors emerged concerning the purpose of FLE: (a) the earlier rationale of helping families deal with the social problems of the times, (b) the unchallenged assumption that if only families could learn how to do the right things, then many family problems would be prevented, and (c) the belief that family members

would have the opportunity to develop their potentials. Based on these purposes, a host of objectives, operational principles, and goals for the field have been specified. Serving as guideposts for decision-making, FLE operational principles have been identified as follows (Arcus & Thomas):

- Is relevant to individuals and families throughout the life span
- Should be based on the needs of individuals and families
- Is a multidisciplinary area of study and is multi-professional in its practice
- Is offered in many different settings
- Takes an educational rather than a therapeutic approach
- Should present and respect differing family values

Meanwhile, Arcus elaborated on the need for a conceptualization of FLE that included a life span approach (Arcus, 1987; Hennon & Arcus, 1993). This perspective has continued to be considered an essential aspect of the field (Bredehoft & Walcheski, 2009; Powell & Cassidy, 2007). A life span approach is grounded in two assumptions: (a) people of all ages could benefit from learning about the many different aspects of family life, and (b) learning opportunities are available during each developmental phase. Thus, over time, the content of FLE and the audiences targeted has evolved and is an important topic addressed later in this chapter.

The National Council on Family Relations (NCFR) serves as the professional home for FLE as this is the organization that first sought to professionalize the field. This began in 1984 with the introduction of guidelines for FLE curricula and professional standards for certification (Darling, Fleming, & Cassidy, 2009). Given the central role played in professionalizing the field, NCFR (n.d.) offers the following definition of FLE:

Family life education focuses on healthy family functioning within a family systems perspective and provides a primarily preventive approach. The skills and knowledge needed for healthy functioning are widely known: strong communication skills, knowledge of typical human development, good decision-making skills, positive self-esteem, and healthy interpersonal relationships. The goal

of family life education is to teach and foster this knowledge and these skills to enable individuals and families to function optimally. Family life education professionals consider societal issues including economics, education, work-family issues, parenting, sexuality, gender and more within the context of the family. They believe that societal problems such as substance abuse, domestic violence, unemployment, debt, and child abuse can be more effectively addressed from a perspective that considers the individual and family as part of larger systems. Knowledge about healthy family functioning can be applied to prevent or minimize many of these problems. Family life education provides this information through an educational approach, often in a classroom-type setting or through educational materials.

This definition is comprehensive and detailed, offering a solid foundation upon which further elaboration can be built. Specifically, NCFR has identified ten content areas of expertise required for certification as a family life educator. A degree of expertise is expected in each of these areas for certification, regardless of which path to certification a professional takes (see Table 33.1). These paths will be discussed in the next section.

Recently, these ten substance areas have been further articulated to reflect specific areas of expertise across the life span. For example, for Substance Area #10: FLE Methodology, the training for family life educators should include content and relevant experiences in program development, delivery, and evaluation aimed at audiences from children to older adults, and all ages in between.

Challenge #1: Continuing Issues of Defining the Field

The field of FLE has a long history of difficulty in defining itself. This difficulty continues today and will likely continue in the future. As the field moves forward, it will require further professional and intellectual debate. Current efforts by NCFR to enlist the perspectives of educators in this process (e.g., Darling et al., 2009) is a positive step toward the development of a definition of FLE that best reflects the focus and content of FLE practice.

Table 33.1 Certified family life educator substance areas

Substance area	Description
Area #1: Families and individuals in societal contexts	Knowledge of how families and individuals function in relation to social contexts (e.g., schools, churches, workplaces, government programs)
Area #2: Internal dynamics of families	Knowledge of family functioning and how family members interact with each other
Area #3: Human growth and development	Knowledge of life span human development experienced by individuals in families
Area #4: Human sexuality	Knowledge of the diverse aspects of sexual development and experiences across the life span
Area #5: Interpersonal relationships	Knowledge of functioning and development of interpersonal relationships
Area #6: Family resource management	Knowledge of decision-making process by individuals and families with regard to resource allocation
Area #7: Parenting education and guidance	Knowledge of parenting and how to guide parents in their parenting
Area #8: Family law and public policy	Knowledge of legal issues, policies, and laws and their influence on family life
Area #9: Professional ethics and practice	Knowledge and critical examination of professional practice with regard to ethical questions and issues
Area #10: Family life education methodology	Knowledge of how to plan, implement, and evaluate family life education

Adapted from National Council on Family Relations (2010)

Working Conceptualization of Family Life Education

Bredheft (2009) noted that FLE has undergone many revisions and refinements over its history and there is no generally agreed upon designation of the profession, content, or procedures. Perhaps a good sensitizing idea is provided by Myers-Walls (2000, p. 359) in her assertion that “boiling down the field of FLE to its essence, family life educators educate families and educate about

families.” Thus, for the purposes of this chapter, we use a broad conceptualization of FLE. We understand that FLE is ideally preventative in nature, but also includes aspects of secondary and tertiary intervention. Throughout this chapter the term intervention is used to describe any type of formal action designed to somehow positively influence family life, fostering the attainment of ends desired by the recipients of the intervention (e.g., Guerney & Guerney, 1981). FLE is an intervention that differs from therapy, social policy, or social services in terms of approach and goals. The terms family life educator (FLEs), professional, educator, and practitioner are also used interchangeably.

We further understand that FLE can include a large audience and presentations, as well as one-on-one education and skills modeling. The incorporation of support groups, psycho-educational and socio-educational modalities, home visiting, and collaboration with therapy and other clinical interventions are viable approaches. Mass media approaches are common, including newspapers, magazines, and websites. A diversity of topics are encompassed, those promoted by NCFR, but perhaps others, and a diversity of family types (e.g., ethnicity, religion, SES, marital status, sexual orientation, structure, immigration status, county of origin or residence) are to be inclusive in culturally relevant and specific manners.

Family Life Education as a Profession

Darling et al. (2009) conducted a survey of family life educators “to determine the core competencies needed for entry-level family life educators, which were refined and incorporated into the creation of the new CFLE examination” (p. 331). Certified Family Life Educators (CFLEs) and noncertified practitioners were asked about the relevance of the ten content areas used in the NCFR certification exam compared to what the respondents actually do. Results showed that the ten areas were supported by these family professionals. There were some differences in how the two groups perceived the importance of the content areas.

Compared to the noncertified group, CFLEs more often reported that entry-level family life

educators needed expertise in Internal Dynamics of Families, Human Growth and Development, Human Sexuality, Interpersonal Relationships, Family Resource Management, and FLE Methodology, rather than the other family life content areas endorsed by NCFR. The survey also asked about specific topics, and some differences were found in items such as: recognize the psychosocial aspects of human sexuality in interpersonal dynamics of sexual intimacy; promote healthy parenting from a systems perspective; and recognize the reciprocal influences of family development on individuals and individual development on families.

The NCFR *Content and Practice Guidelines* (<http://www.ncfr.org/cert/become/>) emerged from this research. This is a tool that can be used as university programs develop curricula, market programs on campuses and in their local areas, and help graduates in marketing and profiling their credentials. An emerging recognition of the importance of prevention as preferred to intervention, as well as the ten CFLE content areas, makes the work of FLEs increasingly more critical (Darling et al., 2009).

NCFR has been offering FLEs a variety of professional development opportunities and resources, such as the NCFR newsletter (i.e., *Network*), as well as workshops and presentations at the NCFR annual conference. Given that entry-level FLEs often have lower incomes, attending the annual conference and benefiting from the professional development opportunities is often difficult. Strategies for diminishing this educational obstacle would be the creation of more regional and local opportunities for professional development, mentoring, and networking.

Family Life Education Professionals

FLEs are employed in a variety of settings, both in the USA and elsewhere (Darling et al., 2009). A survey of 522 CFLEs and 369 noncertified family practitioners, of which 51 % identified themselves as family life educators, showed that they are employed in nonprofit organizations (52 %), government (33 %), and for-profit organizations (15 %). The nature of their work is not

necessarily labeled FLE and tends to occur in organizations that focus primarily on education (66 %), intervention (14 %), and prevention (11 %). FLEs are slightly more likely to hold a bachelors degree (21 %) compared to the noncertified group (17 %). One reason for this is that individuals who have attended a bachelor's degree program that offers an approved CFLE curriculum are able to utilize an abbreviated certification process as opposed to sitting for the certification exam. The most common field where FLEs hold their highest degrees is human development and family studies/science (36 % for CFLEs, 43 % the noncertified).

The primary area of career practice is college/university education (19 %) with the next largest being parent education (12 %). The respondents to the survey were also employed in areas focusing on counseling/therapy (9 %), marriage/relationship education (7 %), and cooperative extension/community education (5 %). Most were employed in postsecondary education (CFLEs 34 %; noncertified 39 %). Community-based service settings were where 21 % were employed and 13 % were employed in preschool through secondary education settings. Other practice settings included private (10 % CFLEs; 6 % noncertified; 8 % overall), faith-based (9 % CFLEs; 4 % noncertified), and 5 % in government/military.

It appears that the "typical" family life educator, regardless of certification, has a master's degree in human development/family science, is employed by a nonprofit organization having an educational focus, and whose primary area of practice is college/university education. Among the CFLE respondents, 79 % had full CFLE status, and 21 % were provisional CFLEs, with 72 % being family life educators for 10 years or less (range 0–46 years; mean=9 years).

Challenge #2: Recruiting and Retaining Family Life Educators from Diverse Backgrounds

A major challenge for the field of FLE is recruiting and retaining educators from diverse backgrounds. The work of Darling et al. (2009)

indicates that the majority of family life educators are white (86 %) and female (59 %). The researchers noted that these demographics indicate a need for greater efforts in recruiting and retaining FLEs who are more diverse in racial/ethnic background, and the necessity of having FLEs who can address, in an effective manner, the diversity found in the USA. That is, concerted efforts are needed within the field to recruit educators whose backgrounds are reflective of the populations with whom FLE programming may be directed. At the same time, the training of all family life educators should include developing cultural competency.

Challenge #3: Developing Educators' Cultural Competency

Over the last few decades there has been increased recognition that effective FLE must incorporate cultural values, norms, and life ways of diverse populations into content and delivery systems. Recognition of the need in FLE to acquire cultural competence is addressed by several authors (e.g., Allen & Blaisure, 2009; Duncan & Goddard, 2005; Gentry, 2007; Hennon, Peterson, Hildenbrand, & Wilson, 2008; Hughes & Perry-Jenkins, 1996; Myers-Walls, 2000; Radina, Wilson, & Hennon, 2008). At the same time, *The Guidelines for Ethical Thinking and Practice for Parent and Family Life Educators* (NCFR, 2009) testify that family life educators are to respect cultural diversity, encourage diversity in the staffing within their organizations, and participate in ongoing training to improve skills and increase knowledge to foster cultural competence. These efforts to enhance cultural competence include the acquisition of "enduring understanding" that goes beyond specific empirical knowledge.

Enduring understandings are transferable ideas to help in being a life-long learner of family diversity and being a culturally-competent professional. Such understandings include: (a) interpreting family behavior from the point of view of its culture; (b) knowing where a family lives (e.g., culture, political system, available resources, geography, religious hegemonism, being a member of a ethn-

ocultural minority) because these influence how they live; (c) understanding that cultures are complex, not static, and vary in homogeneity or pluralism; (d) being aware that culture is dynamic and what is true at one time may not be true in another time, or what is true of that culture in one context may not hold for that culture in another context (e.g., after migration, urban compared to rural area); (e) knowing that not all families sharing a given culture or ethnicity will be alike nor will they necessarily share the same acculturation strategies or adapt to a new culture in a like manner; (f) understanding that some aspects of family life appear to be rather universal, while others are rather specific to certain groups; (g) being aware that more knowledge leads to better, more culturally appropriate programming; and (h) knowing that increased understanding can both lead to greater cultural-sensitivity and acceptance by reducing naive or provincial attitudes or beliefs, but can also lead only to enhanced awareness that can reinforce stereotypes, prejudice, and intolerance (Radina et al., 2008, pp. 386–387).

Thus, according to Radina and colleagues, enlightenment can be a goal, even if absolute cultural competency is not. FLE professionals' attempts to acquire some level of cultural competency are important in order for them to be effective with groups differing from their own native culture.

Challenge #4: Increasing the Professional Profile of FLE

In addition to the diversity of educators themselves, Darling et al. (2009) noted that only 20 % of CFLEs were in community-based services, and less were in other placements such as schools and private practice. A consequence is that CFLEs have a low professional profile and there is insufficient marketing of FLEs. Darling et al. (2009, p. 340) pointed out that, "the growing number of NCFR-approved programs and recent work by NCFR to have the U.S. Department of Labor include the term 'family life educator' in the Department of Labor's Career One Stop website (www.dol.careerOneStop.gov), suggests an increasing number of family life educators entering into the professional world and a growing recognition of their certification." Improving the professional profile of FLE will continue to be a challenge for the field.

Ethical and Appropriate Delivery of Family Life Education

The delivery of FLE with regard to content, planning, and evaluation has been widely discussed elsewhere (e.g., Arcus et al., 1993; Duncan & Goddard, 2005; Powell & Cassidy, 2007). What we have chosen to focus on here is the ethical and appropriate delivery of FLE, and planning of FLE consistent with the FLE's philosophy of education. We focus on "ethical and appropriate" program delivery because FLE should be presented in thoughtful and deliberate ways in order to reflect an authentic educator who is in touch with him/herself and the target population who is benefiting from the programming. We discuss various approaches to program delivery in an effort to highlight areas of challenge for both the field and individual educators.

Philosophy of (Family Life) Education

Interventions of all types are moral enterprises. That is, they have their foundation in the dominant power position of the interventionist (e.g., educator/facilitator) who has the potential to influence others. Such interventionists often engage in intentional or goal-directed behaviors, for themselves and others. Moral education is sometimes involved, with recipients of the intervention being encouraged to be contemplative about their conduct and what is "right" (Tennyson & Strom, 1986). We argue that FLE, because it harnesses these hallmarks of intervention, is a moral enterprise. Thus, FLEs should base their actions on carefully considered reflexivity—the critical self-awareness of the experiences of self and others (Allen & Fransworth, 1993). For FLEs, deciding how those targeted for education should or should not behave is a moral decision, influenced by personal and professional values. Without critical self-reflection, an educator could be unaware of what values he/she holds (e.g., patriarchal vs. feminist, middle-class hegemony vs. radical change), and what philosophy or paradigm guides his/her personal and professional

lives. As a result, the instruction he/she provides could be based on unexamined biases about what is considered "correct" knowledge to teach, how and when to teach it, and to and by whom it should be taught. It is important for FLEs to critically examine what beliefs, values, and attitudes they bring to their practice (Dail, 1984), as they may be imposing their own values on the learners, without considering that many moral or value positions might be valid. It is for this reason that "Professional Ethics and Practice" is one of the ten content areas for FLE certification by NCFR (e.g., Adams, Dollahite, Gilbert, & Keim, 2009; Minnesota Council on Family Relations, 2009).

Being self-reflexive means having an understanding of one's own motives as an educator and one's philosophy of education. This philosophy reflects an understanding of what FLE is and does, the FLE's role and level of involvement with learners, the nature of knowledge and how it is to be acquired, conception of learners including attention to learning styles, and the best instructional models to match the learning needed or desired by people. In considering such a philosophy of FLE, educators might consider questions aimed at helping with values clarification such as: Do you want to maintain the status quo in terms of what is considered appropriate family behavior? Do you want to help people better themselves? Do you want people to help themselves? Does society need to be reshaped, perhaps drastically? How can you practice FLE in a way that best serves your desired purposes?

Self-reflexivity additionally means critically assessing one's subject matter and pedagogical knowledge and improving as necessary. Being self-reflexive leads to understanding learners or program participants. These perspectives naturally entail who is responsible for both problems and solutions, how much agency learners have in determining their own educational needs, wants, desires, and demands, as well as their role in deciding how and where to acquire information. It also includes consideration of learning styles and motivation for learning.

In this portion of the chapter, we review issues related to formulating a FLE philosophy: values clarification, educator-learner relationships,

helping models/paradigms, and types of service delivery. Below, we provide an overview of possible issues and approaches that FLEs may consider in their professional practice.

Values Clarification

An important aspect of a FLE philosophy is values clarification. Specifically, this involves becoming aware of what, why, and how educators think about questions such as: What is meant by “family?” Who constitutes family? Who is held responsible for problematic family outcomes? Is it the individual members, parents, the total family, the kinship group, social service agencies, communities, or society? Who gets blamed or criticized when undesirable family outcomes result from how families function?

There are many ways to think about how to answer such questions. For example, systems theory and ecological thinking might help in placing responsibility. Thinking in reductionist or individualistic, rather than system terms, will often lead to placing blame at different levels. Other ways to think about these issues might include liberal vs. conservative values, seeing families as private vs. public, and ideas about self-sufficiency (i.e., individualism) vs. community (i.e., collectivistic) interests. Whether one considers families from an individual, relationship, group, or institutional framework, the level of analysis provides ways to answer these questions.

One useful conceptual distinction for considering these questions is provided by Mills (1969), who noted that personal/family troubles are private matters. We use Mills’ ideas as an exemplar of one way to think about these questions with regard to values clarification for the FLE professional. According to Mills, personal troubles reside in individuals and families due to their distinctive values, decision-making, and behaviors. Because people and families thus create their own problems, solutions lie within them. For example, if in a given location or time period, few families experience particular troubles (e.g., neglect of children, overwhelming stress, dissatisfying relationships), then one might assume that when a family experiences these troubles,

they are due to the family’s own actions. FLE would seem to be best applied at the family level, because the problem appears to lie within such fundamental relationships.

Similarly, the conceptualization that personal/family troubles are private matters, also applies to the thinking that families alone should deal with their troubles. Policy makers, educators, and others can absolve themselves from responsibility for families and excuse themselves from intervening. The families might be viewed as deficient or deviant, and the intervention comes only when things get out of hand (Coie et al., 1993). The intervention is thus directed toward correcting individual family or personal pathology, deviancy, or shortcomings.

A contrasting point of view is the idea that personal troubles are not caused simply by the values, decision-making, and actions of families but that other forces (e.g., policies, cultural values, social attitudes) may be at work. When many families are facing similar difficulties (e.g., unemployment), these difficulties might be considered social issues. Such difficulties might well be regarded as symptoms of underlying structural problems, large-scale contradictions, and problems in the larger society.

While still holding to a view of families as private spheres, framing their problems as social issues allows for a differing sense of who is responsible and how families may be assisted. In this view, the intervention is not one that blames families, but tries to help them cope in a difficult social structure (perhaps using empowerment paradigms), or an intervention that tries to change the social structure. One consideration is if the structure of a community or society is such that families are finding it hard to function well, then just educating families might not be enough. These resistant social conditions will repeatedly confront families with obstacles to healthy family functioning and good quality of life. As such, advocating for families and working to change society while helping empower or assist families, might be a prudent course of action.

Viewing family challenges and problems as social issues suggests a need for the provision of

Table 33.2 Doherty's (2009) levels of involvement model

Level	Role of families	Role of professional
Minimal emphasis on families	Limited, included only for practical or legal reasons	Program creation without input from families
Information and advice	Collaborators in program development	Expert, responsible for program leadership and conveying accurate information and advice
Feelings and support	Encouraged to share feelings and experiences within a group setting that is billed as educational	Similar to Level Two but also skilled in group process
Brief focused intervention	Contractual arrangement allowing engagement at a level of intensity beyond that found in standard FLE	Similar to earlier levels but includes assessment and planned efforts to assist in changing troublesome problems
Family therapy	Collaborator in enacting personal change	Trained therapist skilled in clinical techniques

Adapted from National Council on Family Relations (2009)

appropriate services and resources that are supportive of families. Rather than seeing problems as family deficits, problems are defined as a mismatch or shortfall between what families require for healthy functioning, and what resources are available to deal with their circumstances. In this view, communities and professionals take on the responsibility of helping to assure that supportive services and resources (e.g., knowledge, skills) are available to all families.

Educator–Learner Relationship(s)

In further crafting and articulating one's philosophy of FLE, the educator must decide on the appropriate level or extent of involvement with learners. Here we discuss two frameworks: Doherty's (2009) Levels of Involvement and the Family Protection and Enhancement Continuum (Briar-Lawson et al., 2001; Hennon & Jones, 2000). Educators may need to consider the relationship of educators and learners in their philosophies of FLE.

Levels of Involvement Model

Doherty's (2009) continuum of Levels of Family Involvement for FLEs is a useful device for helping to understand the difference between family therapy and FLE, as well as helping to comprehend the different roles of FLEs (see Table 33.2). As FLE professionals review this continuum, it is likely there is a level of intensity of involvement that they find attractive. This preference for a

particular level of involvement, or what the educator thinks is the right way to practice education, is thus a constitutive element of the philosophy of FLE. The appropriate level depends on several factors including the educator's training and self-confidence, as well as characteristics of the learners and the intention of the education. FLE professionals might find they require additional knowledge and skills to practice at their desired level. They might also find that their level of involvement may change as they develop new knowledge and skills.

An example of *Minimal Emphasis on Families* is school-focused interventions where parents and their children are "called in" to discuss issues with school personal, or to listen to what professionals have to say. This level is more individual or organization-centered than family-centered. Much like a medical or enlightenment model (Hennon & Arcus, 1993), this level of involvement requires that families be compliant and support and cooperate with the designs of the professional. As Doherty (2009) noted, "Level One programs are increasingly being seen as inadequate ways to work with families and are even contrary to federal law in the case of children with special educational needs" (p. 255).

Activities at Level Two, *Information and Advice*, include the professional as a "speaker" at various social or civic functions, or offering one-shot didactic workshops, but that include families in collaborative ways. This level requires the

professional to provide information on community resources as necessary, have a good grasp of the basic theories and research on family functioning, and know how to convey this information in clear and interesting ways. Level Two also involves the use of good communication skills that allow clarity in engaging groups in the process of education, sharing information, asking and answering questions, and offering recommendations that are focused, effective, and honest. The professional must also be open to engaging families and their members in an accepting and collaborative manner, rather than “doing to” families. One strength of Level Two is that a large number of people can be reached with more generic and universally applicable information. This level also has its drawbacks including the following: (a) the information is conveyed in a “sterile environment” (i.e., little self-disclosure), (b) personal discussions are not encouraged, and (c) the presentations lack the depth many would think necessary for motivating participants to engage in meaningful change.

Doherty (2009) argued that Level Three, *Feelings and Support*, is the optimal in degree of intensity for most FLE, as it combines information and affect. At Level Three, educational interventions have participants share their feelings and personal experiences (e.g., series of parenting seminars/workshops with the same participants, stress management or conflict resolution workshops, socio-educative approaches) (Afonso, Hennon, Carico, Ormiston, & Peterson, 2009). Interventions of this type include the FLE’s knowledge and skills required for Level Two, plus certain additional skills (e.g., empathetic listening that creates an open, trusting, and supportive environment; collaborative problem solving approaches that provide tailored recommendations). The required knowledge for the FLE includes basic information on family functioning, as well as the emotional aspects of group process (Bredehoft & Walcheski, 2009).

Another characteristic of this level is that the education is directed toward what can be considered the normative stresses of daily family living. Traumatic personal memories and experiences are not the focus of inquiry, nor are they elicited.

In fact, the educator must be skilled in “only going so far” and not enticing learners to reveal more traumatic or intensely personal experiences, feelings, and meanings. The educator requires skills for both protecting learners from being too self-disclosing and for making appropriate referrals to mental health professionals as necessary. Likewise, educators have to be comfortable with and reflexive about their own feelings and responses so that they can act appropriately as information is disclosed. Appropriate skills include knowing how to remain “connected” to the participant without trying to rescue or flee. Common mistakes made by educators trying to operate at this level of intervention are: (a) directing attention too quickly back to the total group due to personal discomfort, (b) cutting off too quickly the person making a disclosure and thus premature recommendations are made without a full understanding of the total context, feelings, etc., and (c) in an honest attempt to be helpful, probing too deeply into the learner’s perceptions of distress. FLEs must know how to privately talk with the persons expressing pain in order to discuss referral to a trained clinician, or to a more appropriate Level Four educational intervention.

Level Four, *Brief Focused Intervention*, includes educational practices adding to the level of intensity and skills already discussed and bordering on family therapy. Level Four interventions are particularly suited for vulnerable or at-risk families (e.g., teen parents with multiple problems, families included in child protection services, or families with chronically ill members). Necessary skills for work at this level include assessing family problems and understanding context, and the development of appropriate interventions. It also requires the ability to ask appropriate questions for developing a detailed picture of family dynamics, and formulating hypotheses about particular family dynamics. Although not considered family therapy according to Doherty’s (2009) model, Level Four can resemble family therapy in its use of brief focused interventions involving brief periods of working with people in order to solve a problem and change family patterns beyond those “identified” as the “problem” and knowing when

to bring closure to this intensity of involvement, and providing referrals in an appropriate and acceptable manner. Level Four entails working with therapists, and not as therapists, as well as other community resources who can assist a particular family or families.

Educators wishing to engage participants at this level must have appropriate professional training, including having done personal work examining their own feelings and relationships with their families of origin and creation, as well as community systems (Doherty, 2009; Kilpatrick & Holland, 2009). This is necessary so that educators can avoid triangulated relations with the learner against the other significant people involved in the problem of focus. The appropriate knowledge base includes what was discussed above, as well as some level of sophisticated understanding of family systems theory and how to work with families.

Because educators are increasingly asked to work with at-risk families and those with multiple stressors or problems, the boundaries of FLE are enlarged beyond the more typical information provision and supportive services. FLEs working within this mode are likely to engage in collaborative relationships with other professionals, such as therapists (e.g., psycho-educational or socio-educative practices). FLEs can educate while other professionals can do what they are trained to do and in total, families will be well served.

Level Four demands: (a) careful curriculum planning and decision-making, (b) acceptance by participants, (c) and appropriate training for the leader, as well as good professional relationships with therapists, other clinical staff, mental health professionals, and social service providers in the community. At this level, the group work and group process differs from that found at the less intense levels of family involvement. During any given educational episode, the facilitator and group may work extensively on only one, two, or three problems presented by members. If the situation calls for it, Level Three groups may move to a more intensive Level Four for a time in order to be of assistance to a member facing a particular difficulty (Doherty, 2009).

Family Therapy, Level Five, is beyond the mission of FLE. Thus, Level Five interventions are not considered FLE and should only be engaged in by trained and licensed family therapists. The difference between Levels Four and Five is that family therapy includes a knowledge base grounded in family systems, family patterns, and distressed families, and how to collaboratively interact with professionals and other community systems (Corey & Corey, 2007; Doherty, 2009; Kilpatrick & Holland, 2009). Those engaged in family therapy must receive specialized training and be able to handle intense emotions, both their own and those of the families with whom they are interacting. Required skills include interviewing, dealing constructively with families' resistance to change, overcoming difficulty with engagement, and knowing how to escalate conflict so families can break through impasses. Family therapy involves working intensely with families during times of crises and negotiating collaborative relationships with others who are working with the same families, even when these others are uncooperative or at odds with each other. Marriage and family therapists (MFT), or couple and family therapists (CFT), currently have licensure requirements in all 50 states (see Bartle-Haring & Slesnick, Chap. 34). The requirements include a clinical master's degree, such as in Marriage and Family Therapy, or Counseling/Clinical Social Work with specific training in family therapy; and MFT/CFT supervised clinical experience (i.e., during graduate level training as well as post masters—depending on degree and the type/level of licensure).

Family Protection and Enhancement Continuum

Another continuum useful in thinking about a FLE philosophy is the Family Protection and Enhancement Continuum (Briar-Lawson et al., 2001; Hennon & Jones, 2000) (see Table 33.3). For programs in the first place on the continuum, *family-insensitive* interventions, families are not served well and sometimes are actually harmed. Examples include sex education programs developed without regard to the impact they may have

Table 33.3 Family protection and enhancement continuum

Title	Description	Role(s) of learner	Role(s) of educator
Family-insensitive	Educational interventions developed within social service sector (e.g., health, education) that ignore families	Not involved or considered	All knowing expert
Family-sensitive	Policies or practices that offer only superficial consideration of family needs	Not involved	All knowing expert, little real regard is given to the many potential positive or negative impacts the program might have on families as systems
Family-focused	Programs that are specifically aimed at helping families but do not involve specific perspectives of families in program development	Families are considered and accommodated in program design and delivery	Expert responsible for program design, delivery, and evaluation
Family-centered	Programs focused on considerations of what is best for families	Families come first in planning and delivery of the intervention	Expert who uses and perhaps input from families empirically based information in program design
Family-centric	Programs that consider families' perspectives and not special interest groups, or sector specific specialists	Families considered partners/coauthors of educational plan, not clients to be served	Partners/coauthors of programming with families

Adapted from Briar-Lawson et al. (2001) and Hennon and Jones (2000)

on families or what parents desire their children to learn, and how home–school policy is formulated and practiced without regard to consequences for families with diverse capacities and resources (e.g., employed single parents who may not be able to meet school expectations for parental involvement do to constraints on their time).

Interventions can be “falsely” regarded as *family-sensitive* when families receive “lip-service” and may be mentioned, or presumed impacts are considered in often general or vague terms. For example, a health sector sex education program may mention families but does not really take families and their functioning into account as the program is developed. As a result, families are still not well served or supported, and may even be unintentionally harmed. Educators may assume that they know what is best when designing a program with little real regard given to the many potential positive or negative impacts the program might have on families as systems. On closer inspection, however, it might be discovered that it is difficult to predict the ways families will be assisted or supported, or further deteriorated.

In Doherty's (2009) levels of involvement continuum, work done at Level One (i.e., *Minimal Emphasis on Families*) could be family-sensitive and even family-insensitive. Doherty's Level Two, *Information and Advice*, is similar to the Family Protection and Enhancement Continuum's *family-focused* intervention. With these types of interventions, families receive the attention and consideration they deserve. Planners begin to ask questions concerning assurances for families, such as: Will this intervention harm families? Have a full range of potential benefits and the range of drawbacks been identified? Actual consulting with families is not likely to be done, but outcomes of the intervention for the support of families have been carefully considered. At the same time, all possible consequences of programming for families are not precisely investigated, cultural and other values might not be adequately considered, nor are families' various roles in the educational process necessarily well thought-out. As a result, families may still unintentionally be in harm's way with this type of FLE process.

Family-centered approaches are based on more holistic, systemic, and ecological approaches. These approaches assign priority to the family level of analysis at least equally or more relative to other sectors considered as necessary. In these types of intervention designs, families are not simply regarded as just another sector of society, but as the cornerstone of society. The primary concern driving family-centered interventions is the question “what is best for families?” Individual family members or other social sectors are not ignored; rather they are considered in terms of how they relate to family systems and how their policies and practices may be adjusted or accommodated so that they “wrap-around” or are otherwise supportive of families. This type of FLE is similar to the third or fourth levels of involvement as discussed by Doherty (2009).

There are two major characteristics of family-centric interventions. First, families are enfranchised and empowered, with capacity building, strengthening, and democratizing the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the FLE intervention cycle as major goals. Not only whose voice is heard, but related concerns involve determining how problems are named and framed, as well as how educational policy and conduct decisions are made. Likewise, who participates in the accountability and processing of FLE is given careful thought, with emphasis being placed on ensuring that inclusiveness of all families served by the program/intervention is practiced. Two family accountability questions are asked: To what extent are families included in the decision-making processes concerning their education and support, and to what extent are families included in implementation and evaluation of FLE programming? Second, family-centric perspectives are holistic in that they consider the family as a whole, but nevertheless hold the premise that families are basic units of society influencing social behavior in many important ways. Consistent with family systems and social ecology theory, this approach to intervention situates the individual and the family within a larger ecology or systems.

Helping Models/Paradigms

An important aspect of developing a FLE philosophy is to set forth precisely and systematically the educator’s views concerning the location of, and responsibility for, family problems and who is most accountable for solving these problems. One way to do this is to identify the helping model or paradigm that the educator finds most comfortable, as this will likely form the framework shaping many aspects of an intervention. A helping paradigm may include several components such as: (a) how family problems are named, framed, and prioritized, (b) the necessity of offering FLE, and (c) the approaches undertaken in designing and delivering FLE (Briar-Lawson et al., 2001; Hennon & Arcus, 1993; Hughes, 1994). Clear enunciation of an approach to helping, as well as the articulation between it and the delivery of FLE, can result in the design of better intervention programs that achieve desired goals. This can also help intervention planners realize that they could have been applying the wrong helping or delivery model to the prevention, abatement, or remediation of identified family issues. Brickman et al. (1982) suggested that many times programs have failed to alleviate a problem, and the response has been to apply a similar ill-designed program to that problem. Failure may be the result of having developed a program that does not match the intentions of either the target population or the educator.

It is important to consider a variety of ways of thinking about FLE in order to best understand the types of FLE strategies. Two such strategies are the Brickman et al. (1982) approach that identified four helping models or paradigms, and the strategy by Guernsey and Guernsey (1981) and Guernsey, Coufal, and Vogelsong (1981) that offered various service delivery models. These two strategies are presented in order to highlight the unique perspectives on FLE provided by both helping paradigms and service delivery models. Helping models or paradigms focus on identifying where the locus of the problem lies and whose responsibility it is to address the problem.

Service delivery models go further and define various roles of the actors who must deal with the problem. Together these two strategies elucidate the various ways FLEs might approach their work.

Brickman Typology of Helping Models/Paradigms

The Brickman typology (Brickman et al., 1982) varies on two important dimensions—who is considered responsible for the problem (i.e., who is to blame) and who is considered responsible for alleviating the problem (i.e., who is to take actions toward a solution). The models or paradigms include the moral, enlightenment, medical, and compensatory/empowerment approaches. Table 33.4 summarizes each of these models/paradigms with regard to their strengths and weakness and these dimensions.

The moral and enlightenment models/paradigms share a focus on who is considered responsible for the problem. These two models/paradigms differ, however, as to who accepts the responsibilities for alleviating or ameliorating the problems and in terms of what roles both families and educators would take in this regard. Intervention programs based on the *moral model* require participants to take clear moral stances on accepting responsibility for both the mess they are in and for getting out of it. For example, FLE grounded in principles of the moral model would consist of instruction designed to motivate families to take actions to change their ways. Families might be reminded or educated about what they have done and perhaps why this has happened. Likewise, families would be rewarded for taking positive actions to self-solve their problems and getting themselves out of their situations.

Programs designed using the *enlightenment model* are aimed at enlightening people about the “true” nature of their problems and the difficult actions required to deal with them. The educational and perhaps support intervention program being offered is presented as *the* acceptable and correct way to change one’s life and alleviate identified problems. Various 12-step programs fall under the enlightenment model umbrella. Similarly, any program that tells families exactly

how to achieve a desired goal, especially in a lock-step fashion, is typically of the enlightenment type. The key difference between programming based on this versus other models is that this programming expects the recipients to accept responsibility for their problems and to accept the correct (enlightened) path to alleviate these problems.

FLE intervention programs based upon the *medical model*, like the enlightenment model, require participants to place faith in a program. The creators and the dispensers of solutions (i.e., prescriptions) also probably hold strong opinions about the correctness of the designed intervention. After all, they are the experts and the recipients are merely clients or people to be educated. Problems can be traced to such “root causes” (i.e., diseases of social origin) as racism, sexism, a class society, or globalization; inadequate access to the opportunity structure; or weak or inadequate values being transmitted through a culture of poverty. According to the users of the medical model, the current problems or needs of families are not necessarily their fault. The victims should not be blamed, nor should they be expected to be responsible for alleviating their problems. Experts take the role of physician and thus observe the situation, diagnose the problem, and prescribe the remedy. Recipients provide information asked for, accept the expert advice, and carry out the prescribed course of action exactly as directed. Recipients are expected to do whatever is prescribed to “get well” in order to have a healthy family. That is, learn the correct concepts, skills, and motivation, and then apply this to their situation. The expert might only “see” things narrowly or sector specific and thus name and frame (i.e., assigning a conceptual label to and providing a solution context for a phenomenon) without consideration to broader contexts and situations.

The fourth model is the *compensatory* or *empowerment* model and is based on several fundamental assumptions. First, people are assumed to be cognizant of their own needs, desires, values, and goals, and further, that people have the capacity to identify these and put them into action. Empowerment is based on a non-deficit model; that is, one assuming that all individuals,

Table 33.4 Brickman's typology of helping models (Brickman et al., 1982)

	Moral model	Enlightenment model	Medical model	Compensatory/empowerment model
Description/goal	Helping families accept responsibility for problems rather than blaming others, and motivating them to improve situations	Enlightening families to accept responsibility for their problems, and encouraging acceptable pathways to change	Based upon research and theory, experts design best courses of action to alleviate identified problems	Educators act as collaborators within empowerment mode of intervention or helping
Locus of problem	Families	Families	External factors	External factors
Locus of responsibility	Families	Families with enlightenment provided by professional	Experts/professionals	Families and experts/professionals
Strengths of model	Families become independent and innovative while taking care of themselves without dependency on others	Programming provides emotional support and access to opportunities, motivation, and education	Allows families to claim and accept help without being blamed for personal weakness or for having created their own problems	Directing families' energies outward toward solving problems, without self-blame for having created the problems
Weaknesses of model	Families viewed as solely responsible for themselves and thus systemic, cultural, and situational causes are ignored	Fanatical/obsessive concerns with problems Restructuring life around behaviors and interpersonal relations designed to help Programs require acceptance of both negative images of self and submission to agents of change Alternatives are rejected	Families seen as ill, exempt from ordinary social responsibilities, and often required to accept a passive role Families may become dependent because of expected passivity and willing acceptance of expert diagnosis Families' expertise ignored May be narrow in scope or disregard alternatives	Alienation than can result from being held responsible for solving problems not of one's own making

families, and communities have strengths upon which they can build. FLE based upon this model takes the view that families are not considered responsible for their problems, but are considered responsible for devising and carrying through on solutions to these problems. In this category of FLE programming, participants are viewed “as having to compensate for the handicaps or obstacles imposed on them by their situation with a special kind of effort, ingenuity, or collaboration with others” (Brickman et al., 1982, p. 371). To develop these solutions, people often must be empowered (Hughes, 1994). For the educator, this means asking questions like, “What can we do together to address this problem?” or “How can I be of help?” (Hennon & Arcus, 1993). Using this model, FLEs and others (i.e., acting as collaborators and facilitators) are experts in the means of arriving at solutions judged most appropriate. In this sense, the FLEs can provide information and work collaboratively to find a solution that is suitable for the family.

Second, diversity is useful and adaptive (Hughes, 1994). Rappaport (1981) noted that empowerment should be based on divergent reasoning that encourages diversity through the support of many different local groups, rather than one centralized social agency or institution. That is, centralized groups that control resources and use convergent reasoning attempt to homogenize people and assume that there are standardized ways by which people should live their lives. This might not fit the reality of many families. Professionals also may assume that all people deserve and should seek help when necessary, and even blame families who do not comply with this supposedly normal behavior. But individuals or families who value self-sufficiency might not go to service agencies for help. Rather they may rely on more informal sources of support (e.g., other families, friends, relatives) if the need arises (Newsome, Bush, Hennon, Peterson, & Wilson, 2008). This type of education can be more culturally appropriate and sensitive than FLE based on other approaches (Allen & Blaisure, 2009; Gentry, 2007; Radina et al., 2008). A related implication is that problems, needs, issues, solutions, or required information and other resources are identified in concert with

those who are the targets of education efforts (Hennon & Arcus, 1993; Hennon et al., 2008, 2009; Hughes, 1994).

While it is important to engage in culturally competent FLE development and delivery, it is also important to note that there can be difference and commonalities across cultures. The challenge to FLE is to provide flexible approaches that recognize both the diversity and the commonalities in human behavior. If all FLE is reduced to paying specific attention to individual diversity, there is the risk of too few resources to effectively provide assistance to all individual and unique situations. Thus, there must be a compromise. FLEs need to be both “experts” in content to help provide “clients” with new strategies and scientifically grounded common patterns, but also masters of “process” in order to tap their uniqueness and strengths.

The third assumption is that help is most effective when it is provided by small, intimate social institutions (Hughes, 1994). People find meaning in their lives through their families, neighborhoods, churches, and voluntary organizations. These social institutions may be the best for providing appropriate assistance. It has been asserted that one method for reaching people is to facilitate informal resource exchanges among individuals and groups, perhaps at the neighborhood level (Afonso et al., 2009; Hennon et al., 2008). Effective methods of reaching people in a diversity of families, particularly for maintaining knowledge and skills, would include developing support groups, including socio-educative interventions for encouraging and supporting behavioral change.

A fourth assumption is that empowerment can be at several different levels, such as the individual, family, and community. An implication is that family life educators who are engaged in program development must consider the most appropriate intervention level or levels. Some might consider the strength of this approach to be part of the transformative, or emancipatory, learning process. In this process the person is transformed through a learning process that is experienced in ways other than just through the direct acquisition of pre-specified knowledge (Afonso et al., 2009; Apps, 1979; Freire, 1970; Gentry, 2007;

Hennon et al., 2008; Mezirow et al., 1990). Freire justified the view that adult education should function to raise the consciousness of the participants, helping them realize how personal and social oppression limit personal and family development. Outreach or adult education could thus serve an emancipatory role, allowing for personal and family growth and development. Mezirow et al. testified that programmatic efforts should be structured to foster critical thinking and assessment of personal paradigms that might limit reaching one's full potential, as well as the full potential of more optimal family functioning. With this agenda, the educator should promote learning opportunities that assist program participants to critically assess their unspoken and non-questioned personal life assumptions that might be barriers to more optional living. Duncan and Goddard (2005) mentioned that educators might use a "critical inquirer" approach related to critical/humanist orientations that realize the importance of learners' self-actualization to guide participants to the desired outcome of critical and rational thinking and autonomy (cf. Hitch & Youatt, 2002).

There are three issues that FLEs might reflect upon as the strategy of empowerment may be accepted without much critical reflection. First, to what extent do all or certain people deserve empowerment and to what extent is ensuring empowerment a moral responsibility for FLE? Second, to what extent do vulnerable people or those who might just be considered ordinary, require professionals (i.e., FLEs) in order for them to be empowered? A third issue is the extent to which people can become empowered, transformed, or emancipated simply by obtaining access to relevant resources and services. Is FLE as a resource enough, even if it includes the development of support networks, critical thinking, and other aspects beyond just the "pouring knowledge into the unknowing's heads," or, is a combination of these most appropriate?

The four helping models/paradigms used by many interventionists (e.g., Van Vliet, 2009), vary as to their views on the locus of responsibility for creating problems or solutions, the roles of the educator/expert and learner/recipient, and identified strengths and weaknesses. Depending upon circumstances, one model may be more

appropriate than others. However, an educator might, without much reflection, accept a model as correct for all or most situations. The result can be erroneously force fitting of an intervention to a situation. As a word of caution, "if someone is drowning, they need to be saved, not asked if they want swimming lessons." That is, while some models/paradigms, such as empowerment, have currency now and hold intrinsic value for an educator, in some cases families or individuals first have to be "saved" from their crisis situations before other approaches might be effective or appropriate. Thus, FLEs must determine the appropriate balance between goals of conveying information and empowering clients.

Guerney Model of Service Delivery

In addition to helping models/paradigms that focus on loci of problems and the responsibility to solve them, educators might also vary in terms of their service delivery modes, which identify specific roles and responsibilities of those involved in solving the problem. Becoming more self-reflexive about both can help planners develop better interventions. Guerney (1982) identified the spiritual, medical, and educational models for the delivery of services (Table 33.5). Here we review the spiritual and educational models as the medical delivery system is quite similar to the medical model/paradigm just reviewed.

With the *spiritual model*, the intervention is by someone who can rid the person or family of the "bad spirits" or "exorcise the devil" (Guerney, 1982). While Guerney does not go beyond this level of thinking about this model, it might well also include offering or seeking intervention based on changing fate or luck, guidance of a religious or at least spiritual nature (including astrology and perhaps new age spirituality), or perhaps even finding "one's way," "true path," or "guiding light," based on traditional wisdom and values, and more ancient beliefs (e.g., tribal, communal, folk, kin, etc.). This approach might be found, and considered acceptable, more often among particular ethnic, religious, or subcultural groups. It might include combining education about family life with religious education or the importance of prayer and other devotional activities in helping families find guidance. Whatever

Table 33.5 Guerney (1982) model of service delivery

	Spiritual model	Medical model	Educational model
Aims/focus	Personal or family problems are due to some type of supernatural force	Using disease, illness, and pathology analogies/terminology for problems of living that are not biochemical in nature	Presentation of new knowledge, skills, ways of thinking, and value orientations so that informed decisions about implementing new or better lines of behavior can be made
Role of educator/helper	To offer/provide spiritual guidance and educate families accordingly	May act as clinicians rather than educators	To teach personal and interpersonal attitudes, concepts, and skills that families can apply presently and in the future to solve problems
Role of families	To believe and place faith in a higher order or system that can provide direct intervention or guidance of a spiritual type	To follow the prescribed course of action	To be receptive to learning new information and skills and be willing to implement them to solve problems

From Guerney (1982)

the programming content, the techniques utilized are aimed at changing families' predicaments through use of external, perhaps supernatural or divine, forces. These approaches may include extorting families to give up ills that have separated them from more pure, traditional, and/or "value-based" lifestyles. FLEs who use this service delivery model should consider the appropriate balance between conveying research-based information and making use of spiritual metaphors during information delivery.

The *educational* model of service delivery can be used to implement different types of interventions grounded in many different theoretical models (Guerney, 1982). The educational model is based on learning "how to do it if you want to" rather than a "follow these directions" or "seek this guidance" mentality. Rather than thinking in terms of having to locate pathology and design an individualized prescriptive program to eliminate such, the educator thinks in terms of the needs, aspirations, and desires of the learners, then endeavors to teach them how to reach their goals. This makes it "feasible to embark upon skill-training, the building in of enduring strengths and skills, rather than only the removal of an irritation or weakness" (Guerney, p. 247). The educator teaches how to better fish and how to prepare the catch, rather than formulas for enhancing one's fishing luck, or handing out fish dinners. By reaching larger groups with sustainable knowledge,

more may learn to improve their quality of life over the longer term.

Challenge #5: Choosing Appropriate Approaches to Family Life Education

Each of these various approaches to designing, implementing, and evaluating interventions offers strengths, weaknesses, and trade-offs in terms of time, energy, and other resources. Family life educators likely will find one or more of these approaches acceptable. Some practicing FLE could be in environments where approaches are being used that differ from what the educator would prefer. The approach preferred and/or used will be influenced by, and influence, one's philosophy of FLE, as well as how well one believes he/she fits with the employer or job. Educators may want to educate employers about other methods, be convinced that the employer's methods are better, or seek another place of employment.

Issues in Curriculum Development

Another issue facing family life educators is curriculum development (i.e., what to teach). There has been some debate about terminology when it comes to curriculum development. Here we provide some accounting of this in an effort to

clarify the terms we use to describe the curriculum development process. Curriculum is a term that has been used to describe different aspects of the educational process, as well as the content to be conveyed (Apps, 1979; Tanner & Tanner, 1995). For example, Apps (1979) wrote that *curriculum* has been narrowly defined as a set of courses taught in an educational institution (e.g., courses necessary to complete a bachelor's degree in family studies), and that the broader term *program* has been used to denote what is taught in continuing education and other nonformal educational settings (i.e., community-based FLE). In contrast, Treichel (2009, p. 222) defined *programs* as "educational activities offered for an indefinite period of time (like a university's continuing education program) whereas a *project* [emphasis added] consists of activities offered for a shorter period of time (e.g., a 2 day workshop about a particular instructional strategy)." So, there are at least these three terms, all of which are meant to convey a similar idea—a planned system for action toward a goal. The confusion seems to come from what is meant by "curriculum" in different contexts and with different purposes.

For the purposes of our discussion, the term curriculum is used to denote the largest, most inclusive, whole from which other aspects of FLE programming flow. That is, a curriculum serves as a guide for some larger body of knowledge to be covered under the rubric of a broad or general topic, as well as the process of delivering a sequence of content (e.g., from simple to more complex; from basic to advanced). For example, "Divorce and Remarriage" and "Family Stress" could be two components included in a curriculum titled "The Family." The structure of a curriculum is made up of programs within which lessons, activities, or episodes are organized. An example of curriculum on Developing as Couples (Curriculum title) might include:

Program 1: Developing couple relationships

- Unit 1.1: What is intimacy?
- Unit 1.2: Gender expectations and relationships
- Unit 1.3: What's love got to do with it?
- Unit 1.4: Pairing up

Program 2: Developing sexuality

- Unit 2.1: Sexual socialization
- Unit 2.2: Sexual scripts
- Unit 2.3: Pregnancy and outcomes

Program 3: Developing as a couple

- Unit 3.1: Marriage as process
- Unit 3.2: Let's talk
- Unit 3.3: Conflict management
- Unit 3.4: Growing in love

Program 4: Developing a dark side

- Unit 4.1: Disaffection
- Unit 4.2: Violence
- Unit 4.3: Addictions

Program 5: Developing apart

- Unit 5.1: Divorce: process and consequences
- Unit 5.2: What about the kids?
- Unit 5.3: Starting over

The curriculum in this example is divided into five *programs* with each having three or four *units*. The content and skills intended to be conveyed in the program are likely too comprehensive to be absorbed in one instructional *episode* (i.e., a unit of time-bound "contact" with learners). Thus, the program (e.g., Program 3: Developing as a couple) is reduced into a related and sequential set of units (also called *modules*), such as Marriage as Process, Let's Talk, Conflict Management, and Growing in Love. Each unit is made up of several *lessons*. For example, Let's Talk could consist of lessons on Why Clear Communication is Important, Active Listening, Body Language, and Rules for Effective Couples Communication. Each lesson, depending upon time constraints, characteristics of the learners, the goal for comprehensiveness and thoroughness of coverage, may be more inclusive than what can be effectively delivered in one episode. For example, Active Listening may require many episodes to teach, lasting over several days or weeks.

In the example, the total set of content and delivery processes is the curriculum from which the educator is working. This is based on knowledge from the field of family science. This knowledge is winnowed, distilled, and organized into a

set of concepts, facts, skills, etc. that are coherent in meeting some educational goals. Given this rather comprehensive knowledge, it cannot all be learned at one time by the intended participants in the “courses” (or workshops, meetings, seminars, receivers of newsletters, etc.). The curriculum is thus further organized into smaller, self-contained, but interrelated programs. These consist of a set of concepts, facts, skills, and so on that are logically related to a more specific topic such as Developing as a Couple. Beyond the organization of content, curriculum and these self-contained programs include schema for the process of content delivery (e.g., lectures, small group activities, and the utilization of educational resources).

Curriculum Development

There are several approaches to curriculum development in FLE. We have chosen to focus on the Tyler (1949) and the Freire (1970) approaches. These approaches, while dated, offer timeless models for the development of FLE curricula.

The Tyler Approach

Tyler (1949) developed a linear model of curriculum development based on the objectivist education paradigm (Vrasidas, 2000) that has dominated education. Many approaches to instruction and learning are founded on behavioral and cognitive theories sharing philosophical assumptions with *objectivism* or basic realism, where reality is considered to exist independent of humans. Assumptions of objectivism include: (a) entities structured according to their properties and relations constitute the real world and can be categorized by their properties; (b) the real world can be modeled; (c) symbols are representations of reality and are meaningful in the degree to which they correspond to reality; (d) human’s have a mind that can process abstract symbols allowing for the mirroring of nature; (e) human’s think via symbol-manipulation; (f) the meaning of the real world exists objectively independent of the human mind; and (g) the world is external to the human knower. A practitioner using the objectivist paradigm understands that there is one true and cor-

rect reality, knowable using logical-positivism approaches of science. An illustration would be to base parenting stress programming on the empirical results from research that reveals nomothetic or predictable patterns related to this topic. Consequently, parenting stress really (or probably) exists, is governed by natural laws/forces (or predictable patterns), and the correct application of scientific knowledge can help in preventing or elevating parental stress. Such thinking about parenting stress programming could likely result in the application of the Tyler method.

The *Tyler approach* to curriculum development consists of four steps that are to be carefully followed in correct sequence. These are determining: (a) the purpose that the educational organization seeks to attain (identify curricular goals and instructional and educational objectives); (b) the educational experiences to be provided to obtain these purposes; (c) how these experiences can be effectively organized; and (d) if these purposes are being attained (evaluation). Following in this mode, all aspects of a curriculum should be purposeful and goal driven (Brophy & Alleman, 1993; Vrasidas, 2000). This includes the subject matter, instructional methods, assessment techniques, and so on.

While there may be a singular statement of purpose serving to guide curriculum programming, likely there will be several goals that this programming is designed to achieve. Goals, which are articulated with *goal statements*, are distinguished by their level of generality or abstraction (Learning Objectives, 2007; Martorella, 1996). They might, for example, indicate or propose a level of competency, or state a broad concern to be addressed, or a condition to be obtained, and are the impact the programming is ultimately to achieve. *Objectives* are more specific, and should achieve the goals of the curriculum or program (Learning Objectives, 2007). Objectives are usually stated in and guide lesson plans. *Instructional objectives* must align with the learning experiences and the evaluation process, whereas, *educational objectives* should actuate the curriculum development process. Sometimes objectives are referred to as *competencies*. The educator identifies the knowledge to be transferred to learners before designing

instructional experiences for a selected topic. This knowledge is stated in specific behavioral (i.e., measurable or criterion referenced) objectives using clear and intentional language. This is to ensure understanding of what the learner is expected to know and do when the instruction is complete, and each learner is expected to achieve the objectives and know the same material and behave in the same manner. Evaluation procedures ascertain the extent to which objectives are reached (Vrasidas, 2000).

Educators might consider how to handle the assumption that everything learned is demonstrated behaviorally. For example, participating in a workshop on parenting can lead people to discover new insights about themselves, gain self-confidence, acquire a new sense of empowerment and self-mastery, and acquire ways of thinking and learning that are transferable to other, novel situations. How are these, and other perhaps unintended but important outcomes, to be predetermined and/or measured? What if people acquire the insight that they are failures, incompetent, with no control over their lives and environments, and feel worse about themselves as a result of attending the workshop? Is this a good or bad outcome? Who is to decide if “feeling in control” is realistic or that people ought to feel good? Perhaps bad self-esteem will motivate a person to do something about it, or get out of a dysfunctional relationship. In other words, not all outcomes may be intended or measurable. FLEs should consider the implications of these outcomes in program development and evaluation.

A major component of the Tyler approach is the use of written objectives for the instruction. These are a priori assumptions about what people need to know or do that guide the instructional process. That is, educators teach to the objectives and use them in determining if the instruction was effective or successful. An assumption in this process is that educators know and can decide before a lesson or activity what the outcomes ought to be. Another assumption is that knowledge lies outside the individual and that objectives are a systematic way for bringing the knowledge and learner together in the appropriate way. Depending upon one’s view of knowledge,

and who might control it, an educator might not accept this assumption.

It is assumed in the Tyler approach that learners’ needs are important and that these can be empirically and objectively determined. *Needs* are often defined in terms of something that is absent, but this may be an incomplete viewing of what, exactly, constitutes a need (Hennon & Arcus, 1993). A need is a normative concept based on the premise that an absence ought not to exist. Thus, needs cannot be just determined through observing cases; some standard or benchmark is necessary for comparison and these often are social norms, professional values, personal taste, unchecked biases, religious values, etc. Needs are defined as the gap between “what is,” with “what should be.” The determining of “what is,” can be done empirically using needs assessments (i.e., an empirically based determination of learners’ current level of functioning, knowledge, skills, resources, etc.).

But determining needs or establishing “what should be” is not simply an empirical process. It requires a guiding standard and a commitment to certain values. That is, determining “what should be” is more difficult and requires judgments and standards. “What should be” is concerned with what is normative, proscriptive, moralistic, and includes values. Therefore, “what should be” cannot be determined solely through analyzing empirical data but may require interpretive and judgmental leaps from data. For example, what does the number of children being born to unwed mothers (and even the use of this phrasing vs. labeling them illegitimate children) or the number of divorces in a state or community mean in terms of cultural, normative, and moral standards?

The “should-be” is arguable the most difficult decision in the curriculum planning process, but one perhaps often done with little reflection and critique. FLEs must therefore ask themselves the question, what are my values, training, or situated place in society that may be coloring what I believed to be correct? For example, if professionals are middle class and religiously conservative, they might have strong opinions about what is appropriate family behavior. This frame of mind may blind them to other, accommodating,

acceptable, behavioral choices with which people function quite well in other segments of society. Likewise, determining “what should be” is a political and a powerful process. Who gets to define the reality of what is and what should be? Who gets to say who is deficient and “needs” something? Who (e.g., learners, teachers, school administrators, funding agencies, social service agencies, churches, elected decision-makers) is the “best” in determining what needs exist (and relative to what goals)? Thus, due to lack of sensitivity to differences, professionals might believe that their own way is the right way, and everything else is deficit, if not worse. FLEs are therefore encouraged to maintain self-reflexivity throughout the curriculum development process in order to avoid unintentionally determining needs in ways that are detrimental to those they intend to help.

One answer is to conceive of the FLE process as a procedure for informing people about what researchers and practitioners think is appropriate, and then letting people make their own judgments and decisions based upon this information. Rather than trying to force people to act a certain way, or perhaps even assuming that they should act a certain way, educators can provide what is believed to be the best and brightest information based upon specific standards of scholarship, professional practice, ethics, values, and personal convictions. Educators should, however, keep in mind the political and value-based decisions they are making when determining instructional content and writing objectives. The FLE offered could implicitly or explicitly be suggesting that some people are deficient, backward, immoral, or inadequate. Likewise, certain problems develop when practitioners evaluate their programming. What if people do not accept, or value, what one is teaching them? Does that mean the educator has failed, or the learners?

One problem with objectives, therefore, is that because they are previously determined, there can be less flexibility in the programming than might be optimal for learning and meeting the “real” needs of the learners. Once the learning activity is begun, for example, it might become known that the focus should be changed. The lesson may be “too simple” for the level of current

knowledge possessed by the participants or other more pressing needs or wants may emerge. The learners themselves may demand a change in the content and/or expected outcomes. These kinds of emergent contingencies can mean that some previously determined objectives should be abandoned, some modified, and others added. However, if the educator is rigid, insensitive, not well trained, lacking a broad grasp of relevant content and activities, or required to teach a specific curriculum determined by others, these options may not be possible.

One criticism of the Tyler approach is that it is a stepwise process. As we have outlined, curriculum development using this approach is planned on a “first you do this and then you do that” model. This is a reductionist process (Apps, 1979), that the whole equals the sum of the parts and that the curriculum can be disassembled and dealt with one piece at a time, in sequential order (cf. Hitch & Youatt, 2002). The process of first determining needs and then writing objectives, followed by determining a sequenced pattern of learning experiences, and then evaluating the outcomes, might not always be the most efficient or practical. This can especially be so if the professional holds to an empowerment model of helping, or views him/herself more as a facilitator rather than a teacher. If so, then other methods of programming might work better. Howard (2007) concluded that the most important objection to Tyler’s approach, and the cause of its relative demise in the 1970s (even though it still guides the essentials of curriculum development, applied to ideas reinterpreting his principles) was the seeming mechanistic orientation to curriculum development.

Apps (1979) offered another critique of curriculum developed using the Tyler approach—that much of the programming focuses on “survival skills.” That is, this type of curriculum focuses on improving the quality of people’s lives by helping individuals cope with various aspects of day to day living—how to parent, how to love, how to talk, and how to budget. Much of FLE responds to the question, what do families in my community need in order to deal effectively with the problems they face? When educators say they are grounding their programming on the needs of

the community, what they conceivably are saying is that the programming is based on some concerns or what is needed for survival as a family, couple, parent, or adult. This is admirable and useful, but is it sufficient and is there more to life and being human than mere survival, even at an “improved” quality of life? One concern is that by adhering strictly to the Tyler approach, FLE may stop short of providing opportunities for people to grapple with what it means to be human, or to consider what “living” means, or to discover and enhance hidden talents and potentials beyond those covered in particular lessons.

If a group of farmers gets together most mornings at the local cafe to have coffee and discuss the world’s events, at some point they may realize that there is a common problem they are all facing—stress. Nothing has been planned ahead of time and no objectives are spelled out, but the farmers all realize that they face a common challenge to living. As a result, they decide to take some steps to do something about it for themselves and interested others. They decide that more information is necessary and discuss what methods for getting this information would be best. One gets a pamphlet from his farm cooperative, another gets a video on farm stress from the local Cooperative Extension Office, and another asks a social worker friend to join the group for coffee one morning. They are not sure what their goals are (to get out of farming, to develop stress management strategies, to just feel better knowing they are not alone in their feeling?) or what they should do. As they go along, different people in the group decide on different courses of action, some ridicule the plans of others, some drop out of the group, and others join. Nevertheless, they all learn some things that were not predetermined. Is it possible for educators to view educational situations in their entirety without first dissecting them into component parts, to see the ebb and flow of learning, to understand that learning may be spontaneous and unplanned, and perhaps “disorganized” and not following in some predetermined way “from here to there with a specific set of objectives in mind?”

A standard role enacted by FLEs is that of *expert* through which some have argued that FLE

evolved over the years into a “trickle-down” modality (Doherty, 2000, p. 319). That is, as experts, scientists had discovered empirical facts about families, and these elements of knowledge are then distilled into forms that can be shared by practitioners with lay audiences. The educator takes on the status of expert dispenser of what families need to know to function better, and, whatever preexisting knowledge and expertise that families possess is virtually ignored, a weakness of the Tyler approach. Families are given the status of “consumers of academic knowledge” (p. 321). A strength of this “academocratic” (p. 319) model for informing lay audiences lies in its ability to discern scientific information where there is little or none available, and to address, in a more objective fashion, topics that have ideological splits, are debated, and/or for which there are differing viewpoints about what is best for families. However, there are other roles that FLEs can play, and other approaches to education and support of families to consider.

The Freirian Approach

According to Freire, the educational process is organic and rejects such strategies as Tyler’s that evolve as a stepwise procedure starting with needs assessment/identification, followed by writing behavioral objectives, and so on. The Freirian approach is critical of traditional educators who frame knowledge as something “out there” to be distributed (Afonso et al., 2009; Apps, 1979; Smith, 2002). Traditional education is viewed as a banking model where teachers are depositors of information and learners are depositories (i.e., banks) who patiently and passively receive, memorize, and repeat. The Freirian approach portrays educators as facilitators who guide without directing, raise questions more than answer them, and engage in dialogs with learners.

In this approach the facilitator works from the beginning with a group of people through a dialogical process. The facilitator endeavors to raise the consciousness level of the group concerning their social situation and their social relations within it. This approach assumes that people

cannot always verbalize their most fundamental needs and problems, but through consciousness raising these issues are brought to a greater awareness and discussed. This, in turn, leads to awareness of broader needs and problems through a process termed “problem posing” (Freire, 1970; Smith, 2002).

Freire (1970) stressed the political and socioeconomic contexts of education. He saw the educational process as having two phases—the thematic research and the educational program—that inform each other in a reciprocal manner. Thematic research (i.e., understanding, knowledge) results from the interactions of educators (facilitators) and learners and what can be learned together in that interaction. The process of “research” itself is viewed as education, a cultural action, as part of becoming liberated and is not just a preparation for learning or education (Freire, 1970; Smith, 2002). The educational program phase includes presentations made to groups of people (“circles of culture,” ideally no more than 20 people). In this part of the process the educator/coordinator poses questions about the themes (e.g., family life, work–family linkages, family violence, health, poverty and stress) related to a focal problem established during the thematic research phase. Coordinators, who are likely and preferably people from the local area rather than “experts” or outsiders to the community, head the discussions in the circles. Education, according to Freire, is thus one unified process consisting of research and information discovery. Methodology (or process) and content are to be seen, in this approach, in a reciprocal and holistic manner.

According to Apps’ (1979) explanation of the Freirian approach, people begin to understand their social reality through the process of thematic research, and their reality is expressed in interrelated themes (i.e., topics, ideas, problems). Thematic research involves the discovery and naming of these important themes as well as their interrelationships. Research also poses the themes (and their dialectic opposites) as problems. These problems are considered from the particular sociohistorical context of the people involved (including the learners or audience).

Because the Freirian approach is a much less stepwise process than the Tyler approach, we offer an example here. In this example, a facilitator engages a local community in a process of co-exploration and creation of educational solutions to meet a need or solve a local problem, in this case adolescent truancy. During the thematic research phase, information is gathered and created through interactions between the family life educator and members of the local community (e.g., teachers, parents, administrators, church leaders, social service providers). Themes that might come out of this process could include: family poverty, gang activity, lack of community culture that emphasizes education and academic achievement. Based on the shared understandings of the problem identified (i.e., themes) through this process, the facilitator and the community may move to the educational programming phase. The facilitator then enlists the local expertise of community members who set in motion small group interactions with other members of the community that center around these themes. This phase is aimed at both educating the community about how to deal with the problem, perhaps with information provided by the facilitator/educator, and empowering them through a process of identifying, naming, framing, and potentially solving the focal problem.

Throughout this approach to curriculum development, diverse people are heavily involved. During the thematic research phase there are volunteers from the target population who participate in the investigation and planning. During the educational programming phase locals are recruited, to the extent possible, as coordinators and as many people as possible in the focal community are involved in small groups. Within each group there is participation by all members, with no person or coalitions of people dominating the discussion.

There are several assumptions to Freire’s (1970) approach that we discuss briefly in an effort to further explain what can be an abstract approach to curriculum development. First, education is not viewed as a neutral act. Instead, education is seen in dialectic terms—either helping people liberate themselves or contributing to the loss of their freedom and their humanity.

Humans are viewed as having agency and who thus act on and can change themselves and their world. Even so, humans are still historical and social beings, each with their own biography shaped by their contexts of living (Hildenbrand, 2005). Actions and reflections do not occur in a vacuum, but rather in specific social structures where people are socially situated.

Second, it is assumed that education changes society as well as changes individuals (Freire, 1970). One way this is done is through consciousness raising aimed at elevating people from passive and isolated victims to active people who are capable of learning and acting together. During consciousness raising, groups reflect on problems and formulate actions in attempts to deal with their problems. After action is initiated, the group reconvenes to reflect on this course of action before other action sequences are tested. This dialog is part of action, and for those living in “cultures of silence,” a poignant action. Freire claimed that in educational institutions and wider society, cultures of silence quieted the voices of the marginalized. His pedagogy hunted for ways of breaking this silence, and learning has been attributed a role in giving voice to oppressed and marginalized groups (Armstrong, 2007).

The third assumption is that the approach to social problems is dialectical. Freire (1970) characterized the modern world as one of domination by the few (the oppressors) over the dependent masses (the oppressed). Education is to liberate the oppressed; the oppressors become liberated as they cease being oppressors.

Like with the Tyler approach, there are concerns with using the Freire approach, especially among those who tend to be “bottom-line oriented,” or impressed by the virtue of efficiently achieving “results,” to justify the time, money, and effort required. Such concerns often view the Freirian approach as time consuming and “messy.” Ideas like reflexive iteration, rather than a more planned, lock step, and linear strategy seem hard to evaluate and thus to justify. Questions about the value of time and the investment required by this approach are raised. In addition, questions arise as to the roles and functions of professional educators and program planners, such as who is

supposed to do what and when? Who initiates and who organizes? The application of a Freirian approach, it is argued, is situational in the sense that what works in one situation may not work in another. The consequence is that a “cook book” approach is not appropriate. Moreover, in the Freirian approach, educators are encouraged and have the responsibility to develop specific procedures with specific groups in specific situations. Careful blueprints for developing curriculum are not provided, only general guidelines for the educator can be provided. Each educational situation or new group requires starting over from scratch rather than relying on preplanned or “canned” programs.

Other considerations surround the role of the professional educator. What prevents this person, who is likely more educated and trained, from becoming dominant in the group? Instead of carrying on dialogs, a professional educator might lecture, dispense information, impose her/his perspective and values, as well as guide the learning and action schemes. This may especially be a problem when the group expects the educator to be the “authority,” and not to just sit there but “to do something.” And, how is this dependency of learners on the professional educator to be prevented? After all, educators are trained and are leaders and leaders are supposed to have answers. If they do not have answers, why are they the leaders? Thus, FLEs, especially those who prefer a more empowerment model of service delivery, are both encouraged and cautioned in using the Freire method given its complexity, messiness, and the important questions of process and product that it raises.

Challenge #6: Choosing an Effective Approach to Curriculum Development

Program planners and FLEs have a variety of curriculum development approaches at their disposal, including use of previously developed, perhaps evidence based, best practices. We have discussed two opposite approaches to curriculum development. A challenge is understanding the implication of each approach, including strengths

and drawbacks, and developing the skills to use an approach most pertinent to a specific situation. We have offered a prototypical view of the two polar opposite approaches; combining aspects of both approaches is also possible. Developing flexibility in approach, the role to be played, and the relationship to the learners are important to help ensure quality FLE.

Looking Ahead: Challenges in Family Life Education

There are certainly additional challenges we have not discussed, but we have identified six challenges facing the field of FLE and practicing FLEs. *The first challenge is the ongoing efforts to adequately define the field of FLE as to its scope and content*, which should receive renewed professional and intellectual attention. Efforts by NCFR to enlist the perspectives of FLEs in this process is a positive step toward the development of a definition of FLE that best reflects the complex focus and content of FLE practice. FLE is being asked to broaden its focus and work with diverse populations in a multitude of settings, often in collaboration with other professions. FLE is ideally preventative in nature, but also includes aspects of secondary and tertiary intervention that should be recognized. The definition of FLE offered by NCFR is comprehensive and detailed, thus offering a good footing for future elaboration or refinement.

A second challenge is recruiting and retaining FLEs from diverse backgrounds and having FLEs who can address, in an effective manner, the diversity found in society. Because the majority of FLEs are white and female, concerted efforts must be made to recruit FLEs whose backgrounds reflect the populations with whom FLEs work. *Developing FLEs' cultural competency is a third challenge.* There is recognition that effective FLE must incorporate relevant and sometimes specific cultural values, norms, and life ways of diverse (e.g., class, ethnocultures, sexual orientation) populations into content and delivery systems. FLEs are to respect cultural diversity,

encourage diversity in the staffing within their organizations, and participate in ongoing training to improve skills and increase knowledge. While scientific knowledge about diverse cultures and ethnic groups provide a basis for greater cultural sensitivity and understanding, the process of acquiring cultural competence, including the acquisition of “enduring understanding, goes beyond specific empirical knowledge”. Diverse cultural enlightenment can be a goal, even if absolute cultural competency cannot be achieved. Professionals may not achieve cultural competency totally, nor be expected too, but it is important to achieve at some level to be effective with groups differing from a professional's own native culture. At the same time, it is important to remember that there are differences and similarities across and within cultures.

Challenge four is increasing the professional profile of FLE. Only 20 % of CFLEs are in community-based services, and less in other types of placement (e.g., schools, private practice). CFLEs thus have a low professional profile and there is substantial need to expand their career options and the marketing strategies for this career path. Despite the growing number of NCFR-approved CFLE programs and efforts to have the U.S. Department of Labor include family life educator as a profession, FLEs currently have less recognition than other professionals such as social workers or school psychologists. As a field, unabated attempts to raise the visibility of FLEs and unique contributions to servicing and supporting families have to continue.

Choosing appropriate approaches to FLE is a fifth challenge. Various approaches to designing, implementing, and evaluating interventions currently exist, each having strengths, weaknesses, and trade-offs in terms of time, energy, and other resources. Although FLEs likely find one or more of these approaches to be more acceptable than others, broad knowledge and flexibility in approach are strengths to be fostered in FLEs. This can be accomplished through the education of FLEs in training, the NCFR certification process, and continuing education. A “One size fits

all” approach to the education of families is not desirable, not effective, and perhaps harmful. As a field, FLE should continue to promote quality professional education and development as means of preparing and maintaining competent FLEs who can best serve families in diverse manners as necessary.

The sixth challenge identified is choosing an effective approach to curriculum development. Program planners and FLEs have a choice among a variety of curriculum development approaches, including previously developed programs. Many FLEs desire to, and do, develop their own curriculums or programs. Two opposite methods for curriculum development are the Tyler and the Freirian approaches, both used in FLE, with the Tyler approach in some form likely the most common. Understanding the implications of using either approach, including strengths and drawbacks, and developing the skills for using the approach (or some creative amalgamation of the two approaches) most applicable to a given situation, is vital. Being flexible about employing different approaches, the role (i.e., expert, facilitator) each plays, and the relationships with the learners are important attributes for FLEs. Training programs and textbooks should cover both of these and other approaches to help ensure well-rounded FLEs who can make the best choices about curriculum development.

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Suzanne Bartle-Haring and Natasha Slesnick

Couple and Family Therapy and Theory (also known as marriage and family therapy and theory) has a fairly long history. It started in the 1930s with work on marriage counseling, the child guidance movement, family life education, and social psychiatry (Doherty & Baptiste, 1993); and then moved to work on family therapy in the 1940s, post-World War II with the development of systems theories. However, it is not until more recently that as a field we have begun to examine ourselves as more than practitioners, but as a separate discipline. DuPree, White, Meredith, Ruddick, and Anderson (2009) provided a recent survey of the literature produced by those who are professors in Ph.D. programs accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education (COAMFTE). They found that professors in these programs, on average, produce about one refereed journal article every 2 years. They suggest that this research productivity needs to increase if Couple and Family Therapy (CFT) as a discipline is to continue to move forward.

Part of the impetus for their survey was another article published in 2002 by Crane, Wampler, Sprenkle, Sandberg, and Hovestadt that reviewed the status of the scientist/practitioner model in Ph.D. programs. The conclusion of this review was that much of the research being conducted on CFT was being done “outside” of the field. Those that have degrees in CFT are rarely recognized by these other researchers as representing a separate and legitimate profession (Crane et al.). Thus, we have journals in the area of family psychology, where many of the scholars who produce research in family therapy publish. We also have journals in psychology (i.e., *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, and *Journal of Counseling Psychology*) that publish articles about CFT and seem to think about it as a modality, rather than a separate discipline.

The requirements for delineating a mental health discipline as separate from others is to have a professional association, a separate literature base, and licensure for practitioners. The American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy has been in existence since 1942. There are several journals that publish family therapy-related literature (i.e., *Family Process*, *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, *Contemporary Journal of Family Therapy*, *American Journal of Family Therapy*, and the *Journal of Family Therapy*). As of 2009, CFTs were licensed in all 50 states. California

S. Bartle-Haring, PhD (✉) • N. Slesnick, PhD
Department of Human Development and Family Science,
The Ohio State University, 135 Campbell Hall,
1787 Neil Avenue, Columbus, OH 43210, USA
e-mail: haring.19@osu.edu; slesnick.5@osu.edu

was the first state to provide a license for CFT's which occurred in 1963. Thus, although CFT has the required factors that would establish it as a separate discipline, and it has had these factors for quite some time, there is still a sense that CFT is an emerging field. Part of this sense is that the research base for the field has been slow to develop, and many of those who conduct this research are not CFT-trained (Crane et al., 2002).

What appears to be the biggest hurdle for CFT research is the researcher-practitioner gap. Lee and Everett (2004) suggest that as family therapy developed in the early years, many clinicians identified with the founders of family therapy theories and techniques. This identification set the field on a track that seemed to indicate that the only way to be a family therapist was to practice like one of the "gurus" of family therapy. Lee and Everett (2004) also pointed out that there were *family scientists* at the time that were concerned about this trend and suggested that the first and primary area of mastery for a family therapist was "the family," while the intervention or therapy should come second. Doherty and Baptiste (1993) contended that family therapy was born in a research tradition that investigated the role of family interaction in the development of psychological/mental illness, specifically schizophrenia (i.e., Bateson's double bind theory of schizophrenia, 1972). However, family therapy as a field lost this focus as new ideas and techniques with clinical foci emerged during the 1960s and 1970s. Thus, early in the field, similar to many mental health fields, there seemed to be those who were more interested in practice, while others were more interested in some evidence base for the practice. Wampler (2010) would suggest that this is common for mental health disciplines that establish a license at the masters level, rather than requiring a Ph.D. to practice. This researcher/practitioner rift or split has also created a tension between family science as a field and family therapy. Somehow the theories espoused in family therapy are not considered the same as family theory in general by those in family science (see White, 2012). Thus, it was not until 1993 that family therapy was included as a chapter in a family theory and research text book (Doherty & Baptiste, 1993).

The authors of this chapter link this timing to the classic researcher/clinician split which they suggest began in the late nineteenth century. They end their chapter with the following:

Family therapy theory now risks such a split between research-oriented and epistemologically oriented approaches to theory development.... Family therapy theory in the early 1990's is poised between its ambitious social science and system theory roots and the emerging post modern cultural era that emphasizes skepticism, uncertainty, and modesty in theory construction.

To balance the old and the new, the modern and post-modern, the traditional approaches to theory construction and empirical validation with the more radical constructivist approaches...are the imposing but exciting challenges for family therapy theory in the decade of the 1990's and beyond (Doherty & Baptiste, 1993, p. 522).

We're not sure that family therapy as a field was able to meet these challenges. Johnson (2003), 10 years later, also suggested that although researchers espouse a systemic perspective, they rarely investigate "whole" family functioning and few have investigated change in family functioning in conjunction with changes in outcomes. The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the reader to the classic systems theory framework that informed family therapy theory, review literature on the effectiveness/efficacy of CFT, and promote the use of family therapy theory as family theory. It is our contention that family therapy theory is family theory, and can be used in the study of families in general, not just couples and families who seek services. We believe there are at least two ways of approaching this: (1) use the constructs from family therapy theories, make hypotheses based on those constructs, and assess them on samples of "normal" families; or (2) when investigating the effectiveness of CFT, use the constructs from within the family therapy theory and assess them over time when the family initiates therapy, while the family participates in therapy, and then at structured follow-ups. That is, rather than providing evidence that some symptom or problem outcome has improved during treatment, provide evidence that something inside the family, or something about how the family interacts has changed in conjunction with a change in the outcome or

problem behavior. There are some examples of the first, but very few examples of the second depending on the therapy model in question.

Major Theories

The classic theories in family therapy have as their foundation some combination of General Systems Theory (cf. von Bertalanffy, 1968) and Cybernetics (cf. Broderick, 1993). What delineates CFT from other forms of psychotherapy is its major assumption about the problems or symptoms that bring people to therapy. Individual models of psychotherapy have as their major assumption that problems or symptoms are caused by something in the individual (i.e., a disease or medical model). CFT models have as their major assumption that problems or symptoms are symptoms of the system (cf. Bateson, 1972). That is, Couple and Family Therapists assume that the problem/symptom/complaint is somehow serving a purpose, or is an adaptation to the way the system is currently functioning within its environment. The point of intervention is then impacting how the members of the system interact so that the symptom is no longer adaptive.

There are volumes of family therapy theories (i.e., Gurman & Kniskern, 1981, 1991; Nichols & Schwartz, 2006) as well as original texts written by the authors of the theories (i.e., Bowen, 1978; Haley, 1976; Minuchin, 1974; Whitaker & Keith, 1981, etc.). It is difficult within the confines of a book chapter to review all the theories as well as the research that has been done using these theories or at least, their constructs. Doherty and Baptiste (1993) provide six major assumptions of most family therapy models: family relationships are the principal source of mental health for individuals; family interaction patterns repeat across generations; family health requires a balance of separateness and connectedness; family flexibility (the ability to adapt) is an essential trait that prevents dysfunction; the triad is the minimum unit of analysis to understand the complexity of the family; and, symptoms have meaning within the family's interaction or worldview (pp. 511–512).

Here we provide an overview of a systemic framework about family interaction and how fam-

ily therapists view problem development. First, from a systemic perspective we have the concept of "wholeness" or "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts." Given this, assessing an individual, and asking their perspective about family interaction is not enough data to understand the family system in its wholeness. Second, systems are goal-oriented, and their primary goal is to maintain their viability within their environment or context. Third, given wholeness, change in one member or part of the system will influence all other parts of the system. Since systems have as their primary goal to maintain their viability and any change in one part of the system can influence change in all parts of the system, the system has to have a way to regulate itself. Thus, the fourth concept to understand from a family systems perspective is feedback and how feedback is processed in the system. There are two kinds of feedback with various labels, one is negative or deviation dampening feedback, and the other is positive or deviation amplifying feedback. Systems use both forms of feedback simultaneously to regulate themselves. Melito (1985) suggests that family systems have to have a way to maintain coherence as well as be able to adapt to the changing context (both from within the system and from outside of it). It is the balancing of these two processes that are the essence of, or "purpose of," family interactions within a family systems perspective.

From these concepts flow concepts about rules within the system, and rules about changing the rules within the system, and rules about changing the rules about changing the rules within the system and so on. Thus, systems have complex sets of patterns that allow them to adapt to their context as well as maintain coherence. From ideas about rules we also get notions of "boundaries" in systems. These boundaries are rules about who is in the family system and who is outside of it, and rules about how the family views the world or its context in general. From all of these concepts, family therapy theories generally maintain the notion that all behavior or all interaction patterns or interaction cycles within the family system serve a function that maintains the system's viability. If a behavior or interaction pattern emerges that does not help to maintain the system's viability it would not be repeated.

Thus, from a family therapy theory perspective, problems develop out of these interaction patterns and they serve a function for the system. Intervention, as stated earlier, is targeted at changing the interaction patterns so that the problem/symptom is no longer necessary for maintaining the viability of the family system. It is how, where, and when the intervention occurs that differentiates classic family therapy models. Below, each of the classic family therapy models are described, along with empirical support for the intervention from controlled clinical studies. While many pre-post designs, uncontrolled studies, clinical guides, and case reports have been published, only studies which included a control group are reviewed (including wait-list control, treatment as usual or a comparison condition). Controlled studies allow conclusions to be drawn regarding the efficacy of the intervention, which cannot be assumed from noncontrolled designs.

Structural Family Therapy: Minuchin (1974)

From a structural school of thought, in order to change interactions, the structure or hierarchy in the family system has to be “reestablished” so that parental figures are in charge, in essence. Minuchin (1974) developed this model or therapy for multi-problem poor families. He posited that all families have a structure which is seen through observation of repeated processes or patterns of interaction. This structure is established in order for the system to maintain its viability, but systems can be stressed beyond their ability to adapt. Minuchin coined the terms enmeshment and disengagement as they referred to boundaries between individuals, subsystems and the family system to its context. Somewhere between these two extremes, were clear boundaries where “normal” families function. Enmeshed boundaries are overly diffuse and do not allow for the differentiation of the functions of subsystems within the family (i.e., the parental vs. marital subsystems). Disengaged boundaries are overly rigid. Both extremes leave the system at a disadvantage when it comes to adaptation. Enmeshed boundaries within a family would lead the system to have little tolerance for

difference and evoke an adaptation process for every change from within or outside the family. Disengaged boundaries within a family would lead the system to have a very high tolerance for difference and it would take an extreme change to evoke an adaptation process. Some level of permeability that balances the need for coherence along with the need to adapt to new information would be the ideal for system boundaries.

Interventions from a Structural Family Therapy perspective are aimed at disrupting the status quo. To do that, transgenerational coalitions are interrupted, different boundaries are created around different parts of the system to the extent that the “difference makes a difference.” The techniques used are action oriented, so the clinician uses “enactments” by actually moving family members in the room, pointing out how and where family members are seated, as well as, reframing or putting a “positive spin” on the function of the presenting concern.

No controlled studies examining structural family therapy were identified in the literature. However, several empirically supported family systems interventions report using structural (and strategic family therapy described below) concepts especially in the realm of substance abuse treatment for adults (e.g., Stanton & Todd, 1982) and adolescents (e.g., Henggeler & Borduin, 1995; Liddle, 2004; Szapocznik, Hervis, & Schwartz, 2003). In general, these studies report significantly better outcomes for the individual and family as compared to treatment as usual, individual and group therapy.

Brief/Strategic Therapy: Haley (1976), MRI (Fisch, Weakland, & Segal, 1982), and Italian Schools (Palazzoli, Boscolo, Cecchin, & Prata, 1978)

Brief and strategic schools of thought, for the most part, create strategies that illuminate the voluntariness of problem interactions. They use the “therapeutic double bind” to in essence “corner” the family system into admitting that they have control over the behavior and/or the interaction. For example, if a couple comes in complaining that they argue too much, the therapist after

getting a more in depth description of the problem may suggest that the couple schedule their fights. If the therapist has recommended this and the couple wants to continue therapy, they have two options, they can schedule the fights as suggested, meaning they have control over the symptom, or they can refuse to schedule them which would mean they would have to stop fighting, again meaning they have control over the symptom. If they have control over the symptom they can change it. This is the classic technique of "prescribing the symptom." The therapist listens and gathers information about the problem and the interaction around the problem and then prescribes the symptom to the family in a cleverly disguised way. If the family is able to do what is prescribed, then they have control over the problem. If the family gets angry and resists the therapist's prescription, then the system also has control. Once the family as a system realizes this control, they can then change themselves in some way to eliminate the problem. These briefer models use communication and cybernetics as their framework, and are very technique rather than theory-oriented, although the theory is essential in order to perform the techniques.

Few controlled studies were identified which focused on brief/strategic therapies. However, one study, Bressi, Manenti, Frongia, Porcellana, and Invernizzi (2008) used the Milan approach to family therapy as compared to a nonfamily therapy control and showed promising results for individuals diagnosed with schizophrenia. In particular, improved clinical course and better pharmacological compliance was found among patients who received the Milan family therapy as compared to those who were assigned to the control condition.

Intergenerational Approaches: Bowen (1978), Boszormenyi-Nagy and Spark (1973), and Ackerman (1966)

Intergenerational approaches in family therapy have a "big picture" theory that provides explanations for how interaction patterns in the current family of procreation are influenced by interaction patterns in the family of origin. For Bowen

(1978) the intergenerational transmission process occurs through his cornerstone construct of differentiation, defined as the ability to separate thoughts from emotions and maintain intimate contact in relationships while also maintaining a solid sense of self. Systems fall on a continuum of differentiation as do individuals. Individuals tend to choose partners with similar levels of differentiation. The lack of differentiation in relationships results in an inability to handle chronic anxiety, which is then projected onto others, including offspring. When offspring bear the brunt of this projection process, they may become less differentiated than their parents and the process continues in the next generation. Intervention in this model is focused on increasing the level of differentiation in an individual by coaching them to detriangulate within their family of origin.

Other intergenerational theories follow this same framework, with issues that have occurred in the family of origin being "relieved" in the family of procreation in some way. The target of intervention in these models is acknowledging the issues faced in the family of origin, while also holding the individual accountable for their behavior in the family of procreation. Boszormenyi-Nagy's Contextual Family Therapy/Theory is an intergenerational model that includes the notion of a revolving slate of obligations and entitlements. A child born into a family is entitled to due care. As a parent provides care they gather credit, so to speak, with the child, or pay their debt to the previous generation. When children are not provided with due care, they still maintain their entitlement to it, and according to Nagy, continue to seek that care from others. This may develop into "destructive" entitlement in which the person winds up hurting others to get their needs met. The ultimate goal of therapy is to balance the ledger, so that people engage in relationships of fairness without hurting others to get their needs met, and with the ability to provide care as well as receive care.

Bernal and colleagues utilized contextual family therapy with adult methadone maintenance patients (Bernal & Flores-Ortiz, 1991) and found that families assigned to Contextual Family Therapy showed greater improvement on the outcome measures than families assigned to a

psychoeducation control. More controlled studies have examined Bowen's Family Systems theoretical assumptions. Charles (2001) identified eight controlled studies which tested Bowenian concepts. In particular, some support was provided for multigenerational transmission. That is, the proposition that anxiety regulates the amount of emotional closeness or distance within the family and regulates the impact of fusion experienced in the family of origin on current relationships was supported (e.g., Larson & Wilson, 1998).

Most of the empirical work using Bowen theory has been with "normal" samples to provide support for the constructs and propositions of the theory. Skowron (2000) showed that differentiation of self explained a significant proportion of variance in marital adjustment (74 % for husbands, 61 % for wives). However, the notion that individuals seek partners with similar levels of differentiation was not supported in this study. Using varying assessments of differentiation of self, Bartle (1993) did provide some evidence for the similarity in dating partner differentiation of self. Bartle-Haring, Rosen, and Stith (2002) also found support for Bowen's theory of intergenerational transmission, finding that emotional reactivity toward mothers and fathers in a college-age sample predicted current psychological problems. Miller, Anderson, and Keala (2004) reviewed the basic research that applied Bowen Family Systems theory and found support for some pieces of the theory, but not all pieces.

Experiential Approaches: Whitaker and Keith (1981) and Satir (1988)

Experiential approaches to family therapy integrate a systems perspective with humanistic psychology and existential philosophies. Their basic assumption is that provided the "right" environment all humans and all families have a tendency toward growth. Part of the "right" environment is the ability to express emotion in appropriate ways. Families that do not allow for the expression of emotion or have restrictive rules about the display of emotion may create an environment

that inhibits growth which will eventually lead to symptoms or problems. The primary target of intervention is enabling families to both experience and express emotions in "safe" ways. Whitaker's symbolic experiential approach uses techniques to increase anxiety in the family to a level that will enable the release of blocked emotion. Satir's experiential approach is similar with interventions designed to increase the intensity of the experience in the therapy room by moving people around and having them be in physical contact with one another.

Whitaker was known to mistrust theory (Whitaker, 1982), believing that though theory can help the therapist, an over-reliance will be more inhibiting than beneficial. While Whitaker espoused a mix of psychodynamic, systemic and intergenerational theories, he "transcended the need to theorize by recognizing that the unknowable is unknowable" (Smith, 1998, p. 151).

No controlled studies were identified that tested Experiential Family Therapies.

Postmodern Approaches: Narrative (White & Epston, 1990) and Solution-Focused (de Shazer, 1985)

In the last several decades, postmodern approaches to family therapy have emerged and become popular. The basis for these approaches is a social constructionist (i.e., Gergen, 1999) or constructivist perspective. On one hand, there are ontological assumptions in these theories that would suggest that for us "to know" anything we must know its opposite. Thus, solution-focused approaches use this assumption when working with clients. If clients complain about a problem, they must know what it is like not to have the problem, which means they have a solution in mind. On the other hand, postmodern approaches use ideas about the interactional or collaborative ways that humans make meaning to intervene. In a narrative approach, clients are asked to "tell their story" while the therapist listens. As the story unfolds it is clear that people have interpreted events in certain ways that have led to interpreting other events in ways that may

suggest failure, for example. The job of the narrative therapist is to provide alternative meanings to events in collaboration with the client in order for the client to create different meanings for events, enabling them to "retell" their story in a way that does not suggest problems or failure.

A prior review of Solution-Focused brief therapy (Gingerich & Eisengart, 2000) identified five controlled studies using a no-treatment control ($n=1$), treatment as usual ($n=3$) or a viable comparison condition ($n=1$). The study using the viable comparison showed no differences between conditions while the other four studies showed superior outcomes for those who received Solution-Focused therapy. While these findings suggest that Solution-Focused therapy can positively impact behavior, less support for its differential effectiveness is offered. Similar findings were reported more recently by Corcoran (2006). In this study, solution-focused family therapy was compared to treatment as usual for behavior problem children. Those families who received Solution-Focused therapy had better treatment engagement but no significant differences were found between groups on perceptions of child behaviors from either the parent or child perspective.

Behavioral Models: Jacobson (1981)

While a small number of controlled trials have tested the Solution-Focused therapy approach, the most researched, empirically supported of the marital therapies is Behavioral Marital Therapy (BMT; Shadish & Baldwin, 2005). BMT is considered a brief intervention with a focus on behavioral self-control, and learning new coping skills to improve individual and relationship functioning. Meta-analyses conclude that BMT is more effective than no-treatment and individual therapy approaches for a range of presenting problems including marital discord and substance abuse (Epstein & McCrady, 2002; Powers, Vedel, & Emmelkamp, 2008; Shadish & Baldwin, 2005).

Some evidence suggests that disregarded issues of relational traumas and unmet emotional needs inhibit behavioral change among families

facing prolonged disturbances (Suchman, Mayes, Conti, Slade, & Rounsaville, 2004). In other words, focus on behavioral change alone without attention to emotional connection might limit the impact of behavioral interventions (Suchman et al.). Alternatively, the extent that behavioral family therapies impact behavior might depend more upon their impact on an individual's sense of connection and less on increases in coping or behavioral skills, although future research will need to evaluate this assumption. Postmodern and behavioral approaches do not have a systemic framework at their base, and thus these will not be reviewed further in this chapter.

Testing of Underlying Theoretical Propositions

As reviewed above, testing of the theoretical propositions underlying the change process is rare. Much of the extant family therapy literature regarding the major/classic theoretical schools of family therapy include case reports detailing positive therapeutic findings, with only a limited number of controlled studies reported.

Furthermore, in the prior 10 years, family therapy as a treatment for various problem behaviors has been tested using hybrid family therapy approaches. Many more controlled studies examining hybrid models (compared to classic models) have been conducted. For instance, these CFT interventions have been evaluated for bullying (Nickel et al., 2005, 2006), intimate partner violence (Stith, Rosen, & McCollum, 2004), depression (Christensen et al., 2004; Diamond, Reis, Diamond, Siqueland, & Isaacs, 2002; Miller et al., 2005; Solomon, Keitner, Ryan, Kelley, & Miller, 2008; Trowell et al., 2007), delinquency and criminal behavior (Gordon, Graves, & Arbuthnot, 1995), anorexia nervosa (Eisler et al., 1997, 2000; Lock, Couturier, & Agras, 2006), schizophrenia (Bressi et al., 2008), anxiety disorders (Siqueland, Rynn, & Diamond, 2005), adolescent running away (Slesnick & Prestopnik, 2005, 2009), physical problems such as diabetes (Harris & Mertlich, 2003), as well as adolescent (Austin, Macgowan, & Wagner, 2005; Coatworth,

Santisteban, McBride, & Szapocznik, 2001; Waldron & Turner, 2008) and adult (Powers et al., 2008) substance abuse.

Many of the interventions described in these studies include elements of different theoretical orientations such as structural and strategic (e.g., Coatworth et al., 2001) or psychodynamic and behavioral (Nickel et al., 2005). Successful integrative therapies are not rigid but allow further development of theory and practical techniques after being clinically tested with specific populations as noted by Lebow (1997). Integrative therapy can offer more intervention choices and better tailoring of treatment to specific clinical issues (Lebow). However, compared to the classic theoretical models described earlier, integrative therapies may pose special challenges for identifying mechanisms of change and therefore might challenge attempts to identify necessary targets of intervention. Even so, the majority of these studies report clear advantages to family therapy over alternative and viable individual and group-based treatments.

Of note is that the research base described in this chapter has done little to support the underlying theoretical assumptions of the various family therapy theories. With few exceptions, family therapy studies focus on clinical outcomes and not on the mechanisms underlying change on these outcomes. Indeed, theoretically, a family systems framework does not recognize an individual as an isolated being. However, family therapy studies commonly report findings based upon individual dysfunction (e.g., referred patient diagnoses with schizophrenia, substance abuse/dependence, anorexia) with the primary outcomes being individually focused. Many of the family therapy outcome studies described above do not adhere to a reciprocal understanding of behavior, but instead adhere to a linear or reductionistic approach to behavior change. That is, the family system does not cause dysfunction within the individual system and the individual does not cause dysfunction in the family. The family and individual systems are not isolated systems but function within the larger social system in which they are embedded. The reciprocal

and dynamic processes that maintain behavior are at the root of systemic thinking, and research is needed that attempts to measure such processes, and especially change associated with these complex processes.

Overall, little attention is afforded to the underlying theoretical propositions guiding the intervention approaches. In fact, those that have, for example in regard to Bowen's family systems theory, have done so outside the family therapy context. Of interest is how families, their members, and the broader system, adjust to changes initiated through the therapy context. It is important to know how and why change occurs, how it is maintained, and which intervention targets lead to greater well-being and adjustment.

Not surprisingly, family therapy theories guiding intervention have rarely been compared to each other, therefore, knowledge of whether one family systems intervention is more effective than another is not known. It is unlikely, however, that given the overarching similarity in the underlying systemic understanding of behavior, that the different family theory models would result in different (clinically or statistically) outcomes. Targeting behavior change depending upon an emphasis on the here and now vs. an emphasis on multigenerational influences, or an emphasis on boundaries and triangles vs. an emphasis on interpersonal needs would likely result in only small comparative effect size differences. However, that begs the question, "Why bother having multiple family therapy theories?" Does each offer meaningful knowledge, above and beyond a general systems understanding of families and behavior change? According to Whitaker (1982), the choice of theory to guide one's therapy is a personal choice, influenced by personal experience. The general systems framework offers a working model upon which many family therapy theories are based. Truth is subjective, and the therapist's chosen theory, used to make goals for clients, might not fit for that client even though it fits for the therapist. However, without theory, family therapy researchers will continue to produce outcomes and facts perpetuating the current atheoretical empiricism.

Family Therapy Theory as Family Theory

As an "exploratory study" we used PSYCHINFO to search the literature about family therapy from 1999 through the beginning of 2009. The search included the words "data and family therapy." This resulted in 907 hits. Many of the articles listed were about group therapy so we eliminated those from our review. Of those left, 194 of the citations were from peer reviewed journals, 40 were from books, 37 from international journals, 15 were reviews, 10 were case studies, and 77 were dissertation abstracts. In essence, over the last 10 years or so, on average about 19 articles that have both of the words "family therapy" and "data" are published each year. Many of these articles are reports about the practices of couple and family therapists, or the satisfaction of CFT trainees. Those that are theory-focused tend to be few and far between. We also used specific schools of family therapy and "data" in PSYCHINFO searches. For "structural family therapy" and "data" we got 16 hits, for "strategic family therapy" and "data" we got 9 hits, for "Bowen Family Systems Theory" and "data" we got 10 hits, and for "Contextual Family Therapy" and "data" we got 3 hits. That gave us a total of 38 citations with no limit on publication year. Of those 38 publications, 19 were dissertation abstracts, three were case studies, five tested constructs within the theory, one investigated the process of therapy and four were in books about evidence-based practice.

Although this is a fairly "rough" way to gauge the amount of empirical literature that is available about family therapy theory, we clearly have a dearth of empirical data that tests constructs from family therapy theories, and even fewer about actual change in family processes related to outcomes. Since family therapy theory is based primarily in a family systems perspective, any of the research that uses a systems perspective could be used in support of (or not of) the constructs in family therapy theory. The reader is invited to review the chapter by Anderson, Sabatelli, and

Kosutic (2012) to get a sense of the progress of research in this area as well as the needed future directions.

Johnson (2003) and others (cf. Manders et al., 2007) have suggested that family systems research tends to be constrained by at least three factors which seem to widen the gap between clinical family systems theories and empirical family research. The first constraint is measurement. Family Systems Theory suggests that the family is a "whole," while the measurements we use for family systems do not assess families at that level or researchers only ask one person about the family, rather than collecting multiple perspectives about the family. Another constraint highlighted by Johnson (2003) is that many theories suggest that there are family types (i.e., the Circumplex Model, structural family therapy, Bowen Family Systems Theory), however few studies examine the validity of family typologies. This again would be an issue of assessment or measurement. Finally, Johnson (2003) suggests, as has been highlighted previously, few studies track changes in family processes and outcomes across time to support the notion that it is change in the family as a whole that has influenced the change in the outcome.

Measurement

As Family Systems researchers, we struggle with measuring the system in terms of what and who to ask. A plethora of family therapy theories that label constructs differently, although they may be describing the same thing, does not make this any easier. For example, Minuchin (1974) describes boundaries in families as enmeshed or disengaged, while Bowen (1978) refers to poor family distance regulation as fused or cut off. Contextual Family Therapy relies on the clinician's understanding of the family's transactional processes rather than labeling the processes themselves. The Circumplex Model of Families (Olson, 2000) uses terms like cohesion and adaptability, and other theories use terms like mutuality and hostility. As fields, both Family Science and Family

Therapy need to come to some agreement about what is important to measure about family functioning, and stop taking “ownership” of “new” constructs that actually mean the same thing as other constructs that have already been introduced (Halverson, 1995), or, if a new construct is introduced it needs to be contrasted with similar constructs that may sound the same, but, at least to the author, mean something different. It may be time in the development of family therapy theory to admit that many of the founding clinicians created their theories at roughly the same time, and did not confer with each other. Thus, like many “discoveries” or “inventions,” more than one person had the great idea (i.e., the telephone). The first author and a colleague (Bartle-Haring & Sabatelli, 1998; Sabatelli & Bartle, 1995) have highlighted these issues before and suggested that perhaps a systems view of family process could be, dare we say it, reduced to a fewer number of constructs that provide the domain of content that most family systems theories and family therapy theories use. Some common themes in these theories include boundaries, intimacy, autonomy, attachment, etc. These could be labeled “distance regulation.” That is, families have consistent and perhaps idiosyncratic ways of regulating distance (the continuum of closeness to separateness) within their systems. Some families may appear to struggle with allowing individual members the experiences of autonomy, while others may appear to struggle with allowing individual members the experience of intimacy or closeness to others within or outside the family. Optimal distance regulation, at least theoretically, would provide both experiences of intimacy and autonomy at developmentally appropriate times, and even simultaneously. This highlights the complexity of family systems.

Cook and Kenny (2006) suggest that the measurement of the family should specify this complexity. “It is the architecture of the system, the way the individuals fit together, that distinguishes the family from other groups in which there is less interdependence” (from Manders et al., 2007, p. 606). Thus, research on family therapy theory or family systems theory needs to assess families with their complexity, and not make assumptions

about families as wholes without all the pieces to the puzzle. Cook and Kenny (2004) suggest that the items we use to assess families should be relationship-directed and from multiple perspectives. That is, if we ask questions of one person about the family as a whole then the answers we get contain too many sources of variance for us to be able to have confidence in what exactly we are measuring. According to Cook (2005) a single item about the family as a whole contains at least five sources of variation: a family effect, relationship effects, actor effects, partner effects, and rater effects. For example, one of the Family Adaptability and Cohesion Scales III (FACES; Olson, Portner, & Lavee, 1985) items for cohesion is “members of my family get together often.” We might assume that Olson and colleagues wanted the family effect, or family level answer. However, there may be relationship effects here as well in that some members of the family, because they have better or worse relationships, get together more often than others, but when the participant answers the question, they are thinking about those members of the family, and not the “cut off” members of the family. The participant may also be the one (i.e., the mother) who feels responsible for ensuring that family members get together often, so there may be actor variance or an actor effect. On the other hand, the participant may also be someone who likes to get together with family—and others like to get together with them (partner effect)—so, the participant may say, this is very true of the family as whole. Finally, the participant may have their own idiosyncratic way of reading the items (social desirability bias, halo effects, etc.), which leads to another source or level of variation.

The problem with items that target the “whole” family is that they are “double barreled” (Cook, 2005). Methodologists have criticized these types of items because they have more than one logically possible response, and the researcher is not able to distinguish which of those responses underlies the participant’s answer. In order to decrease the many sources of variation that are present in “whole family” items, Cook and Kenny (2004) suggest that items should be relationship specific. That is, if we were to make the FACES

item an example, it would include "my mother tries to get together with me often," "I try to get together with my mother often," "my father tries to get together with me often," and "I try to get together with my father often." These types of items acknowledge that relationships are two-sided, with intentions not necessarily reciprocated. Bartle-Haring, Kenny, and Gavazzi (1999) used these types of items to measure family differentiation and found that all three of the family members' perspectives shared common variance for dyadic relationships in the family, and these dyadic relationship latent variables were all highly correlated, suggesting some sort of a system level of differentiation. Usually, however, analyzing data from multiple perspectives, with scales that use relationship-directed items requires large amounts of data.

Samples

Cook (2005) suggests that understanding the sources of variation from participants'/clients' answers to relationship-directed questions (i.e., family level, relationship specific, dyadic and individual level variance) reflects the ways that families differ from each other. That is, they can provide us with assessments that show differences between families that have a dysfunction and those that do not. Cook (2005) suggests, then, that knowledge of these various levels of variation are fundamental to the process of clinical family assessment, not just assessment of family functioning for research in family science. Cook (2005) also suggests that if we collect these sorts of data from larger samples as "norming" samples, we can then use *Z* scores to create the Social Relations Model (SRM: Kenny & La Voie, 1984) for an individual family. The SRM would then provide information about how the father as an actor (his unique contribution to relationships) compares to other fathers as actors. It could provide information about how a child as a partner (what the child elicits from others) compares to other children in families. It would also provide relationship effects or information about the unique fit of a mother and father, or father and one of the children, etc. It would also allow us to

"pull out" the family effect, or the part of the variance in scores that is due to being part of that particular family, rather than being part of a particular dyad, or a particular person. Cook (2005) provides a case example of this method using interpersonal affectivity, interpersonal self-control, and attachment security as variables of interest for a clinical family. Typically, SRM analyses are done on large samples, which make them seem less pertinent to clinicians and clinical researchers. However, Cook (2005) provides a unique way of assessing clinical families as a whole, as unique relationships and individuals that does not require a large sample. Cook (2005) would not have created this unique way of assessing clinical families without a thorough knowledge of more sophisticated statistical techniques.

Statistical Sophistication

The need for more sophisticated statistical techniques to be applied to families is not unique to research in family therapy. Family science research also appears to lag behind in this as well (we refer the reader to Acock and Washburn, 2012). However, in order to support the efficacy and effectiveness of family therapy models and theory, as researchers we need to be able to conceptualize families as being complex organisms as well as analyze the data with that complexity in mind. Perhaps one of the many constraints for family therapy as a field is that for many of us, statistical techniques seem far removed from clinical practice. Many of the researchers in CFT who conduct outcome research were trained in psychology. Psychology as a discipline has more advanced statistical theorists, but does not necessarily use a systemic framework when teaching statistical analyses. Thus, the researchers who conduct outcome research in CFT seem to know the statistics that served them well in clinical trials of individually based treatments, and use those same techniques when analyzing the data from family therapy treatments. This is more than likely why we rarely find articles that demonstrate a change in family process occurring in conjunction with a change in the outcome measure.

For many researchers trained in psychology, having more than one dependent variable that changes is a complex model—rarely encountered in their training. However, for those of us interested in demonstrating support for family therapy and theory, this is the analytical issue we face, along with what to do with multiple perspectives on the same construct. These sorts of analytical issues require structural equation modeling, latent growth curve analysis, dyadic and triadic data analysis, multilevel models, and mixed models. Hopefully, as more sophisticated techniques become available in user friendly software, this gap in statistical sophistication will decrease. In the meantime, family therapy researchers have a lot of catching up to do. Regression models simply cannot be used when assessing families from more than one perspective which is what is needed, and what is done when a clinician assesses a family. The problem is regression's major assumption of the independence of the data, at least for the dependent variable. In this case, "independence" means that it was randomly sampled and that the analyst has no reason to believe that one participant's answers were influenced either directly or indirectly, by another participant's answers. As family clinicians, and family systems researchers, we know this is not the case.

Of course, this only speaks to quantitative research and not qualitative research on family therapy and theory. Qualitative research on the processes of family therapy has been published and provides a unique perspective for clinicians to understand just what clients' think is happening in therapy. Again, however, qualitative research does not, and perhaps cannot, answer the question of whether the change in some outcome is related to a change in some family level process. The qualitative researcher would have to interview multiple members of the same family and tease apart areas of agreement and disagreement, leading, more than likely, to the same sources of variation in the interviews as Cook (2005) highlights. Observational ratings of families may also be a productive avenue to pursue. Family process coding schemes are available (Kerhig & Lindahl, 2001) that purport to measure families as whole units. Again, sources of varia-

tion would need to be teased out of these ratings, but having videotapes of families at the beginning of therapy, during therapy and sometime after therapy would provide a way to assess whether something within the family changed in conjunction with changes in outcome.

Conclusions

In this chapter we provided the theoretical foundations of family therapy theories and how the varying schools of family therapy can be distinguished. We also provided a review of the controlled studies that have been conducted that provide evidence that family therapy works. For CFT to continue to move forward and grow as a discipline, however, we also provided a critique of the field and its lack of empirically based research. We provided some reasons for why CFT researchers continue to struggle and provided some suggestions for moving the field forward. What we believe to be most imperative for the CFT field to move forward include

1. When integrative approaches are used in clinical trials research, the theoretical constructs used need to be clearly defined and identified
2. Assessments of the family need to occur more than once, and preferably at baseline, during treatment and at structured follow-up times
3. Assessments of families need to reflect the complexity of the family, and at least include relationship specific items and data from multiple members of the family and preferably all members of the family involved in the treatment

In stark contrast to most psychotherapy models including CFT models, individual Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is a commonly studied treatment intervention across a range of problems and populations. Research generally shows that individual CBT can reduce a variety of problem behaviors (Butler, Chapman, Forman, & Beck, 2006). However, research also indicates that these treatment gains are moderate and often dissipate significantly over time (Lynch, Laws, & McKenna, 2010). Family therapists know the power of relationally based interventions to inter-

rupt problematic behaviors, and some research indicates the superiority of family therapy over individual and group therapy for some problem behaviors (Graves, Shelton, & Kaslow, 2009; Liddle, 2004). Family therapy researchers need to stay motivated to continue the search for an understanding of family interaction because of a

theoretical and personal conviction that relationships are more than the individuals who comprise them; that interaction is a separate phenomenon not currently predictable, perhaps ever predictable, from knowledge of the interacting individuals; and that psychopathology is something that happens between people as well as within people. Furthermore, this motivation is not founded just on the belief that families, interaction and psychopathology represent phenomena uniquely different from individual processes, but on the belief that these differences are extremely important—that we will never completely understand either individuals or psychopathology unless we understand relationships and interaction (Christensen & Arrington, 1987, p. 293).

As discussed in this chapter, the dearth of research on family therapy, as compared to individual cognitive behavioral therapy, is likely due to the difficulty in operationalizing, measuring, and agreeing on the core components of systems-based interventions. It is more difficult to quantify and measure interactional events such as connection, boundaries, differentiation, trust, and communication than it is to measure an individual's self-reported behavioral symptoms. Greater dissemination and utilization of family therapy and its theories might require clarity regarding the essential elements that underlie change, the use of creative and innovative methodologies to test the underlying theoretical concepts, and sophisticated statistical analytic techniques that capture the multiple interdependent relationships among family members.

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Sandra J. Bailey and Deborah B. Gentry

Throughout the chapters in this Handbook, research, theory, and methodology have been presented on marriage and family. The content provides much of the background for one to understand the study of family and family science as a discipline. In this chapter, the goal is to explore ideas around teaching family science as a discipline. We will examine the terms used to describe the science and the profession, and where the field fits among social science disciplines as primary, secondary, or tertiary. We will discuss the ethics, theories, and methodologies that many scholars believe should be included in the study of marriage and family and provide a discourse on whether or not a separate discipline of family science exists today. The seven criteria for a field to become a true discipline as described by Burr and Leigh (1983) will be explored. We will examine what “teaching” about families entails as the field prepares professionals. Finally, we will identify some emerging and futuristic topics for family science educators to consider.

Approaches to learning are often applied to teaching children, however, styles of learning are applicable across the life span from early

childhood to adulthood (Conlan, Grabowski, & Smith, 2003). Pedagogy is how children learn, whereas andragogy, according to Knowles (1980), is the art and science of adult learning. Knowles claimed that the material presented to the adult learner must be learner-centered and self-directed. Andragogy is based on the following four principles: (1) adults need to be involved in the planning and evaluation of the learning; (2) experience is the basis for learning; (3) adult learning is most effective when it is relevant to the learner’s job or personal life, and (4) the learning is problem-centered rather than content-oriented (Conlan et al., 2003). Within our discussion of teaching family science, we will use andragogy as a framework to understand how professionals in the field are prepared.

Terminology

A discussion of family science as a discipline can be enhanced by first defining some relevant terms and concepts. How is family science different from other social science fields? Is it simply an area within sociology, psychology, anthropology, or social work? Most will agree that the family field is interdisciplinary (Burr & Leigh, 1983; Ganong, Coleman, & Demo, 1995; Hollinger, 2003; Leigh, 1987; Meredith & Abbott, 1988; Pearl, 1950; Smart, 2009). Works from the fields of sociology, psychology, anthropology, and social work provide a backdrop for scholars to focus on family processes or the family realm.

S.J. Bailey, PhD (✉)
Department of Health and Human Development,
Montana State University, Bozeman, MT, USA
e-mail: baileys@montana.edu

D.B. Gentry, PhD
Instructional Development Center, Heartland Community
College, Normal, IL, USA
e-mail: Deborah.Gentry@heartland.edu

A recent survey of administrators of academic departments with the word “family” in the title revealed that family science was distinct in that it concentrates on specialized topics, including family and relationships, a family strengths philosophy as opposed to pathology, anomaly or deviance; a multidisciplinary/interdisciplinary approach; an emphasis on family systems; and an examination of individual development and family processes from a life span, ecosystem perspective (Hamon & Smith, 2010). Additionally, the field focuses on prevention and provides students with practical skills and a background for graduate education.

The definition of “discipline” must also be clarified. A discipline is a “field of study” (Merriam-Webster, 2010). In 1985, Kinglsey Davis published a paper in the National Council on Family Relations (NCFR) *Task Force Newsletter* applying the field of family science to a typology of disciplines. Davis claimed that there are three levels of fields—primary, secondary, and tertiary. Some disciplines are considered primary and include Greco-Latin terminology such as psychology and sociology. The explanations from these sciences are independent and do not rely on other sciences. Others are considered “secondary,” such as family science, as they rely on other sciences for explanations and conclusions. These sciences also reveal some independent explanations. The tertiary sciences do not have independent explanations and tend to be identified by the term “studies” (e.g., gender studies and ethnic studies).

Is family science a secondary discipline that uses the explanations of other older primary sciences? A special issue of the *Journal of Family Psychology* (Snyder & Kazak, 2005) contains a collection of articles on methodology in family science. Although it labels them a family psychology program, clearly there is a subset of psychology that examines the family in the forefront and the individual in the background. The authors acknowledge the complexity of family psychology and refer to the broader field as “family science” (Snyder & Kazak).

We must also clarify what it means to “teach” family science. According to Merriam-Webster’s (2010) online dictionary, to teach is a verb that goes

beyond instruction. To teach is to “cause to know something” or gain a set of skills; to “guide the studies of,” which in this case is the study of families; to “impart knowledge”; and to “make known and accepted” which in this discussion is a continued discourse about whether or not the study of the family realm is indeed a distinct field and if so, where the discipline is headed. Knowles’ (1980) framework for adult education aligns with this definition as students learn about the science behind marriage and family and then apply the knowledge through experiential learning. Clearly, teaching family science is more than imparting a set of theories and methodologies to students or teaching specific skills to work with families. The principles of andragogy are evident as the learner can apply what is learned to professional and personal spheres. The teaching encompasses an effort to move the discipline forward to refine the challenges that scholars in the past have presented, including a resolution of what to call the discipline.

Criteria for a Discipline

Burr and Leigh’s (1983) article brought together the history behind family science and proposed that indeed, a new social science field existed. Their rationale was that

The family institution is so different that the findings and theories in other areas, such as small groups research, communication, and learning psychology, cannot be applied without careful adaptation, because the family system has a unique composition of age, gender, functions, and roles; there are not other institutions where the life-cycle, careers, affect commitment and help patterns even begin to be similar (p. 468).

They asserted that the seven criteria necessary for an area of study to become a discipline had been met. These include a unique subject matter; an adequate body of theory; development of methodology; supporting paraphernalia; apparent utility; ability to teach and discipline; and consensus among professionals. We venture to suggest an eighth criterion also be used: an accumulating history. We will examine and apply each of these criteria, beginning with a synopsis of key historical milestones.

Accumulating History

From Schvaneveldt (1971) and Burr and Leigh (1983) to Smith, Hans, and Kimberly (2010) a number of observers have asserted that the family field has experienced an “identity problem” and mused about the nature of its origin and possible solutions. On the web site for the American Historical Association, Stearns (2010) sets about answering the question of why one should undertake studying the history of, say, a nation, religion, family, individual, or...for that matter...an academic discipline. Among the reasons he enumerates are that history helps provide identity and it furthers understanding of change and how we came to be. Whether family science is a primary or secondary discipline, studying its history could be one way of helping family science professionals solidify their sense of identity.

Based on a recent popular British Broadcasting Company (BBC) television documentary series and accompanied by a book of the same title authored by Smolenyak (2010), “Who Do You Think You Are?” successfully captured American television viewers’ attention in early 2010. During each of seven episodes of this television show, different celebrities researched their families’ past and, in doing so, traveled all over the world. Viewers were given a comprehensive look into famous stars’ family trees and, along the way, were exposed to surprising facts and emotional encounters that served to demonstrate how connected everyone is not only to the past, but to one another (NBC Universal, 2010). Besides winning assorted awards, this documentary series has seemingly furthered everyday Americans’ interest in exploring their own individual and family histories. Taking a cue from this show, one might ask, “So, *family science*, just who do you think you are?”

The history of the family field, including family science as an evolving academic discipline, begins less than a 100 years ago. By comparison to other sister disciplines (e.g., psychology, sociology, economics, law, communication, or political science), family science is relatively new. Thus, in researching such history, it is not difficult to find relevant information. Noteworthy documents and publications are reasonably well preserved and accessible. We found two comprehensive written

histories particularly helpful, one written by Hollinger (2003) and the other by Smart (2009). Additionally, we considered a paper published by the NCFR Task Force on the Development of the Family Discipline (1988) a “classic,” as it placed important historic milestones in the growth and development of the family field in various stages: discovery, pioneering, and maturing. Many who have played key roles in pioneering and expanding the discipline are still living, some of whom willingly report their recollections when interviewed (e.g., Day, Leigh, Settles, Keim, and others). Lastly, we consulted a creative pictorial account of the discipline’s history developed by Alexander and Hamon (2010).

Efforts to document the earliest developmental milestones of most disciplines are often difficult to undertake (NCFR Task Force on the Development of the Family Discipline, 1988). Evolution occurs gradually; the meaningfulness attributed to various happenings can vary; memories can fade; and records may be poorly kept and maintained. To some degree, this observation is true of family science. Nonetheless, the chronology of events given in Table 35.1 has been commonly reported. The table is separated into three sections or stages. The first section features events and outcomes representative of a stage of development Schvaneveldt (1971) and the NCFR Task Force on the Development of the Family Discipline (1988) labeled as “discovery.” During its approximate two decade duration (see 1922 through 1939 in Table 35.1) there was a shift among psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists, home economists, theologians, political scientists, and other scholars toward emphasizing scientific, positivistic modes of inquiry. These scholars increasingly employed more rigorous research methodologies, and attempted to maintain a professional, value-free perspective (Hollinger, 2003). Though many scholars in these disciplines were interested in systematic study of families, few claimed “family” as the organizing center or core of their discipline. Few, if any, described family “in holistic terms, as a coherent, integrated body of knowledge” (p. 629). There were, however, a number of exceptions. It is those early, family-focused trail-blazers and the fruits of their labors that are given recognition here.

Table 35.1 Chronology of historic milestones

1922	While at Boston University, Ernest Groves, sociologist, launched the first college-level course focusing on family: "The Family and its Social Functions." He later went on to launch a parent education course while at Harvard University
1925	The Family Section of the American Sociological Association began. By 1930, it was renamed the Sociology of the Family Section
1927	Groves published the first family-focused college textbook: <i>Social Problems of the Family</i>
1934	Groves cofounded the Groves Conference on Marriage and the Family, a scholarly professional organization that sponsors an annual conference and publications
1936	Robert Angell's study of effects of economic depression on the family was published: <i>The Family Encounters the Depression</i>
1938	Paul Sayre (law professor), Ernest Burgess (sociology professor), and Sidney Goldstein (a rabbi) cofounded the National Council on Family Relations (NCFR), a professional organization that sponsors an annual conference, publications, and certifications Lewis Terman's scholarly efforts to predict success and failure in marriage were published: <i>Psychological Factors in Marital Happiness</i> Willard Waller's classic analysis of the family was published: <i>The Family: A Dynamic Institution</i>
1939	Groves established the first 3-year graduate training program in marriage and family at Duke University A journal entitled <i>Marriage and Family Living</i> was launched by NCFR. Today, this journal is now titled the <i>Journal of Marriage and Family</i> Burgess and Leonard Cottrell expanded the scholarly work being done to predict success and failure in marriage in their publication titled <i>Predicting Success and Failure in Marriage</i>
1946	Ernest Groves proclaims advance beyond an era of discovery to firmly establish a science of marriage and the family in a seminal article in <i>Marriage and Family Living</i> entitled "Professional Training for Family Life Educators"
1948	Howard Becker and Reuben Hill published a family-focused anthology: <i>Family, Marriage, and Parenthood</i>
1950	In an article appearing in <i>Marriage and Family Living</i> , Lester Pearl addressed the question "Are we developing a profession?"
1952	NCFR launched a journal titled <i>The Coordinator</i> . The journal was later renamed <i>The Family Life Coordinator</i> and, currently, is read under the name <i>Family Relations: Interdisciplinary Journal of Applied Family Studies</i>
1962	Another family-focused journal was launched: <i>Family Process</i>
1964	Edited by Harold Christensen, the first handbook in the family field was published: <i>Handbook of Marriage and the Family</i>
1971	In an article appearing in <i>The Family Coordinator</i> , Jay Schvaneveldt was among the first scholars to describe role and identity problems as experienced by family-focused educators and researchers
1976	<i>Journal of Family History: Studies in Family, Kinship, and Demography</i> was launched C. R. Figley and B. R. Francis author <i>Student Perspectives: A Resource Guide for Graduate Programs in Family Studies</i>
1979	Wesley Burr, Reuben Hill, F. Ivan Nye, and Ira Reiss coauthored this seminal book: <i>Contemporary Theories About the Family</i>
1982	Carolyn Love's <i>A Guide to Graduate Family Programs</i> identified 54 institutions of higher education offering doctoral and master's degrees in family science, 49 of which were offered by programs with "family" in the title Results of a survey of members conducted by NCFR indicated 79% of those who responded believed discipline-related identity ambiguity was a "serious problem"
1983	Based on an address given while serving as NCFR president, Wesley Burr co-authored an article with Geoffrey Leigh titled "Famology: A New Discipline." The authors posited the family field met seven criteria for being a discipline in its own right and that a suitable name for this new discipline was "famology"
1984	NCFR president Bert Adams appoints multiple task forces to study and promote discussion about organizational, professional and career development, and identity issues. Task Group 5 was to specifically assess the worthiness and appeal of various names for the emerging discipline: family science, famology, familiology, and family studies. A number of annual conference sessions, forums, and published essays resulted

(continued)

Table 35.1 (continued)

	NCFR published <i>Standards and Criteria for the Certification of Family Life Educators, College/University Curriculum Guidelines, and Content Guidelines for Family Life Education: A Framework for Planning Programs Over the Lifespan</i> . Similar publications are printed in subsequent years
1985	At NCFR's annual conference in Dallas, Texas, the Task Force for the Development of a Family Discipline issued a recommendation advocating the new discipline be called "family science" The NCFR Board of Directors changed the status of the Task Force to that of a Section within the organization. Although first called the Family Discipline Section, it is renamed the Family Science Section in 1992 The first Certified Family Life Educators (CFLE) were approved by NCFR
1987/ 1988	Guided and directed by the NCFR's Family Discipline Section, the first volume of <i>Family Science Review</i> came into print featuring numerous articles defining the nature and scope of family science, justifying "family science" as preferred name for both the discipline as well as academic programs, and proposing means by which academic and training programs in family science could best be designed and evaluated Family Science Association (FSA) was founded and began assuming formal sponsorship for <i>Family Science Review</i> as well as an annual Teaching Family Science Conference Wesley Burr, Randal Day, and Kathleen Bahr published a preliminary edition of an introductory college textbook titled <i>Family Science</i> . Today, in its fifth edition and solely authored by Day, it is called <i>Introduction to Family Processes</i> <i>Journal of Family Psychology</i> is launched
1989	The University of Kentucky began hosting an international electronic discussion group or listserv for family science educators, researchers, and practitioners. It continues today John Touliatos edited and published <i>Graduate Study in Marriage and Family: A Guide to Master's and Doctoral Programs in the United States and Canada</i> . Subsequent editions were published in 1994, 1996, and 1999
1994	Four of five home economics professional organizations adopted new nomenclature "family and consumer sciences." Thus, the American Home Economics Association became the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences
1995	James Ponzetti provided a comparative analysis of certification programs in family science and home economics NCFR's Family Science Section approved <i>Ethical Principles and Guidelines</i> and discussed it widely with the entire NCFR membership. NCFR adopted <i>Ethical Principles and Guidelines for Family Scientists</i> in 1998 Randal Day, Kathleen Gilbert, Barbara Settles, and Wesley Burr edited and published <i>Research and Theory in Family Science</i> Robert Keim furthered family science career awareness with his chapter in <i>Research and Theory in Family Science</i> by Day et al. Lawrence Ganong, Marilyn Coleman, and David Demo identified competencies a family scientist should master, core and supplemental curricula, learning experiences, training and career requirements, and future trends in an article appearing in <i>Family Relations</i>
1996	NCFR began approving college and university family degree programs for adherence to the criteria needed for CFLE designation
1998	Robert Endsley expanded upon the topic of career development in family science. In years since, others have made clear the importance of experiential learning and professional practice
2000	Capitalizing on the international emphasis on the scholarship of teaching and learning, FSA modified the focus and name of <i>Family Science Review</i> to <i>Journal of Teaching in Marriage and Family: Innovations in Family Science Education</i> . In 2006, the journal's name reverted back to <i>Family Science Review</i>
2002	Jason Hans edited and published <i>Graduate and Undergraduate Study in Marriage and Family (2002–2004)</i> . Subsequent editions were published in 2005 and 2008
2004	NCFR published <i>Family Science: Professional Development and Career Opportunities</i>
2005	An entire issue of the <i>Journal of Family Psychology</i> is devoted to "methodology in family science" Efforts undertaken to secure formal listing of "family life educator" as a career by U. S. Department of Labor. Such efforts continue today
2010	Annual conference FS Section sessions regarding programs, names, future, etc.

Described as an unusually creative period (see 1949 through 1982 in Table 35.1) the roughly 35-year “pioneering” stage of development came next (NCFR Task Force on the Development of the Family Discipline, 1988). Sociologist Groves (1946) kicked it off with a now well-known paper. In it, he shared an outcome he envisioned for the quickly evolving family field: a science of marriage and the family. During this stage, new theories, research methods, and intervention strategies were being developed, tested, and written about, often in newly launched journals. Three professions, family therapist, family life educator, and family extension specialist, were born. Family-focused doctoral programs and family therapy training offerings were becoming increasingly popular. The side effects of such rapid change were, however, role and identity problems among social and behavioral science academicians, scholars, and practitioners of the time (Schvaneveldt, 1971).

In the early 1980s, family science embarked on its third stage of development (see 1983 through, perhaps, 2005 in Table 35.1). Titling it the “maturing stage,” the NCFR Task Force on the Development of the Family Discipline (1988) also characterized it as a time period filled with complexities. One of the intricacies they noted was that family science was an interdisciplinary field while, at the same time, having a newly emerging discipline within it. Other aspects of convolution were described as follows.

There are several professions such as family therapy and family life education that have thousands of practitioners, and they are dealing with training standards, licensing and certification, codes of ethics and enforcement of professional standards. There are also many different schools of thought, theories, research strategies, and differences of opinion in the field (p. 90).

Task Force members also viewed this phase in development as a time of rapidly expanding knowledge. They noted the following observation:

There are many new research findings, therapeutic strategies, educational and enrichment methods, professional organizations, conferences, and workshops. There is also an expanding realization that the family is important, and this has led to many new ways our expanding knowledge about the family can be applied (p. 90).

Differences of opinion still existed regarding whether or not the family field had indeed reached discipline status. After careful review and analysis, Burr and Leigh (1983) ventured to resolve the uncertainty in an article that resulted in much debate and controversy. On the basis of seven criteria, they concluded the family field had become a discipline in its own right. These criteria have been recounted in earlier paragraphs and serve, in part, as a means for organizing this chapter. Additionally, role and identity problems continued to persist. The remedy, many said, was to officially name the new discipline and consistently abide by such nomenclature once it was conferred. This proposal also prompted considerable debate. Among the names bantered about and assessed for their suitability were family science, family studies, famology, familology, familyology, familiaology, famistry, and famics (Burr & Leigh). The NCFR Task Force on the Development of the Family Discipline was formed to help facilitate discussion and decision making among interested parties. Though typically civil, some dialogue on these matters evidenced a degree of disciplinary snobbery, along with wounded egos and feelings. Ultimately, family science was deemed the preferred term.

Within a few short years of this decision, a section within NCFR, a separate professional organization along with its accompanying annual conference, and an introductory college textbook, utilized the new nomenclature. Within this textbook, family science was described in the following way.

Family science is the discipline devoted to the study of the unique realm of the family. Its primary concentration focuses on the inner workings of family behavior and centers on family processes such as emotions in families, love, boundaries, rituals, paradigms, rules, routines, decision-making, and management of resources. When the family is studied from a family science perspective, researchers, practitioners, and clinicians treat information from other related disciplines (i.e., sociology, psychology, and anthropology) as vital background information. The foreground emphasis, however, is on the family system and its intimate workings (Burr, Day, & Bahr, 1993, pp. 17–18).

Buetler, Burr, Bahr, and Herrin (1989) further explained the family-realm perspective and its

unique usefulness for those researching families and family processes. In their view, it emphasized the effects of the generational, emotional, altruistic, polychromic, qualitative, and nurturing aspects of the human experience in ways other social sciences did not. Not everyone was convinced, however. Other scholars provided only modest support or critical, counterpoint views (e.g., Edwards, 1989; Jurich, 1989; Menaghan, 1989), thereby continuing the debate.

During the most recent 27 years that have passed, has family science simply continued to mature or has it, without much acknowledgement and fanfare, evolved into a fourth stage of development? If so, how should this new stage be characterized and what name would be most appropriate? In recounting the evolution of education for home and family life, Lewis-Rowley, Brasher, Moss, Duncan, and Stiles (1993) identify and label five developmental stages: coalescence, emergence, crystallization, expansion, and entrenchment. Since family science, in its most recent stage has involved considerable expansion, is “entrenchment” an equally suitable label for it? Entrench means to “place in a strong defensive position” and “to establish solidly.” As Hamon and Smith (2010) observe

Within a climate of shrinking academic budgets and threats of departmental dissolution or mergers, administrators of family science programs are discovering the need be able to articulate the distinctiveness of the discipline, the worth of the unique skills and perspectives afforded by family science programs, the challenges affecting the field, and the solutions and resources necessary to propel family science to new levels of relevance and application (p. 11).

They suggest family science is instead transitioning to an “evaluation and innovation” stage. Though adopting common nomenclature is still of importance, they additionally call for implementation of well-conceived public relations and marketing campaigns as well as advocacy and alliance-building strategies (Hamon & Smith, 2010).

To bring closure to this section, let us return to the topic around which it opened: reasons to study history, a primary one being to provide a sense of identity. Stearns (2010) also identifies

three skills or abilities that historians-in-training can and should develop. These are the abilities to assess evidence, assess conflicting interpretations, and assess past examples of change. Family science students studying history of the family would have opportunity to develop and refine these skills. For that matter, studying the history of family science could afford them the same opportunity. These skills seem compatible with two of 12 competencies Ganong et al. (1995) enumerate as important for family scientists-in-training to acquire.

Ganong et al. (1995) thoughtfully address issues of training family scientists, particularly at the graduate level. Using Boyer’s (1990) model of four types of scholarship (discovery, integration, application, and teaching) as a guide, they identify their 12 competencies. They also recommend educational experiences necessary to achieve these competencies. These and other recommendations will be addressed later in this chapter. Two of the 12 competencies these scholars emphasize are pertinent to this section pertaining to the history of family science, however. Family science students must master qualitative and quantitative research methods as well as excel in their ability to communicate with professional colleagues (Ganong et al., 1995; Gilgun, 2005; Snyder & Kazak, 2005). One way of honing these skills would be for students to research the history of family science and, upon uncovering the insights, complexities and controversies that inspired those who struggled to forge and establish it as a discipline, engage in dialogue with each other and their mentors regarding an answer to the question: Who do you think you are?

Distinct Subject Matter

Defining a distinct subject matter may appear to be a daunting task with the interdisciplinary nature of family science. It is our belief, however, that scholars have achieved this goal. Ganong et al. (1995) articulated what should be included in training of family scientists. These three authors claimed they are typical of family scientists in that they come from very different

backgrounds and professional identities, yet they were able to come together and identify the core elements needed for a graduate program in family science. Boyer's (1990) four elements of scholarship (discovery, integration, application, and teaching) guided their discussion. Ganong et al. (1995) asserted that doctoral students should have courses in quantitative and qualitative research methods, statistics, theory, life span development, multicultural families, interpersonal family dynamics, and a course on application. The basis for family science is the research that is conducted on the family, or in Boyer's (1990) terms "discovery." While many would claim that the study of the family is intuitive, scholars have demonstrated through empirical research that specific patterns, interactions, and processes exist within various family contexts. Graduate students need to understand how to conduct and interpret research. Family science clearly follows Boyer's (1990) scholarship of integration as the field is multidisciplinary. Students in family science programs are required to apply their knowledge in the form of internships and supervision hours fulfilling the scholarship of application. Finally, family science is a changing field, therefore the scholarship of teaching involves more than the sharing of knowledge but also an understanding of the changes facing families.

For undergraduate programs, Brock (1987) also articulated the identity problem inherent in family science programs. Brock claimed that in family science, the student is studying a prevention model of working with families. Students leave with knowledge of how to teach individuals and families strategies to prevent interpersonal and intrapersonal problems. According to Brock, the focus is to assist the student in becoming a skill builder rather than an interventionist. Brock's suggestions for a curriculum in skills training included theory and methods, but focused more on application than would be necessary at the graduate level. He listed 20 specific skill building areas that students could select from (e.g., parent education, family enrichment, assertiveness) and an internship requirement. The internship was critical because students need to be able to prac-

tice what was taught in the classroom in order to be effective in their profession. Again, we see that family science is a field that is interdisciplinary in nature, and yet is distinctive in that the focus is on prevention and, at the undergraduate level, the development of skills to work directly with families. The content is taught to students following the theoretical frameworks of both Knowles (1980) and Boyer (1990).

Both Ganong et al. (1995) and Brock (1987) concluded that a core curriculum across family programs has not been achieved. We, however, believe that the criteria for a distinct subject matter have been attained. Various disciplines approach the study of families uniquely, and the variety of professional backgrounds brought together to study families enriches our knowledge of this complex entity. Without this, we believe students would be relegated to study "the family" rather than family in its most diverse form. Ideally, family science as a discipline would be taught by faculty with a background in the full realm of family—e.g., faculty with doctorates in family science. Since this is not a reality at this time, one possible course of action is for departments to focus on hiring faculty from the various social sciences to bring together a more comprehensive curriculum for students.

The NCFR established the Certified Family Life Educator (CFLE) designation in 1985. This designation was developed for professionals with at least a bachelor's degree to work with individuals and families on issues across the life span. Within the CFLE designation, there are ten areas of competencies that can be attained—"families and individuals in societal contexts, internal dynamics of families, human growth and development across the life span, human sexuality, interpersonal relationships, family resource management, parent education and guidance, family law and public policy, professional ethics and practice, and family life education methodology," (NCFR, 2010, p. 5). See Chap. 33 in this Handbook for explanations of these competencies. A professional must be able to document proficiency in at least eight of the ten areas of competency. Today, prospective CFLEs must pass an exam to attain the certification unless they have graduated

from a CFLE approved academic program. The areas of competencies illustrate the multidisciplinary nature of family and family science. Currently, there are 121 academic departments at colleges and universities in the USA and Canada that have approved programs based on the CFLE guidelines (Dawn Cassidy, personal communication December 2, 2010). Although coursework may differ from department to department, the core resulting knowledge of a prospective CFLE will be similar. This furthers the argument for a distinct discipline. This, too, points to an agreement of a distinct discipline.

Well-Developed Theories and Methodologies

A discipline is guided by theories, frameworks, and perspectives. Is it possible to study family without imposing one's own experience and value system? How can the concept of family be studied when a variety of definitions exist? This dilemma was articulated by Christensen in the 1964 edition of the *Handbook of Marriage and Family*. In 1988, McKenry and Price visited these questions, citing that most research until that time focused on traditional White families. McKenry and Price (1988) discussed how conceptual perspectives were viewed as nonscientific if family life in traditional nuclear families were challenged. At that time, variations from this family life were viewed from a deviance perspective. Other family structures were considered problematic as they were compared to the traditional nuclear family.

More than 10 years later, the debate continued about the limitations of how families are studied (Allen, 2000; Walker, 2000). Allen argued that the study of families today continues to be more from a positivist core that does not address the diversity of families in context, structure, and racial/cultural diversity. Although a positivist approach answers some questions about family, as Allen pointed out, the field needs to continue to expand the methods by which families are studied in order to capture the diversity.

Walker (2000) asserted that family scholars need to be mindful of limitations in how families

are studied. In a review of four studies from the *Journal of Marriage and Family* published during the 1990s, Walker illustrated the need for a variety of methodologies in studying family and articulated the need to examine our research methods based on the questions being asked and the population under study. She challenged family science scholars to examine data sampling, measurement issues, and interpretation of significant results. Both Walker (2000) and Allen (2000) brought attention to the need to continually examine the conduct of research on families and to acknowledge limitations.

Theoretical frameworks. With the complexity of modern families, it is not surprising that family science uses a variety of theories and methodologies. The theory and method will vary depending upon what aspect of family the research focuses on. Buetler et al. (1989) discuss the uniqueness of the family realm when conducting research on families. They point out that the "family realm" or concept has seven characteristics that, when taken together, explain family. These include "the generational nature and permanence of family relationships; concerns with 'total' persons; the simultaneous process orientation that grows out of familial caregiving; a unique and intense emotionality; an emphasis on qualitative purposes and processes; an altruistic orientation; and a nurturing form of governance" (p. 806). Buetler et al. (1989), assert that within family science, theories from other disciplines are borrowed and adapted. In using the family realm as criteria, the authors attempt to acknowledge the vast diversity in families and the difficulty in borrowing theory to explain family from other disciplines.

Burr (1995) outlined how theory should be applied in family science. He identified six aspects of theories. First, theories answer questions about what is going on within the realm of the family. Next, Burr asserts that theories are in the minds of those who are studying the family—that they are frameworks or models that help map what is studied. Third, he claims that theories give power. When scholars discover what works, they can then apply the information to work with families. The fourth aspect is that one lone theory will not

and should not be developed. Instead, a variety of theories is needed to complete the picture of the family realm. Next, Burr claims that the usefulness of a theory is vastly more important than whether or not it is true. According to Burr, “bad” theories will eventually fade away because they are not useful in explaining family. Finally, Burr states that theories provide perspective about an aspect of the family. For instance, one theory might apply to marital relationships, whereas another would be more useful in explaining a parent–child relationship. Again, this indicates the need for a variety of theories to study family.

We asked other Handbook authors to share with us the theories they used to guide their chapters and what they believed were essential frameworks for students to understand. We found a variety of theories and frameworks incorporated, based on the topic of the chapter. The responses, however, fell within five domains: (1) an examination of families over time; (2) families operating within systems; (3) the interactions and exchanges that occur in families; (4) power within families; and (5) individual family member perspectives. Theories that examine families over time included life course and family development theories. Family as studied through systems included ecological theories, cross-cultural perspectives, intersectionality, and family systems theory. Descriptions of how family members interact were framed within social exchange, conflict theory, and family stress perspectives. Finally, some study of the family focuses on the individual within the family using such frameworks as symbolic interaction, attachment theory, and identity theory. We also asked our fellow authors what theories and frameworks they believed should be taught to students studying families. Here, too, we received a variety of responses. However, the most frequent frameworks suggested included ecological/systems theories, feminist theories, exchange, symbolic interaction, and life course. This diversity would support the conclusions of Walker (2000) and Allen (2000), as the plurality of family requires the examination of family through various lenses.

We conducted a review of articles from 2008 to 2009 published in the *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *Family Relations*, and 2 years of

Theory Construction and Research Methodology (TCRM) papers presented at the 2008 and 2009 NCFR conference to assess the types of theories and methods used in family science. Life span or life course perspectives were predominant, with exchange theories also frequently utilized. A variety of theories and frameworks still exist, however. According to James White (personal communication, May 7, 2010), a review of the *Journal of Marriage and Family* finds the following theories to be most predominant in the following order: (1) rational choice and exchange, (2) life course, and (3) feminist theories. White claims that although the order of the theories in terms of usage may change from time to time, these three frameworks have remained the most prominent in use. As Burr (1995) articulated, no one theory is adequate to explain family, nor should the field attempt to identify a single theory. Papers from TCRM indicate an attempt to combine theories or frameworks as scholars work toward refining theory in the study of family. Hopefully, as family science continues to evolve, scholars will adapt and develop frameworks that expand from the positivist to a post-positivist core that better explains the plurality of family.

Methodology. Research methodology in family science also appears to be varied. Carver and Teachman’s (1995) chapter, *The Science of Family Science*, focused primarily on quantitative deductive methodology with a small section on ethnography. Sociologists typically use large quantitative data sets, and psychologists also use quantitative methods. During the time that the discourse on family science was taking place, there was also a movement to expand the use of qualitative methodology (Vidich & Lyman, 1998). Perhaps in an attempt to legitimize family science as a true discipline, the early work focused on this positivist quantitative framework. Many would say a quantitative positivist approach to the study of family severely limits how families are studied and what constitutes “family” (Allen, 2000; Walker, 2000). Today, a variety of methodologies are accepted in the field, depending upon the research questions being posed and the sample being assessed.

In the review we conducted of journal articles and TCRM, a range of methods were used. In the *Journal of Marriage and Family*, quantitative data sets and secondary analyses were frequently used. This is not surprising, as this journal is touted as the research journal of the NCFR and the field of family science. *Family Relations*, the applied journal of the NCFR, contained fewer studies using secondary data sets. The focus of this journal is application and implications necessary for professionals in the field.

This review indicates that family science continues to be an interdisciplinary field and by the nature of the study of families will, at least in the near future, continue to be influenced by a variety of other social sciences. Methodologies also will continue to vary, depending upon the aspect of family being studied. Family structure, culture, context, race, and ethnicity cannot be studied using a single method. Additionally, we cannot compare all families to White, middle-class families as has been done in the past. Doing so would inaccurately produce data that does not explain family interactions in a majority of families.

Our inquiry and review of theories and methodologies reveals the diversity in how families are studied. Rather than asking what theories students are exposed to in studying families, Adam Davey (personal communication, May 19, 2010) suggests that we should examine how theories are used. He asserts that while our data and methodologies have grown, the theory base for studying families has lagged behind. According to Davey, "We have pushed in several places to move from studying families in contexts to studying families as contexts and this is one place where there is precious little to guide our thinking, but the gaps continue to grow wider." Researchers need to continue to refine, expand, and develop theory that is suitable for the study of families.

Supporting Paraphernalia

If, as Burr and Leigh (1983) note, one criterion for establishing and maintaining a discipline is the existence of supporting paraphernalia, then this would appear to be a strength of family science. Among such accessories or belongings would be

professional associations, conferences, electronic networks, journals, review papers, as well as academic departments featuring majors and courses of study. In combination, these offerings provide a "means of professional growth, interaction, and exchange" that enables the discipline to continue to develop and flourish (p. 469).

Professional organizations. Family scientists in the USA have four primary national professional associations to which they can belong: NCFR, Groves Conference on Marriage and Family (Groves), the Family Science Association (FSA), and the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapists (AAMFT). Additionally, there are other professional organizations that have a division or section that focuses specifically upon families and family processes, such as the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences, the American Sociological Association, the American Psychological Association, the American Bar Association, and the Association for Conflict Resolution (ACR). These organizations, and possibly any existing state or regional affiliates of them, sponsor an annual conference where scholarly papers, symposia, and posters about families are presented. Membership and conference fees are typically reduced for students. Many family science faculty members encourage students to seek membership in such organizations and ask students to accompany them, even copresent with them, at conferences. Being engaged in these ways helps students appreciate the value of continued professional development and networking, as well as reinforces a sense of identity.

Discussion lists. In 1990, the first family science discussion list on the Internet was launched at University of Kentucky. In its earliest years, it had approximately 700 members, although today it has about 500 (G. W. Brock, personal communication, May 23, 2010). NCFR, like some other professional associations, also tries to keep members connected through multiple electronic listservs, including ones for members of the Family Science Section, the Education and Enrichment Section, the Family Therapy Section, and the CFLE group. For the most part, these discussion lists are used to accomplish two goals: Publicizing

conferences and resource materials as well as soliciting advice (e.g., which textbook might be most suitable for a particular course). Family science students and new professionals are increasingly technologically savvy. They may be more willing to venture into the world of blogs and wikis in order to promote discussion and debate among themselves than to continue using listservs.

Scholarly journals. As with other disciplines, family science evidences journals and review papers. The NCFR sponsors the *Journal of Marriage and Family (JMF)* and *Family Relations: Interdisciplinary Journal of Applied Family Studies (FR)*, whereas FSA sponsors *Family Science Review*. Though the Groves Conference on Marriage and Family does not support a journal, it does have publications, often evolving from conference presentations. In 1983, Burr and Leigh reported the existence of eight refereed professional journals that focused specifically on the family and yet most were not journals sponsored by sister disciplines. In addition to JMF and FR, the remaining six were *Family Process*, *Journal of Family Issues*, *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, *American Journal of Family Therapy*, *Journal of Family History*, and *Journal of Family Psychology* (G. K. Leigh, personal communication, May 26, 2010). All of these journals remain active today. Over time, journals have proliferated in number. A recent search conducted of a journal/serial database called Ulrichsweb—Global Serials Directory using title keyword “family” resulted in 95 active, academic, refereed entries. Family science professors often call for their students to read, summarize, and critique journal articles and review papers. Advanced students are sometimes encouraged to author or coauthor a manuscript that is subsequently submitted for review and possible publication. There are ample journals in the family field to turn to for such purposes.

Analyses and listings of academic programs. For more than 30 years, efforts to track the number and kinds of academic family-focused programs offered at universities and colleges have been undertaken (Burr, Schvaneveldt, Roleder, & Marshall, 1988; Figley & Francis, 1976; Hans, 2002, 2005, 2008; Love, 1982; Touliatos, 1989,

1994, 1996, 1999). Until 2002, only graduate-level programs were tracked. In the early 1980s, Love reported 95 graduate programs in the family field offered at 71 institutions of higher education throughout the USA. By comparison, 12 years later, Touliatos (1994) identified 157 graduate programs offered at 134 institutions. With the passing of another 11 years, Hans (2005) reported 245 programs, both graduate and undergraduate, at 227 institutions across the nation. The names of the units (e.g., departments, centers, schools) have and continue to vary considerably, thus contributing to the previously mentioned identity problems. In her 1982 guide, Love listed 36 different academic unit names. And, just a year later, Burr and Leigh (1983) identified 53 different names. In his most recent guide to academic programs (2008), Hans lists 73 different names. Despite name variability, the terms “family studies,” “family science,” and “family therapy” have increasingly, and in this order, been terms used in unit names. Greater uniformity in naming academic units would be beneficial for prospective students and prospective faculty members as they search for programs to which they wish to apply.

Apparent Utility

A bona fide discipline must, according to Burr and Leigh (1983), demonstrate utility in the form of established professions or applications. A profession can be defined as “the whole body of persons engaged in a principal calling, vocation, or employment requiring specialized knowledge and often long and intensive academic preparation” (Merriam-Webster, 2010). This whole body of persons seeks new knowledge and to apply knowledge in useful ways once realized. In Burr’s and Leigh’s view, two well-established family-focused professions were family life education and family therapy.

Family life education. With regard to education for family life, Lewis-Rowley et al. (1993) suggested this profession had evolved through stages of coalescence, emergence, crystallization, and expansion and was then well into a period of

entrenchment in the 1980s. Although “entrenchment” inferred at least modest stability, a number of issues continued to confront family life educators. These issues had to do with variability of preparation and training, program standards, contexts and settings, and perceptions of identity (Czaplewski & Jorgensen, 1993). To enhance further maturation of the profession, certain actions were recommended. Better standards needed to be developed and promoted. Programs of accreditation, certification, and/or licensure needed to be expanded, improved, and efficiently implemented. Rigorous, empirical evaluations of programs needed to be conducted and the results publicized. And, relevant professional associations needed to assume stronger leadership and advocacy roles in an effort to market the profession to appropriate publics (e.g., consumers, students, family professionals, employers, and legislators).

East’s (1980) framework for measuring the progress family life education has made toward full professional status consists of eight criteria. This framework has been more recently applied by Czaplewski and Jorgensen (1993) and Cassidy (2009). Over time, advancement as a profession has been incremental, yet steady and persistent (Gentry, 2004). Table 35.2 provides an appraisal of current conditions. Though more can be done to increase the number and rigor of program evaluation studies (Duncan & Goddard, 2005; Powell & Cassidy, 2007), there is evidence this aspect has been improving. Results of such studies are commonly featured in *Family Relations* and other reputable journals. That family life education programs have utility is apparent.

Marriage and family therapy. At the time that the field of family science was developing, so were the professions of marriage and family therapy (Gurman & Fraenkel, 2002; Olson, 1970). Olson, in his article in the *Journal of Marriage and the Family Decade in Review*, characterized the fields of marriage and family therapy as the “youngsters” in the sciences. At that time, the fields of marriage and family therapy were deemed separate and had not “yet developed a solid theoretical base nor tested their major assumptions or principles” (p. 501). The development of

specialties in the areas of family and couples, however, were being made. Three major centers were established focusing on marriage and families in the late 1920s and 1930s. In 1942, the American Association of Marriage Counselors (AAMC) was formed, later changing its name to the American Association of Marriage and Family Counselors (AAMFC) to include both couple and family counseling. Then, the organization changed its name again to the AAMFT (Gurman & Fraenkel, 2002; Olson, 1970). These professions developed as mental health professionals realized that treating the individual was not sufficient, since the problems were within the context of the relationship and the family. Family therapy originally developed primarily out of the work of psychiatry, while marriage therapy developed from interdisciplinary programs and social workers who had additional training. Further evidence of a profession was the founding of the journal *Family Process* in 1962, *Family Therapy* in 1972, and the *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy* in 1975.

In 1995, Gurman and Jacobson asserted that couple therapy had come of age as the profession had progressed in areas such as a greater understanding of couple interdependence, implementation of interventions and linkages with related professions. By 2000, Johnson and Lebow claimed the field had clearly come a long way, but was still not fully developed. More specific couple therapy training was being accessed by practitioners and new research was informing the field. Despite these advances, Johnson and Lebow (2000) claimed that couple therapy was still an “art and a science” (p. 23). In order to gain acceptance in the field of mental health, couple therapists needed to develop new models based on empirical research.

According to the AAMFT (2010), there has been a 50-fold increase in the number of marriage and family therapists since 1950, now serving an estimated 1.8+ million people at any given time. The AAMFT defines marriage and family therapy as being “brief, solution-focused, specific with attainable therapeutic goals, and designed with an ‘end in mind’” (p. 1). Marriage and family therapists are now considered a core mental health profession by the federal government

Table 35.2 FLE as a profession

East's criteria (East, 1980)	Progress made	Room to grow	Criterion: 1 = no progress; 5 = criterion has been fully met
1. The activity becomes a full-time occupation	Though rarely called family life education, many professionals practice family life education on a full-time basis under such descriptions as parent education, sex education, marriage enrichment, etc.	Family life education is often only part of a family life educator's job responsibilities or employment specifically in family life education may only be available on a part-time basis	4
2. Training schools and curricula are established	Family-related degrees have been offered since 1960s. NCFR began recognizing academic programs that meet the criteria needed for the CFLE designation, beginning in 1996. To-date there are 101 NCFR approved programs	Few degrees are called <i>family life education</i> but rather Child and Family Studies, Human Development and Family Studies, Human Services, Family Studies, etc.	4
3. Those who are trained establish a professional association	Numerous family-related associations have been in existence since the early 1900s. NCFR established itself as the premier family life education association in 1985 with the establishment of the CFLE program	There are numerous other family-related associations and organizations which can cause a fragmented identity	4
4. A name, standards of admission, a core body of knowledge, and competencies for practice are developed	NCFR developed the <i>University and College Curriculum Guidelines and Standards and Criteria for the Certification of Family Life Educators</i> in 1984. In 2007, NCFR conducted a practice analysis and created the CFLE Exam	The results of the CFLE Practice Analysis Survey confirmed the validity of the ten family life content areas as representing the knowledge base needed for family life education	5
5. Internal conflict within the group and external conflict from other professions with similar concerns leads to a unique role definition	Numerous organizations and credentials exist with some overlapping content. Development of <i>University and College Curriculum Guidelines</i> and the <i>Standards and Criteria for the Certification of Family Life Educators</i> defined the family life education content areas	Employers and the public are still unclear on what family life education is and how family life educators differ from social workers, therapists, counselors, etc.	3
6. The public served expresses some acceptance of the expertise of those practicing the occupation	The increased popularity of parent education and marriage education programs throughout the country reflects the public's increased acceptance of education related to family issues	Participation in family life education programs including parenting education, sex education, marriage and relationship education, financial literacy programs, etc. is still not the norm	4
7. Certification and licensure are the legal signs that a group is sanctioned for a particular service to society and that it is self-regulated	The CFLE designation was developed to regulate qualifications of family life education providers. CFLEs must meet continuing education requirements in order to maintain their designation. The CFLE credential is becoming recognized as a valid credential for those working in parenting coordination		5
8. A code of ethics is developed to eliminate unethical practice and to protect the public	The Family Science Section of NCFR established <i>Ethical Principles and Guidelines</i> in 1995. In 1997, the Minnesota Council on Family Relations finalized their work on <i>Ethical Thinking and Practice for Parent and Family Educators</i> , which was adopted by NCFR for use with the CFLE program in 1997. In 2008, NCFR began the process of developing a formal code of ethics for the CFLE credential		5

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and these professionals are licensed or certified in all 50 states.

Family mediation. Defined as “the act or process of a neutral third party’s intervention between conflicting parties to promote reconciliation, settlement, or compromise,” mediation (Merriam-Webster, 2010) has applications in the family realm. Conflicts between romantic partners, spouses, parents (birth and adoptive), parents and children (teen and adult), and siblings over such issues as finances, postdivorce visitation with children, and elder care are suitable for family mediation (Irving & Benjamin, 1995; Taylor, 2002). According to Milne, Folberg, and Salem (2004), research indicates that mental health professionals, including marriage and family therapists, significantly outnumber lawyers in the practice of family mediation in both private and public arenas. Taylor (2002), a family mediator with marriage and family therapy training, posited this point of view:

What is true about family mediation is that first and foremost, it is about families, and secondarily, it is about mediation and dispute resolution processes. Family mediators help families change from what does not fit to what will work better...An understanding of family law is certainly critical to an understanding of the family dispute in question..., however, this understanding is incomplete without the theory and practical implications of how families maintain themselves, change, communicate, and function on a daily basis (pp. 3–4).

While the practice of mediating disputes has a long history dating back to ancient times, the prevalence and prominence of family mediation surged in the 1970s. Pioneers of that movement who are still active practitioners today reflect upon the progress that has been made, and they conclude the professionalization of the field is well underway and still advancing (Irving & Benjamin, 1995; Milne et al., 2004). Applying East’s (1980) framework and Cassidy’s (2009) rating system for measuring a field’s status as a profession, family mediation fares reasonably well. Nonetheless, there remains “room to grow” in several areas. In public or court-connected settings, family mediators can typically practice full-time. Contrastingly, in private settings, those who practice family

mediation often find the need to supplement their income with other professional activities. Most mediators have academic degrees in disciplines such as law, marriage and family therapy, counseling, social work, or education. Many states have passed legislation mandating mediation when separating or divorcing couples have children. Though some individuals balk when being mandated to attend mediation sessions, the general public has increasingly come to accept the expertise of those who practice mediation.

In 2002, the Institute of Government at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock undertook a study for the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service in an effort to examine the purpose and scope of mediator qualifications, lists, and certification procedures established by the judicial branch or other branches of state governments. Results of this study indicated that,

although many states recommend qualifications for mediators, no state has requirements for the practice of mediation. In any state, a mediator can practice in private settings without being licensed, certified, or listed. Rather than regulate the practice of mediation, states have chosen to create lists of mediators meeting criteria for certain areas of practice. Statewide lists of mediators are usually maintained by the judicial branch as an extension of its responsibility for settling civil disputes. Lists or certification procedures have two general purposes: (1) to establish qualifications for mediators who receive funding from state government or who receive referrals from the courts or other agencies; and (2) to provide information about mediator qualifications for parties, attorneys, courts, and members of the public as they exercise free market choice among private mediators (p. 1).

When states (or counties/circuits within states) certify family mediators, academic degree, amount and kind of mediation-related training, and amount of post-training supervision are typically important criteria. To provide guidance to entities seeking to or actively involved in certifying mediators, the ACR has begun drafting Model Standards for Mediation Certification Programs (ACR, 2010).

Professional organizations devoted to mediation exist at the national, state, and local levels (e.g., Association of Conflict Resolution, Society

of Professionals in Dispute Resolution, and Association of Family and Conciliation Courts). Typically, these organizations have sections that focus on family mediation. They hold annual conferences and sponsor journals (e.g., *Conflict Resolution Quarterly* and *Family Court Review*) that feature articles specifically related to family mediation. These organizations also promote and publicize training. Mediator training programs vary in a number of ways: setting, content, duration, and inclusion of practicum and supervision components. There is growing consensus about basic qualifications and core competencies needed for high quality performance as a family mediator (Irving & Benjamin, 1995; Milne et al., 2004). Typically, mediation training programs seek an “approved” designation rather than to be accredited by any official entity. For example, upon reviewing an application, the ACR can render a particular training program and its trainer(s) “approved” provided certain requirements have been met.

In 2000, leaders in the field established Model Standards of Practice for Family and Divorce Mediators. Though family mediators, depending upon their academic roots (law or mental health), have pledged to abide by other ethical codes of conduct, these standards helped to provide additional guidance with regard to ethical behavior (Taylor, 2002). Academic scholars and experienced, insightful practitioners have developed conceptual frameworks and models demonstrating that mediation is a unique process. It is not arbitration, negotiation, or therapy (Milne et al., 2004; Taylor, 2002), yet many find the lines of distinction blurry. Although research on the nature and impact of family mediation has varied in quality, considerable insight has been and continues to be amassed (Beck, Sales, & Emery, 2004; Irving & Benjamin, 1995; Taylor, 2002). Returning to East’s (1980) framework and Cassidy’s (2009) rating system, we assess family mediation to have achieved the following levels of status as a profession: Ability to provide full-time occupation, 3 out of 5; established curricula and training programs, 3 out of 5; existence of professional organizations, 4 out of 5; existence of standards, body of knowledge, and competen-

cies, 4 out of 5; unique role definition, 4 out of 5; public acceptance, 4 out of 5; certification and licensure, 2 out of 4; and code of ethics and censure; 4 out of 5.

Ability to Teach and Discipline

In Burr’s and Leigh’s (1983) view, a field of study has indeed reached “discipline” status when its devotees are sufficiently able to teach and discipline, or regulate themselves, be they scholars, educators, or practitioners. Burr and Leigh believed family science had become a discipline because, in part, it had demonstrated this criterion. With the passing of a quarter-century, this ability has been refined and strengthened. As mentioned in previous passages, the number of postsecondary family science programs of study across the USA has grown, as have opportunities for continuing professional development by way of workshops, trainings, conferences, journals, and networking. Additionally, upper level students and new professionals are mentored and coached in more structured ways (Sherif-Trask, Marotz-Baden, Settles, Gentry, & Berke, 2009).

Results of a survey of administrators of postsecondary family science programs conducted by Hamon and Smith (2010) have been highlighted in an earlier passage. The administrators were asked to enumerate the distinctive attributes and strengths of their academic offerings. Not previously mentioned, but now cited as a program asset, was the belief that their programs provided excellent preparation for a variety of career paths or advanced education. Career opportunities for family science professionals are diverse and the public and private settings (e.g., business, government, court, health care, education, community, and church) for them are varied. Yet, students and new professionals are not always well versed in the possibilities. Comprehensive coverage of career options has been provided by Keim (1995) and the NCFR (2004; 2009).

Employers of new professionals in the family field expect them to display a number of competencies. Most, if not all, of the competencies identified by Ganong et al. (1995) require

higher-level critical thinking skills associated with analysis, application, integration, and generation of new knowledge. Though several of the competencies Ganong et al. deemed important have been previously mentioned, all are listed below.

- A sophisticated understanding of family dynamics and of the interrelationships between families and other social systems
- Knowledge of interrelationships between family systems and life span human development
- A broad understanding of family theories
- A broad understanding and appreciation of marginalized, disadvantaged, and oppressed families
- An understanding of the diversity (e.g., ethnic, racial, structural) of families
- Mastery of qualitative and quantitative research methods used to study families (including evaluation research)
- Ability to communicate to lay audiences
- Ability to communicate to professional colleagues
- Leadership/administrative skills
- Ability to teach at the college level
- Ability to teach in community settings (e.g., adult education workshops)
- Knowledge of ethical standards affecting their interactions with families, as well as ethics involved in research and publishing (p. 502)

This list of competencies, coupled with the ten CFLE-based Family Life Content Areas, can and should lend guidance to university administrators and faculty as they design new programs of study or review and revise current ones. While there are differences in opinion regarding how much attention a program should direct toward a given competency, Ganong et al. have provided some recommendations with accompanying rationale. The NCFR guidelines for reviewing and certifying family science programs of study offer additional insight and direction.

Considerable consensus has been reached among family science educators regarding important learning experiences college students must have in order to optimally develop these competencies. As adult learners, college students, particularly graduate students, benefit most from a learning environment that addresses their needs

for autonomy, self-direction, relevance, practicality, clear expectations, and respect (Knowles, 1980). Their retention and mastery of crucial family science content and skills will be enhanced by frequent opportunities for in- and out-of-classroom practice (e.g., research projects; collaborative learning activities; problem-solving exercises; field work; service learning endeavors; demonstrations and presentations; and internships and practicums), accompanied by helpful feedback about their performance. Some postsecondary family science educators, in both college and community settings, engage in the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) or classroom action research and subsequently report their findings at family science conferences, workshops, journals, and other publications (Gentry, 2004, 2007). Their systematic analysis of, and insightful reflection about learning, gives guidance to others' efforts to design and deliver high quality, effective family science instruction.

As Table 35.1 denotes, the NCFR has a history of publishing resources helpful to family science educators. Among its current offerings are collections of syllabi and teaching strategies, a framework for curriculum design, and a handbook related to internship and practicum experiences. Also among its current publications is a booklet that addresses ethical principles and guidelines for family scientists. The drafting of these standards for conduct was initiated by the Family Science Section of the organization in the mid-1990s and eventually adopted by the organization's board in 1998. The following statement of purpose and the specifics of each principle and guideline should be taught to and impressed upon every family science student.

These ethical principles and guidelines were developed to inspire and encourage family scientists to act ethically; provide guidance in dealing with often complex ethical issues; and provide ethical guidance in areas that family scientists may overlook; enhance the professional image and status of family scientists by increasing the level of professional consciousness....Family scientists are respectful of all individuals, do not unethically discriminate, do not develop intimate personal relationships in their role as family scientists, are sensitive to the complications of multiple role relationships, protect the confidentiality of their students or clients, and do

not engage in sexual harassment (Adams, Dollahite, Gilbert, & Keim, 2001, p. 46; as well as cited in NCFR, 2004, p. 25).

To further emphasize the valuing of ethical behavior among family science professionals, “ethics” is one of the ten CFLE-based Family Life Content Areas. In light of all these supports for teaching and promoting the professional behavior of its disciples, we believe family science has achieved this criterion for being recognized and respected as a discipline. Nonetheless, current and future family scientists must remain attentive to maintaining, even improving upon, the standards associated with these important aspects of the profession.

Achieving Consensus Among Professionals

As noted earlier, family science as a discipline emerged in the late twentieth century and therefore, is relatively new among the social sciences (NCFR Task Force on the Development of the Family Discipline, 1988). Is there consensus among professionals? Although the field is interdisciplinary, and professionals from a variety of academic backgrounds are involved in studying the family, we conclude that there is a distinct field. The strength, as well as the vulnerability, of family science is its interdisciplinary nature.

Scholars and professionals use the term family science on a regular basis. We have family psychology and family sociology that focus on the study or science of the family. All are putting family in the forefront as Burr et al. (1993) claimed was a central element of family science. There has been continual agreement from many that family science is interdisciplinary (Burr & Leigh, 1983; Ganong et al., 1995; Hollinger, 2003; Leigh, 1987; Meredith & Abbott, 1988; Pearl, 1950; Smart, 2009). This complexity is what makes the discipline unique. Families are best studied through a variety of lenses. No single set of theories or methodologies appear to adequately provide the structure needed to study families.

The interdisciplinary nature of family science is also its vulnerability. As noted, students can have a difficult time locating a family science academic program or an option within a department because there is no single common name as there is with psychology and sociology. Explaining the discipline can also be difficult, as the lay person will often ask if it is sociology or psychology. The discipline has a difficult time with an “elevator,” or quick, definition.

Frequently, those of us in the profession are asked, “What is the distinction between ‘family science’ and ‘family studies’?” In order to understand the distinction, one must agree that there is a distinct discipline called “family science.” Family science is the discipline that studies the concept of family, family processes, and family issues. Family becomes the object of the scientific inquiry. Family studies are the examinations of the family from the lens of the academic home where one resides. For example, a family psychologist may examine family based on human knowledge or behavior, while a family sociologist may study family from the broader lens of institutions. A graduate of an interdisciplinary family science program will often study the family from a mid-range perspective of family within the near environment.

The debate over whether or not there needs to be a common name for family science that identifies the discipline for potential students will most likely continue for two reasons. One is disciplinary “snobbery.” If family scientists study families and provide a framework for applying the knowledge to professions, then some may claim that it is not really a primary science, but an applied science that is relegated to a second level. Does this matter to the social scientists studying families or the professionals in the areas of family mediation, marriage and family therapy and family life education? Our thought is probably not. The second reason is that shrinking budgets at colleges and universities have caused departments to be folded into other similar departments. Since psychology and sociology are older sciences, it may be easier to bring family science into those departments. We in family science

often do not have the longevity to hold steady in times of infrastructure changes. Therefore, the issue of the name and how to identify a family science or family studies program may continue indefinitely.

The application of knowledge learned from family science is one of the benefits of the field today. Students from family science programs are able to obtain jobs after graduation often due to the internships documenting how the knowledge gained in their academic training can translate to real-world situations. The first author of this chapter recently visited a sociology department in Europe. As an Extension Specialist in the area of Family and Human Development, I explained my role at the university was to translate the research and take it out to the people of the state to help them improve their lives. A faculty member in the department commented that this was an interesting idea. She had never thought that her work in family sociology would result in information related to findings that she could give back to participants, as is common in primary disciplines.

The area of family science continues to grow, and we assert that the need for family researchers and practitioners will grow. We need to continue to expand how we study family and how to apply what is learned from the research. While there has been an increase in the number of studies exploring families of various cultures and structures, we need to expand upon the research. Family formation, child bearing, and later life no longer follow a linear pattern (Cherlin, 2010). As families adapt to a changing world, continued study is needed. For example, during the next decade there will be a large increase in the elderly population (Cherlin) and the issues facing aging families will need to be addressed. Other demographic trends in the past decade will also need further study, including committed couples who do not live in the same household, immigration, and multiple partner fertility (Cherlin). The implications of families formed through reproductive technologies need to be examined. Public policy implications of such issues as gay marriage need continued study as well (see Chap. 27

for discussion). The study of biosocial influences on the family have assisted scholars in better understanding how nature and nurture play a role in family issues (D'Onofrio & Lahey, 2010). Understanding how human energy fields (energy that can be detected around and within the body) contribute to family communication is yet another area being explored (Leigh, 2004). Understanding these variations in families and family issues will include the need for the development of new theoretical frameworks and methodologies.

Summary and Conclusions

In this chapter, we have acknowledged a past, and perhaps even ongoing, identity problem for family science as an academic realm of study. We have also defined the term “discipline” in several ways, as well as what it means to “teach.” One possible means of resolving the identity problem, at least in part, could be to make better known to undergraduate and graduate students the seven criteria for a discipline put forward by Burr and Leigh (1983) nearly 30 years ago. In introductory and capstone courses within family science programs of study, an eighth criterion, accumulating history, could be added and evidence of progress in all eight arenas could be demonstrated. In preparation for future coursework and/or in reflecting upon completed coursework, students could develop a solid appreciation of family science that they can articulate to others. One of the noted strengths of postsecondary family science programs of study is the innovative instructional strategies and techniques faculty members employ to teach about family dynamics and processes. We are confident some already do, and many more can, design and carry out equally innovative ways of teaching their students about family science as a discipline.

Family science has a history that spans less than 100 years, but still garners much pride. As a field of study, it has progressed through multiple stages (discovery, pioneering, and maturing) to a current stage we suggest might be called “entrenchment.” Family science entails a distinctively

unique subject matter for which curricular guidelines for academic programs have been established. Researchers, scholars, and practitioners conduct their work using multiple well-developed theoretical frameworks and methodologies, yet are open to testing new ones, all the while drawing implications for practical applications for families. The utility of family science is demonstrated by the evolving professions of family life education, marriage and family therapy, and family mediation.

Students and new professionals should be impressed by the ever-growing number and kinds of paraphernalia that support the discipline: professional organizations; individual and programmatic certifications; journals, handbooks, and other publications; conferences and workshops; and listservs and other means of networking and sharing ideas. Just as technological advances have impacted the delivery of some of these supports, such advances have also impacted how vital competencies in the realms of discovery, integration, application, and teaching are acquired and perfected (Boyer, 1990; Ganong et al., 1995). Family science scholars, educators, and practitioners are guided in their daily work with colleagues, students, and the families they serve by a now decade-old ethical code of conduct.

Although a total consensus in the field has not been achieved, we have documented the growing evidence that a distinct discipline of family science exists. Based on Davis's (1985) typology of disciplines, family science is, and by its interdisciplinary nature will continue to be, secondary. There is still a problem in terms of nomenclature, however, within the various disciplines (e.g., family psychology) the terminology of family science is utilized. University faculty can mentor students by helping them learn more about professional organizations such as NCFR, and where their specific niche fits within the broader department where they are studying to obtain their degrees.

Perhaps one way to view family science as a discipline is through an analogy of Maslow's hierarchy (1943). The physical sciences which were developed prior to the social sciences provided the base so that people had shelter and food

that was safe and secure. Sociology came later, examining institutions. Psychology and psychiatry then evolved, working to understand the human brain and psyche. Family science or understanding couple and family dynamics has been the most recent, as now we have the framework to survive, to understand individual development and we are moving on towards a better understanding of our relationships within the context of our primary social unit. These other disciplines provide a solid base by which we can now examine relationships within the primary unit—family—where individuals live.

Family science may always be a "secondary" social science. However, we have explained that the applied nature of family science is its strength. We have highlighted some of the emerging trends in family science. We conclude we are able to have a science of family because we have reached, in Maslow's (1943) terms, "self-actualization." We also have the ability and the luxury to study relationships and families and then apply that knowledge to the field of family practitioners because of the work of other sciences. The work of family science researchers and practitioners will continue to make an impact on the lives of individuals in relationships and within their families.

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Part VI
Afterword

Diverse Families: Islands of Refuge in the Midst of Troubled Waters?

36

Gary W. Peterson and Kevin R. Bush

A quick perusal of chapters composing the *Handbook of Marriage and Family, 3rd Edition*, reveals that American families are faced with many challenges from the larger societal context of the twenty-first century, a circumstance that seems likely to continue for some time to come. Current evidence does not support the idea that these contextual challenges will be met exclusively by “cookie cutter” nuclear families, which have often been the falsely imagined nostalgic ideals of America’s domestic past (Coontz, 2000, 2005). Instead, a society of rapidly expanding complexities and growing ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic diversity will certainly be the constant theme that drives our societal future. Moreover, families will likely require a variety of structural arrangements and processes to foster the necessary interpersonal resources in varied ways to meet the evolving challenges from the larger macrosystem, exosystems, and mesosystems of society (see Chaps. 6, 9, and 32; Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1979, 1994, 2005). Many families of diverse structure and ways of conducting everyday life may need to function as safe havens in which interpersonal resources such as security, autonomy, resiliency, problem-solving strategies, and coping skills are fostered during persistent times of trouble. These interpersonal

resources, in turn, will be essential for dealing with challenges associated with a precarious future involving rapid changes in the larger societal context consisting of social, cultural, economic, political, and technological dimensions (Bowlby, 1988; Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1979, 1994, 2005; Raef, 2006). Diverse families may increasingly be needed as island refuges in a vast context of troubled waters.

In his first novel entitled *2030: The Real Story of What Happens to America*, (Brooks, 2011) the comedian, actor, director, and screen-writer, Albert Brooks paints a vivid portrait of our society that, if he is correct, will certainly serve as a challenging context for families in 2030, the not so distant future. Expressed in the parlance of our current times, the America he envisions has shed the image of “too big to fail” and is limping along in a much dilapidated state in an agonizing downward spiral. A continuing message in Brooks’ prognostications is that the fabled American Dream is either greatly diminished or is no longer feasible for much of the population by 2030, a theme shared by a few contemporary commentators who see this decline as happening much faster than Brooks proposes (Huffington, 2010; Reich, 2010).

Brooks is able to find humor and redeeming qualities in the human condition against this backdrop of an America living on borrowed time, like an old jalopy with high mileage and bald tires, lumbering along a rough road strewn with massive potholes, nails, and other sharp objects. It is important to recognize initially, of course,

G.W. Peterson, PhD (✉) • K.R. Bush, PhD
Department of Family Studies and Social Work,
Miami University, Room 101, McGuffey Hall,
Oxford, OH 45056, USA
e-mail: petersgw@muohio.edu; bushkr@muohio.edu

that not everything, just 19 years in our future, is terribly bad. Such positive circumstances are evident because most cancers and Alzheimer's disease have been largely cured and people are now living much longer on average. Medications have been developed that reverse obesity and, more or less, actually do keep the weight off permanently. If families can afford luxuries in 2030 (and this is a big "if"!), the precise movements and locations of a family's teenagers, or anyone else for that matter, can easily be tracked with new GPS technologies (e.g., implanted inside a person or the person's clothing). Other technological breakthroughs include the development of highly sophisticated robots that can service a wide range of pragmatic, frivolous, exotic, and erotic human needs.

The rest of the Brooks' story about the period from 2011 to 2030 is grim indeed, with the overall economic conditions of American society and its families experiencing substantial decline. One development, resulting from chronically bad economic conditions, is the pervasive disappearance of America's "real jobs" that can sustain a middle class standard of living. A multitude of continuing economic maladies, further automation, diminishing job-related benefits, and declining salaries are playing key roles in this long-term demise. Most American individuals and families of 2030, including particularly those from the middle class, have experienced serious declines in their standard of living as growing numbers face insurmountable debt and financial ruin. The result of these trends, of course, is greater inequality in the form of a widening gap between a small number of super rich and a rapidly growing number of poor, and a rapidly declining middle class, consistent with the circumstances of Third World countries. Of great concern are the large numbers of very angry, alienated youth who are becoming more vocal, and whose present and future circumstances have become much worse than it was for previous generations. This set of circumstances is becoming disastrous for Americans who have traditionally clung to the premise that "our kids will do better than we did"—a belief in 2030 that has become largely an unattainable aspect of the past.

An increasing source of discomfort is that many of these unlucky youth, who are experiencing downward mobility, are forming "resentment gangs" and expressing growing anger toward the long-term elderly. Gangs of young adults are even beginning to commit acts of violence or terrorism against the long-term elderly who are living much longer lives in lavish circumstances compared to the younger population. These senior elderly, are referred to as "the olds" (i.e., or those over 70 years of age), and continue to receive maximum benefits from entitlement programs, have extended lives (due to life-extending medical breakthroughs) and are increasingly disliked by young adults for monopolizing much of the nation's dwindling financial resources. Moreover, continuing efforts by Right-to Life advocates and medical breakthroughs (e.g., life support machines) have allowed the "lives" of many of these older Americans to be extended in vegetative states for decades after their conscious lives have ended and at great cost to dwindling healthcare resources.

Compared to their predecessors, the younger adult generation and anyone younger than "the olds" (i.e., below the age of 70) are taxed higher, earn less, and are destined to receive much less government assistance from entitlement programs. Despite the existence of life-extending technologies, therefore, the majority of those who are younger than "the olds" are increasingly unable to afford the expensive healthcare that is available. Only an increasingly small number of the wealthy and the "olds" are able to extend their mortality by benefitting from the emergent medical breakthroughs of 2030. The results of these unequal circumstances, in turn, is growing anger by the younger generation who increasingly express this resentment in more hostile ways.

Another development in 2030 is that a college education no longer translates consistently into lucrative and meaningful careers. The primary outcome of diminished career opportunities is that many young people are deciding not to go to college because the cost is too great and the return on investment has become too low. Moreover, if parents don't launch the young out of the family nest to live independently by their late 20s or

later, many of these youth are increasingly unlikely to leave their parents' homes voluntarily in the foreseeable future. The consequence of such practices is that the new stage of emerging adulthood has become increasingly normative and young people are attaining economic and other forms of autonomy from parents much later if at all. In addition, things have gotten even more impersonal in the society of 2030, with face-to-face human communication being greatly reduced in favor of contacting others through elaborate communication devices and virtual reality experiences.

At the national level, the federal government's debt of 2030 has risen to insurmountable levels and no solution is in sight any longer. Health insurance covers fewer medical problems in affordable fashion and the rising costs of healthcare is ruining the financial well-being of individuals and families. Safety nets that traditionally helped to assure a dignified existence for the middle class, retirees, and lower income populations, have greatly diminished and are continuing to decline. Political gridlock is pervasive at the federal, state, and local levels of government, with little financial capacity remaining to solve the nation's problems through new corrective programs.

In the years leading up to 2030, terrorists successfully pulled off both a biological attack with small pox virus and the detonation of an atomic weapon, a dirty bomb, in a large American city (Chicago). Climate change is no longer challenged in 2030 because dramatic changes in the weather have actually happened in the form of terrible winter blizzards and blistering heat waves on the East Coast of the United States that consistently exceed 105° for almost 6 consecutive weeks. To top things off, the "Big One" finally hits in California, a 9.1 earthquake that occurs up and down the San Andreas Fault, which utterly destroys Los Angeles and adjacent areas of the West Coast. About 50,000 people perish in the quake almost instantaneously and there are an incalculable numbers of injured, homeless, and dislocated individual and family victims.

Perhaps the most crippling dilemma is that, because the US government is deeply in debt, it is financially incapable of responding adequately to

deal with the immense devastation in California (the estimated cost of rebuilding and restoring Los Angeles from a state of almost total destruction is 20 trillion dollars) and China initially rejects American overtures for additional loans to finance the needed reconstruction efforts. The result is that China eventually agrees to provide the necessary funds in stages through a joint ownership plan with the US government—an arrangement that essentially means that China now is part owner of Los Angeles! An overall message of Brooks' novel, therefore, is that America and the majority of its families who endure all these developments are sliding down a slippery slope toward Third World status and major reductions in the quality of their lives.

A convenient way to avoid coming to grips with this "Brooksian" view of the societal context that families may face in the near future is to say "oh well, this is only fiction and it hasn't happened yet, so something will save us from these imagined future horrors." If one takes a step back, however, and ponders what has recently happened in America during the past 10–15 years, an apt response would be "are you really sure it hasn't already happened?" A sobering but honest response to this question may be that Brooks actually may be underestimating the grim circumstances we are experiencing as predecessors of what may continue to confront us in the not so distant future. It is important to remember, of course, that Brooks is only projecting 19 years into our future and, more importantly, many of his troubling predictions or even worse circumstances seem to be developing currently before our very eyes.

A prominent aspect of the societal context of today's families in 2011 is the occurrence of the Great Recession or a severe global economic crisis that began in December of 2007 and took a very sharp downward plunge in September of 2008 (i.e., the Financial Crisis of 2008). This Great Recession and an associated financial crisis in banking and Wall Street have ignited and built upon long-term economic forces that could lead us to an America much like Albert Brooks has imagined. This severe recession, which ended (perhaps only technically) in the United States

during June or July of 2009, created serious short-term economic problems and worsened previous long-term economic hardships that had been developing for many years and that continue today (Gross, 2009; see Chap. 24). For the United States in particular, the Great Recession and the period of slow economic growth that has followed involves persistent high unemployment, declines in real wages, a collapse of the US housing bubble, an increase in housing foreclosures, greater numbers of personal bankruptcies, declining retirement accounts, rising gas and food prices, as well as an escalating federal, state, and local debt crisis.

In a short-term sense, the Great Recession was initiated by the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s that was triggered by several developments. Included in the factors precipitating the Recession were sharp increases in crude oil prices in 2001–2007, reduced interest rates, easy credit, sub-prime lending to poorly qualified home buyers, increased debt burden at the personal, family, and governmental levels, as well as a growing practice of incorrect pricing of risk. An important additional contributor was a liquidity shortfall in the US banking system that failed to provide sufficient funds to struggling business interests. These conditions resulted in the collapse of large financial institutions, the bailout of banks, and some of the American automobile industry by the federal government, as well as sharp downturns in stock markets around the world (Baily, & Elliot, 2009; Gross, 2009; Huffington, 2010; Reich, 2010). These factors contributed to the failure of large and small businesses, declines in consumer wealth estimated in the trillions of US dollars, and a significant decline in economic activity, all of which added up to a severe global economic recession in 2008. Most of these economic hardships, of course, provided societal contexts that threaten the welfare of many of today's families through declines in their well-being in ways similar to the "fictional" observations of Albert Brooks about our near future (Baily, & Elliot, 2009; Gross, 2009; Huffington, 2010; Reich, 2010). Some economists are now predicting that a "double-dip" recession may occur and that many condi-

tions of the great recession will be with us for a long time to come.

Although somewhat less dramatic than the disasters described by Brooks, the United States has been faced recently with many severe calamities, such as the 911 terrorist strikes, massive hurricane, and flood devastation in New Orleans, a huge oil spill that contaminated much of the Gulf Shore area, a higher frequency of F-4 and F-5 tornado strikes (some up to a mile wide!), and involvement in three foreign wars. So far, the United States has been spared from a massive earthquake like Brooks describes, but Japan sustained a "big one" of comparable dimensions only to be followed by a devastating Tsunami and a horrendous nuclear disaster. Many of these catastrophes also illustrated the increased difficulty of our federal and state governments to respond to the needs of communities, businesses, families, and individuals whose circumstances were drastically disrupted by these calamities.

The short-term financial crisis and recession also exacerbated long-term economic issues that have increasingly added to the burden of many families in our society and seem to be headed in a direction that Albert Brooks predicted for the near future. Such long-term economic problems include an accelerated decline of the US manufacturing base, corresponding job losses in manufacturing but also significant employment losses in the service and technological sectors. The result is an America that generates wealth much less by manufacturing (i.e., by making things) in favor of creating wealth and economic resources through minimally regulated "financialization." This form of economic resource creation disproportionately benefits investors (who often make investments with other people's money) and the currently wealthy. These financial interests have money to invest, with the goal being to generate more money for themselves without the intent of contributing much wealth to the "real economy" in the form of manufacturing products, providing sufficient financing for main street businesses, and job creation for American workers. One result of these problematic economic practices is a growing disparity or economic inequality between the rich and the poor and the greater difficulty of families

to maintain a middle class status (Huffington, 2010; see Chaps. 3 and 24). A recent report by the Pew Research Center using census data, for example, indicated that the country's wealth gap (i.e., median household net worth or total assets) has recently grown extensively to the widest level since such data gathering began. Specifically, the wealth of White households in 2009 was \$113,149, while being only \$6,325 for Hispanics, and only \$5,677 for African Americans, respectively. These differences in dollar amount translated into ratios of roughly 20 to 1 for White compared African American households and 18 to 1 for White compared to Hispanic households (Kochhar, Fry, & Taylor, 2011)—figures that represent almost a threefold increase in these ethnic/racial disparities since 1995. Moreover, according to the annual 2011 *KIDS COUNT® Data Book* by the Annie E. Casey Foundation (2011), there has been a significant decline in economic well-being for low income children and families. The official children's poverty rate, which is a conservative measure of economic hardship, increased 18 % between 2000 and 2009. This means that children's poverty essentially returned to the level of the early 1990s. Another way of viewing this is that about 2.4 million more children were living below the federal poverty line in 2009 compared to 2000 (Annie E. Casey Foundation).

Other examples of chronic economic problems having important implications for families are rising home foreclosures, the decline of home equities, rising individual and family debt levels, declines in real wages, growing educational costs (e.g., increases in college tuition and serious financial shortfalls in public education), serious losses in retirement plans and accounts, and rising prices for many consumer goods (Huffington, 2010; see Chap. 24). The rising debt levels of federal, state, and local governments also are likely to have adverse consequences for families in the form of greater potential for raising tax rates, diminished funding for their children's education, the cost and quality of healthcare coverage, reduced retirement funding and the growing decay of the nation's infrastructure (Huffington; Reich, 2010). Perhaps, as a lead-in to a "Brooksian View" of America, we seem to be on the verge of

reconsidering our ability to retain our current safety nets for families provided by Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid in a country that remains engaged in three armed conflicts (i.e., Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya) and many other manifestations of the Modern American Empire (see Huffington, 2010; Chap. 31).

From the perspective of many family members, the political world of America in 2011, like the Brooksian world of 2030, is characterized by political gridlock in which real solutions to problems take a backseat to partisan warfare, uncompromising ideological conflict, and political power struggles simply for the sake of winning the next election. An example of such political strife is the recent struggle over raising the debt ceiling, which many experts considered an unnecessary conflict spawned more by partisan wrangling and posturing for the next election without much real substance. Much like the world of 2030, the US Congress is deadlocked and seems unable to deal with major political problems through compromise and reasoned solutions. Political party squabbles over how to deal with the national debt, stimulate employment, and attain a path to renewed prosperity have reached repeated impasses. Such deadlocks over issues include whether or not to cut federal government expenditures or raise taxes on large corporations and the wealthy (largely millionaires and billionaires). Frequent reference is made of the large tax loopholes for large corporations and the extremely wealthy that are not only significantly lower than the tax rates paid by the middle class but also are the lowest tax rates for the privileged in many decades. American CEOs also have dramatically increased the disparity between their own incomes and those of average workers in their own industries and those of CEOs of corporations from other countries (Huffington, 2010).

Most economists argue that cutting the federal budget without raising tax revenues is unlikely to be a viable way of solving governmental debt problems because there is little flexibility as to how this problem can be addressed without the implementation of both solutions (Huffington, 2010; Reich, 2010). For one thing, disproportionate economic gains have been characteristic of

large corporations and the wealthy during this time of economic stagnation and slow growth. Moreover, a lack of flexibility exists in reducing the federal deficit, in part, because 77 % of federal spending is tied up in Social Security, Medicaid, Medicare, net interest owed on the national debt, and national defense appropriations. Less than 23 % of the federal budget is devoted to discretionary spending beyond the basic entitlement programs and defense spending, which leaves little flexibility to solve federal debt problems simply by cutting governmental functions without raising taxes. An overall assessment, therefore, is that Albert Brooks did not have to leap very far ahead from the conditions of 2011 to give us a grim view of the difficult financial and economic circumstances of American families in 2030 (Huffington, 2010; Reich, 2010).

Beyond such political struggles over the economic issues described above, recent partisan political strife also specifically addresses family life or, more specifically, the definition of what constitutes a “normal family” and what similar close relationships should be like. Here we refer to the present-day *culture wars*, with the central component of this strife being advocacy for or opposition to *family values*, a general perspective most clearly identified with social conservatives within the Republican Party. The basic elements of a family values perspective are as follows:

- Support for traditional marriage and opposition to sex outside of conventional marriage, including such things as pre-marital sex, adultery, polygamy, and incest.
- Support for a retreat from aspects of feminism and greater emphases on traditional roles for women in families.
- Resistance to diverse family forms such as same-sex marriage, cohabitation, and single parent families which took its most overt legislative form in the Defense of Marriage Act.
- Support for and parental involvement in traditional education, including such things as vouchers for private, non-secular education.
- Opposition to the legalization of abortion and support for policies that encourage abstinence and adoption instead.
- Support for abstinence education exclusively in regards to dealing with risks associated with early sexual activity such as teen pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases.
- Opposition to teaching such topics of sex education as human sexual behavior, safe sex, and birth control.
- Support for policies that are said to protect children from obscenity and exploitation. The promotion of morality based in Christian values and the belief that the nuclear family is the religious ideal for the care and socialization of children and adult marital relationships.
- Rejection of the constitutional principle of separation between church and state for family values issues.

Many social conservatives wish to roll back the societal clock on these family values by using their electoral power to capture state and federal governments and impose Christian family values on the rest of the population. This is, of course, a direct challenge to the constitutional principle of separation between church and state, a fundamental principle upon which the nation was founded. Throughout our history, immigrant populations repeatedly came to America to practice freedom of religion (or to be free from any obligation to believe in or practice any religion), but to do so in a country that did not have an established religion that was imposed on citizens by government sanction.

A quick glance at the complicated, present-day diversity of American families, and the speed through which these social changes have occurred makes it seem quite naïve for social conservatives to believe that these powerful social forces are reversible through use of ephemeral government power. A glaring historical example of such folly was America’s abortive flirtation from 1918 to 1933 with extremist morality in the form of national prohibition of alcoholic beverages (The Volstead Act or National Prohibition Act) should serve as a lesson in the futility of trying to put a deeply ingrained “social genie” back in the bottle. The result of this effort was a policy that was vigorously resisted, widely violated, inconsistently enforced, and spawned widespread corruption. This lesson from history illustrates how legislative

efforts to reverse natural processes of social change away from nuclear families toward diverse family forms would certainly be doomed to failure. Most certainly, any legislative efforts to reverse current complex patterns of family change would face many more genes to put back in the bottle than was true for national prohibition.

Cast against this backdrop of potential impending disasters in the social, economic, political, and technological context is evidence that families, in their increasingly diverse forms, may be needed, even more than in the past, as refuges from the growing uncertainty in the larger human ecology. Supportive of such a perspective are themes in this Handbook about family life including: (a) increased diversity of successful/resilient families; (b) increased gender equality; and (c) continued desire for marriage and satisfying family relationships. Before discussing the first of these positive themes, it is important to recognize that distinctive or opposing perspectives are used frequently to define what is considered to be a “successful” family. These opposing views are often couched in the terms of viewing diverse family forms (i.e., non-nuclear) as signs that the American family is either (1) declining as it evolves away from the nuclear family structure (e.g., Popenoe & Whitehead, 2002) or (2) adapting to the moving target of a social ecology with rapidly changing demands and challenges (e.g., Bianchi, & Casper, 2000; Coontz, 2000, 2005). The obvious result is that a person’s perception of “successful” forms of family life will be substantially shaped by which side of this debate is accepted and used for assessing the contemporary condition of American families.

A perusal of chapters in this *Handbook* provides continuing evidence of what seems to be an inexorable movement away from nuclear families toward much greater diversity. Combined with patterns of greater domestic variation is growing evidence that diverse family forms are persistent and resilient (see Chap. 3). In reference to lesbian and gay families, for example, Patterson in Chap. 27 concludes from current research that the overall picture is one of resilience, even in the midst of continuing discrimination and oppression. Despite substantial obstacles, lesbian and gay couples

often are able to create supportive relationships and social networks in a society with improving but still conflicted attitudes about families with diverse sexual identities. The weight of the evidence also indicates that, compared to families with heterosexual parents, home environments provided by lesbian and gay parents are equally likely to foster psychosocial growth among family members. Adding to this positive view, is the chapter on remarriage and stepfamilies by van Eeden-Moorefield and Pasley (see Chap. 22) who indicate that, compared to nuclear families, adults in remarriages and stepfamilies experience largely similar levels of well-being, life satisfaction, and marital quality. Moreover, on average, children in stepfamilies tend to do well over time as their young enter and progress through adulthood. Stepfamilies are functioning well with remarkable resilience, in spite of the many challenges, both within their family systems and within the broader social and legal contexts.

The structure of American families increasingly provides extensive options, including stepfamilies, single parent families, non-married cohabiting families, and nuclear families. Moreover, these varying structures have been increasingly found to support healthy and satisfying family relationships and individual development (see Chaps. 12 and 22). Recent research emphasizes the importance of process and relationships, not simply formal legal obligations (e.g., marital status) or structural compositions within families (e.g., two parent vs. single parent, or binuclear remarried/cohabiting family) (see Chap. 13). Not only are diverse family forms becoming more common, but they also are demonstrating considerable success in producing/maintaining relationships and individual outcomes.

Given growing economic uncertainty, relationships within diverse family structures may function in flexible ways to mediate, ameliorate, improve, or worsen these circumstances. Recent research supports the notion that economic conditions alone do not solely determine the extent to which individuals or families experience success and satisfaction (Chaps. 10 and 24). The possibility does exist that our increasingly diverse family forms, with their adaptive qualities, may

function as islands of restoration for mustering our resources and resilience in the face of what appears to be formidable and impending external challenges.

Although some of the developing patterns identified within this *Handbook* may provide reasons for substantial concern, a deeper examination into these issues also reveals a positive side of these circumstances. For example, while rates of divorce and non-marital births remain relatively high (see Chaps. 3 and 21) divorce rates have actually declined modestly and stabilized somewhat since their peak in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Moreover, a higher frequency of these “out of wedlock” births (approximately 40 %) are now occurring within the context of relationships involving stable, cohabiting couples who increasingly appear capable of promoting the development of social competence in children (see Chaps. 10 and 12).

Other positive signs include the fact that the rates of remarriage and recoupling through cohabitation continue to provide families with structural options for supporting one another. Thus, although both remarried and long-term cohabiting families often experience more complex relationships and barriers (e.g., increased financial responsibilities, prior relationship complications, and deficient legal support due to unmarried status), these families are proving to be very resilient, increasingly stable, and quite capable of fostering successful family relationships and positive individual outcomes (see Chaps. 12 and 22).

Despite the fact that our society is nowhere near the attainment of gender equality, progress toward this goal has been evident in several areas of American family life. Considering the current economy and gender roles, the fact that a majority of couples now have both spouses in the work force, serves as an important safety net in the event of economic reversals. Although many families increasingly depend on incomes from both spouses to maintain a middle class standard of living, having two incomes also provides greater assurance of being able to weather the many storms of difficult economic times. Moreover, within two parent families with children, both

parents appear to be sharing more domestic and childcare responsibilities (see Chaps. 16 and 25). This pattern contrasts sharply with traditional gender role divisions that existed within idealized nuclear families of the 1950s consisting of bread-winning husbands/fathers situated primarily in instrumental roles and stay-at-home wives/mothers who were focused primarily on expressive functions (Parsons & Bales, 1955).

Changing gender roles also may mean that women and men are looking for spouses or long-term partners who have similar characteristics (e.g., good earning potential, communication skills, parenting skills) that can lead to (or are created from) more equitable relationships between partners, regardless of gender (see Chaps. 10, 18, and 23). Although women still perform the bulk of household labor, research during recent decades has revealed that women have slightly decreased and men have slightly increased the average number of hours they spend on housework. Some observers assert, however, that men have not stepped up sufficiently to compensate for women’s decreasing hours, but, instead, some household labor is either not getting done or is being outsourced (Chap. 25).

Examinations of the work and family literature suggest that indeed the time allocated to both paid and unpaid labor is starting to look quite similar for men and women (Chap. 23). Although improving, however, structural constraints that exist in society continue to impede gender equality and make it more difficult for men and women to assume the same roles equally (see Chap. 7). Such barriers include persisting gender differentials in pay which make it more likely that couples will focus on the male’s job/career. Another example is the persistence of discrimination, based on traditional gender assumptions, that leads to difficulties for the growing number of men who are assuming “non-traditional male roles” by becoming stay-at-home fathers and/or taking time off from work to care for children. Continuing obstacles also deter women from assuming more “non-traditional female roles,” such as becoming primary breadwinners and/or taking secondary roles in caregiving (see Chap. 7). These engendered processes are illustrated in the more robust

impact that family-to-work spillover (e.g., time off of work to care for family) has on women compared to men (see Chap. 23). Despite such continuing obstacles, however, gender equality is being made in all of these aspects of the workplace and other social and institutional settings. Further progress toward gender equality is likely to continue in the future.

Although, in an overall sense, fewer Americans are getting married or at least are waiting longer to do so, both of which are patterns that might be viewed by some observers as negative developments for family life. Instead, a contrary view is that most Americans still desire marriage and will try it out at least once during their lives (see Chaps. 10 and 11). Such trends as those to delay marriage, engage in cohabitation, and for divorce rates to stabilize, suggest that people are (or will be) continuing to seek marriage even though they are spending less time actually being married during the life course.

Despite increases in cohabitation and other forms of non-marital lifestyles, therefore, these trends do not translate into widespread patterns of giving up on marriage, intimate relationships, or parenting as central goals of adult life. Instead, many of these alternatives seem to be precursors to (e.g., the majority of marriages are now preceded by cohabitation) or common alternatives to marriage (or remarriage). Such varied domestic patterns allow individuals to create familial relationships other than conventional marriages (e.g., cohabitation) and traditional nuclear families (e.g., binuclear remarried families), all of which seek a similar form of personal fulfillment through structuring a balance between autonomy and connectedness within their intimate relationships (See Chap. 1). These diverse family forms allow greater capacity for the co-parenting of children, mutually supportive couple relationships, and related benefits for personal well-being that typically have been reserved solely for two-parent nuclear families (Chap. 12). That is, individuals who desire intimate relationships, and/or seek to become parents, but desire different relationship arrangements than traditional nuclear families, now have options that more closely fit their preferences, goals, and needs. Although a

major concern about cohabitation is its relative instability compared to conventional marriage, the diverse nature of these relationships diminishes some of the concerns about this volatility. Some researchers, for example, assert that cohabitation is actually becoming either part of or a step in the dating process (see Chap. 10). In other words, cohabitating relationships have diverse goals (e.g., a trial marriage, sexual gratification, an alternative to marriage, financial security), trajectories, role manifestations, and satisfaction levels. Consequently, it is increasingly recognized that cohabitation will have diverse outcomes and goals that cannot be reduced simplistically to an initial step along an inevitable pathway toward marriage (Chap. 12).

An important concluding message, therefore, is to emphasize the importance of focusing on processes within the families and less so on family structure. That is, compared to all other family forms, the tendency to tout one type of family structure, such as the nuclear, two-parent family (or any other family form for that matter) as the “normal” or optimal arrangement for successful childrearing and adult relationships seems anachronistic at best and an even greater folly in the future. Such a presumptive conclusion is likely to be time-limited in the face of rapid social change and may obscure the adaptive, evolving qualities of diverse families that contribute to strength and resilience. For example, the term “cohabitating couples/families” is a structural construct created for categorizing non-married cohabiting couples who are involved in romantic relationships. In reality, however, not all non-married cohabiting couples fit neatly into a common category having the same expectations, goals, resources, and trajectories (see Chap. 12). Instead, a better approach will be to focus on patterns of relationships within the whole family system, the component relationships between family members (e.g., parent–child, couple/marital, and co-parenting relationships), and the strengths common to relationships across all family structures. Family researchers then will be better prepared to understand and facilitate the strengths and resiliency of diverse American families that are currently a reality and becoming more so everyday. Perhaps more than ever, these

diverse family relationships may be in urgent demand during a time of growing social contextual uncertainty—our island refuges in the midst of troubled waters.

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