

CHAPTER 12



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Marriage, Work, and Economics

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What Do YOU Think?

Are the following statements **TRUE** or **FALSE**?

You may be surprised by the answers (see answer key on the bottom of this page).

- T** **F** 1 In contrast to single-worker couples, dual-career couples tend to divide household work almost evenly.
- T** **F** 2 More than 1 million American men are full-time homemakers with no outside employment.
- T** **F** 3 It is generally agreed by economists that welfare encourages poverty.
- T** **F** 4 Couples who work different shifts have more satisfying and stable marriages.
- T** **F** 5 Women in the United States currently make 90 cents for every dollar that men earn.
- T** **F** 6 Family economic well-being is a national priority.
- T** **F** 7 Many female welfare recipients are on welfare as a result of a change in their marital or family status.
- T** **F** 8 Most families are dual-earner families.
- T** **F** 9 Women tend to interrupt their work careers for family reasons far more often than do men.
- T** **F** 10 Married women tend to earn more and have higher-status jobs than single women.

Answer Key for What Do You Think

1 False, see p. 427; 2 True, see p. 441; 3 False, see p. 449; 4 False, see p. 440; 5 False, see p. 442; 6 False, see p. 451; 7 True, see p. 432; 8 True, see p. 433; 9 True, see p. 431; 10 False, see p. 426.

Imagine yourself at a party put on by your school's alumni association. As you float around the room, trying to meet and mingle with some people who graduated in recent years, you overhear the following exchanges among some of the other guests. Each snippet of conversation illustrates some unspoken assumptions people have about work and family. Can you recognize the assumptions and identify what is wrong in each exchange?

- *Exchange No. 1.* A trio of women is in a corner. "What do you do?" one of the women inquires politely while being introduced by a second woman to the third. "Nothing. I'm a housewife," the third responds. "Oh, that's . . . nice," the first woman replies, seeming to lose interest and turning toward the woman handling the introduction.
- *Exchange No. 2.* A bearded man is talking to a couple. "So, what do you two do?" the man asks. "I'm a doctor," the woman responds as she picks up her child, who is impatiently tugging on her. "And I'm an architect," her husband says while nursing their second child with a bottle.

Although they are subtle, we can observe the following assumptions being made and attitudes being displayed. In the first exchange, both women ignore that the woman who identified herself as a homemaker does, indeed, work. They also appear to devalue such unpaid work in comparison with paid work. In the second exchange, the woman identifies herself as a physician without acknowledging that she is also a parent. Her husband makes the same mistake. As husband and wife, father and mother, both the physician and the architect are unpaid family workers making important—but generally unrecognized—contributions to the family's economy.

Because it is unpaid, and perhaps because it is done mostly by women, family work is ignored and looked upon as inferior to paid work, regardless of how difficult, time consuming, creative, rewarding, and important it is for our lives and future as humans. This is not surprising, because in the United States employment takes precedence over family.

To understand the role of work in families, we may also need to rethink the meaning of *family*. We ordinarily think of families in terms of relationships and feelings—the family as an emotional unit. But families are also economic units that happen to be bound by emotional ties (Ross, Mirowsky, and Goldsteen

1991). Paid work and unpaid family work, as well as the economy itself, profoundly affect the way we live in and as families. Our most intimate relationships vary according to how we participate in, divide, and share paid work and family work (Voydanoff 1987).

Our paid work helps shape the quality of family life: it affects time, roles, incomes, spending, leisure, and even individual identities. Whatever time we have for one another, for fun, for our children, and even for sex is the time not taken up by paid work. Work regulates the family, and for most families, as in the past, a woman's work molds itself to her family, whereas a man's family molds itself to his work (Ross, Mirowsky, and Goldsteen 1991). We must constantly balance work roles and family roles. These facts are the focus of this chapter.

Workplace and Family Linkages

Time and Time Strains

Outside of sleeping, probably the single activity to which most employed men and women devote the most time is their jobs. Data suggest that, in contrast to declines throughout Europe, Americans are working more (Jacobs and Gerson 2004). Although European and American workers face similar "time dilemmas," the societal responses to these pressures have been vastly different. Jerry Jacobs and Kathleen Gerson (2004, 124) assert the following:

Several European countries, especially those in Northern Europe, have made sustained, highly publicized, and well-organized efforts to reduce working time as a strategy for reducing unemployment, increasing family time, and reducing gender inequalities in the market and at home.

Conversely, ". . . the average American worker—including both part-timers and full-timers—puts in more hours per year on the job than the typical full-time worker in Europe" (Jacobs and Gerson, 2004, 127). The United States has the longest average work week and the highest percentages of men and women who work 50 hours per week or more. This is true of married women and men as well as unmarried, parents as well as people without children (Jacobs and Gerson, 2004, 125). The more we work, the less time we have for our families and leisure. Most of us know from experience that our work or even our studies affect our personal relationships.

It bears mentioning that although some categories of workers (for example, professional and managerial) have experienced an increase in the time demands upon them, others are underemployed and would prefer to work more (Jacobs and Gerson, 2004; Perry-Jenkins, Repetti, and Crouter, 2000). This **bifurcation of working time**, wherein some work longer and longer days and weeks while others work less hours than they need or want, is revealed by findings from the National Study of the Changing Workforce. Sixty percent of both men and women would prefer to work less; however, about one in five men (19.3%) and 18.5% of women would prefer to work more hours than they currently work (Jacobs and Gerson, 2004).

Whether we love, loathe, or merely learn to live with them, our jobs structure the time we can spend as families (Hochschild 1997). Time at work can create a feeling of **time strain**, in which individuals feel they do not have or spend enough time in certain roles and relationships. Kei Nomaguchi, Melissa Milkie, and Suzanne Bianchi (2005) found interesting gendered patterns in their investigation into the psychological effects of time strains:

- More fathers than mothers report feeling they do not have enough time with their children or their spouses. More mothers than fathers feel they have too little time for themselves.
- Life satisfaction is significantly reduced *for mothers but not for fathers* when they feel they have or spend "too little time with children."
- Feelings of time strains with a spouse are associated with significantly higher levels of distress *for women but not for men*.
- Feelings of insufficient time for oneself are associated with reduced levels of family and life satisfaction and with increased feelings of distress *for men but not for women*.
- Fathers articulate feeling strained for time with both their spouses and their children, but these feelings do not affect them as much psychologically as they do women.

Work and Family Spillover

In addition to the time we have available to our families, work affects home life in other ways. Common sense (as well as our own fatigue) suggests that our paid work has effects on other aspects of our lives. We

can call this **work spillover**—the effect that work has on individuals and families, absorbing their time and energy and impinging on their psychological states. It links our home lives to our workplace (Small and Riley 1990). Work is as much a part of our marriages and home lives as love is. What happens at work—frustration or worry, a rude customer, an unreasonable boss—has the potential to affect our moods, perhaps making us irritable or depressed. Often, we take such moods home with us, affecting the emotional quality of our relationships.

Research demonstrates that work-induced energy depletion, fatigue, or, in more extreme cases, exhaustion can affect the quality of our family relationships. Fatigue and exhaustion can make us angry, anxious, less cheerful, and more likely to complain and can cause us to experience more difficulty interacting and communicating in positive ways. Yet according to one study, although both stress and exhaustion from work affect marital relationships, “stress is far more toxic” (Roberts and Levenson 2001, 1,065). These researchers suggest that although common, job stress can seriously and negatively affect marital happiness, creating dynamics that unchecked may even contribute to divorce.

Scholars have increasingly looked at how and how often negative spillover affects us. Although negative work spillover occurs neither every day nor to everyone, it is accurate to consider it fairly commonplace

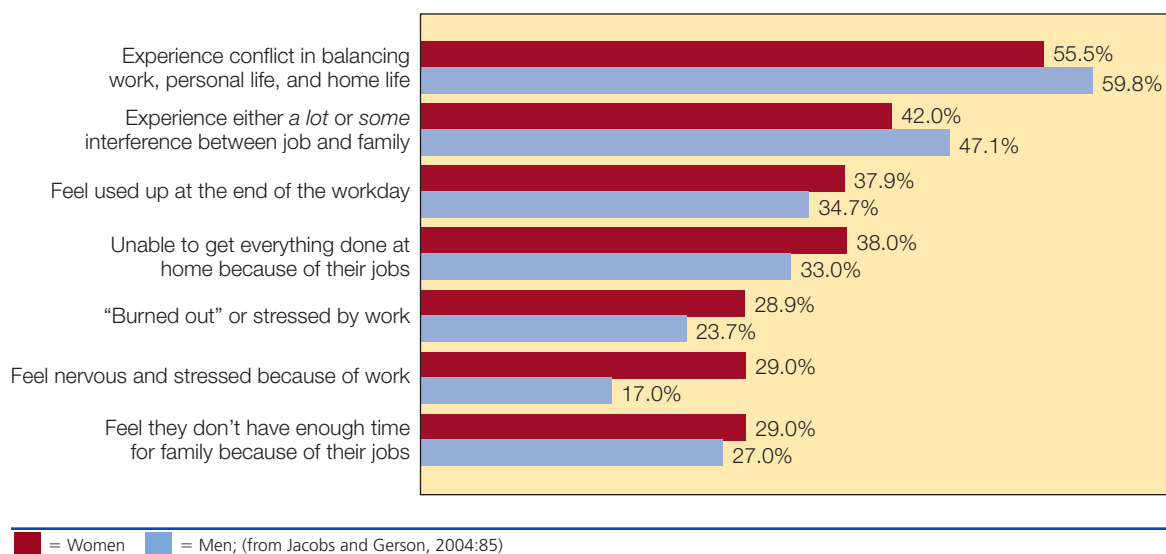
(Roehling, Jarvis, and Swope 2005). This is revealed in the Figure 12.1, based upon data from the 1997 National Study of the Changing Workforce.

Such work–family tensions are greater for mothers and fathers than they are for employed women and men without children. Furthermore, the effects seem to be greater on mothers than on fathers, just as the differences between parents and nonparents are greater among women than among men. Jerry Jacobs and Kathleen Gerson note that children’s ages make little difference in parents’ experiences of work–family stress. Workplace stress often causes us to focus on our problems at work rather than on our families, even when we are home with our families. It can lead to fatigue, stomach ailments, and poorer health, as well as depression, anxiety, increased drug use, and problem drinking (Roehling, Jarvis, and Swope 2005; Crouter and Manke 1994).

Family-to-Work Spillover

As many employed parents can attest, the relationship between paid work and family life cuts both ways. The emotional climate in our homes can affect our morale and performance in our jobs. Positively, family can help alleviate some workplace stress. More research has focused on how the demands of our home lives may impinge on our concentration, energy, or availability at work (Jacobs and Gerson 2004).

Figure 12.1 ■ Work-to-Family Spillover



Yet Jennifer Keene-Reid and John Reynolds (2005) argue that “workers who have control over their work schedules report feeling more successful at balancing work and family life.” Furthermore, because family demands and needs can and do arise unexpectedly, the ability of employed parents to adjust their schedules accordingly is a useful and important family-friendly benefit.

Research indicates that because women, more often than men, face the intrusion of their family responsibilities into their work lives, they are forced to make more work-related adjustments because of family needs (Keene-Reid and Reynolds 2005). Additionally, higher levels of family to work spillover have been found among parents compared to non-parents (Roehling, Jarvis and Swope, 2005).

Meeting family demands such as assuming more household and childcare responsibility often comes with hidden or unanticipated work-related financial costs. Regardless of gender, those who carry responsibility for traditionally female housework chores are likely to suffer reduced wages. This is probably the result of having less effort and energy available to spend on paid work activities, although it may also reflect employer discrimination against those who perform female housework as a result of reduced effort and energy to devote to their employment (Noonan 2001).

Role Conflict, Role Strain, and Role Overload

Two-parent families in which both partners are employed face more severe work-related problems than do nonparents. Being an employed parent usually means performing three demanding roles simultaneously: worker, parent, and spouse or partner (Voydanoff and Donnelly 1989). In juggling these roles, we might experience role conflict, role strain, role overload, or a combination of these.

When the multiple social statuses or positions that we occupy (for example, spouse, parent, and worker) present us with competing, contradictory, or simultaneous role expectations, we experience **role conflict**. When the role demands attached to any particular status (for example, mother, husband, or employee) are contradictory or incompatible we experience **role strain**. Finally, when the various roles we play require us to do more than we can comfortably or adequately handle, or when we feel we have so much to do that we will never “catch up,” or have enough time for ourselves we experience **role overload** ourselves (Crouter et al. 2001).



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■ *Work spillover and role strain affect many employed women and men, especially those who have children.*

In the specific case of family and paid work roles, when we feel torn between spending time with our spouses or children and finishing work-related tasks, we are experiencing role conflict. We cannot be in two places at once.

Men who see themselves as traditional providers may experience role strain when pressed into higher levels of housework or childcare. Employed wives exhausted by their combination of paid work, housework and childcare may also experience role strain and not enjoy sexual intimacy with their spouses.

There is some evidence suggesting that job stress has a “crossover effect” on a spouse or other family members. When one spouse feels a lot of pressure or overload at work, the other spouse may begin to feel depressed or overloaded as well. This may be especially true regarding a crossover effect of husbands’ overload onto wives. Less clear is how much “crosses over” from parents to children or whether parent-child relationships are affected in similar ways as marriages. Crouter and colleagues found that both fathers’ role overload and the amount of hours they worked affected the quality of their relationships with their adolescent children (2001). When fathers worked long hours but did not experience overload, their relationships with their adolescents do not seem to suffer. It appears that for fathers and children the combination of hours and overload have the greatest effect (Crouter et al. 2001).

Parental “availability” to children is affected by the levels of stress that parents experience. Particularly stressful days at work may be followed by parents being withdrawn at home. This may sometimes prove

beneficial because, by withdrawing, less negative emotion is brought into the relationships (Perry-Jenkins, Repetti, and Crouter 2000).

Some research indicates that individuals with high self-esteem feel less role conflict than those with low self-esteem (Long and Martinez 1994). Women spend less time on housework if they are employed (Coltrane 2000; Greenstein 1996). But women with high self-esteem accept lower housekeeping standards as necessary and realistic adjustments to their multiple roles rather than as signs of inadequacy.

However, the more important sources of role conflict and overload are not within the person but rather *within the person's role responsibilities*. Men experience role conflict when trying to balance their family and work roles. Because men are expected to give priority to their jobs over their families, it is not easy for men to be as involved in their families as they may like. A study examining role conflict among men (O'Neil and Greenberger 1994; see also Marks 1994 and Greenberger 1994) found that men with the least role conflict fell into two groups. One group consisted of men who were highly committed to both work and family roles. They were determined to succeed at both. The other group consisted of men who put their family commitments above their job commitments. They were willing to work at less demanding or more flexible jobs, spend less time at work, and put their family needs first. In both instances, however, the men received strong encouragement and support from their spouses.

Married women employed full-time often prefer working fewer hours as a means of reducing role conflict (Warren and Johnson 1995). Some women work a shift different from that of their spouses or partners. Not surprisingly, because they have less role conflict, single women (including those who are divorced) are often more advanced in their careers than married women (Houseknecht, Vaughan, and Statham 1987). They are more likely to be employed full-time and have higher occupational status and incomes. They are also more highly represented in the professions and hold higher academic positions.

The various issues surrounding spillover, role conflict, role overload, and role strain vary depending upon the household structure and division of labor. Single-parent households with full-time working parents are easily susceptible to role overload and role conflict. Two-parent, dual-earner households also face versions of work-to-family spillover different from

those of households with one provider and a partner at home full-time.

Comparing levels of expressed work–family interference from two large survey sources, the Quality of Employment Study in 1977 and the National Study of the Changing Workforce in 1997, Sarah Winslow (2005) offered the following conclusions about work–family conflict: Compared with respondents in 1977, respondents in 1997 reported greater difficulty balancing work and family. This was greatest among parents regardless of whether they were in dual-earner or single-earner households. Also, women and men reported similar levels of work–family interference.

Reflections

Much of the workplace–family linkage concept can be applied to the college environment. If you think of your student role as a work role and the college as the workplace, what types of work spillover do you experience in your personal or family life? If you are a homemaker or are employed (or both), what kinds of role strain do you experience?

The Familial Division of Labor

Families divide their labor in a number of ways. Some follow more traditional male–female patterns, most share wage earning, and a small number reverse roles. Even within a single family, there will likely be a number of divisions of labor over time, as the family members move through the various family life-cycle stages. How families allocate tasks and divide paid and unpaid work have a tremendous effect on how a family functions.

The Traditional Pattern

In what we often consider the “traditional” division of labor in the family, work roles are complementary: the husband is expected to work outside the home for wages, and the wife is expected to remain at home caring for children and maintaining the household. A man's family role is secondary to his provider role, whereas a woman's employment role is secondary to her family role (Blair 1993).

Exploring Diversity Industrialization “Creates” the Traditional Family



In the nineteenth century, industrialization transformed the face of America. It also transformed American families from self-sufficient farm families to wage-earning urban families. As factories began producing farm machinery such as harvesters, combines, and tractors, significantly fewer farm workers were needed. Workers migrated to the cities, where they found employment in the ever-expanding factories and businesses.

Because goods were now bought rather than made in the home, the

family began to shift from being primarily a production unit to being a consumer and service-oriented unit. With this shift, a radically new division of labor arose in the family. Men began working outside the home in factories or offices for wages to purchase the family's necessities and other goods. Men became identified as the family's sole providers or “breadwinners.” Their work began to be identified as “real” work and was given higher status than women's work because it was paid in wages.

Industrialization also created the housewife, the woman who remained at home attending to household duties and caring for children. With industrialization, because

much of what the family needed had to be purchased with the husband's earnings, the wife's contribution in terms of unpaid work and services went unrecognized, much as it continues today (Ferree 1991).

In earlier times, the necessities of family-centered work gave marriage and family a strong center based on economic need. The emotional qualities of a marriage mattered little as long as the marriage produced an effective working partnership. Without its productive center, however, the family focused on the relationships between husband and wife and between parent and child. Affection, love, and emotion became the defining qualities of a good marriage.

This difference in primary roles between men and women in traditional households profoundly affects the most basic family tasks, such as who cleans the toilet, mops the floors, does the ironing, and washes the baby's diapers. Women—whether or not they are employed outside the home—remain primarily responsible for household tasks (Demo and Acock 1993). This is the family form that most fits the *two-person career* model (see Chapter 3). Women become the domestic and childrearing supports on whom families depend, freeing men to focus on wage earning and providing.

The division of family roles along stereotypical gender lines varies by race and class. It is more characteristic of Caucasian families than of African American families. African American women, for example, are less likely than Caucasian women to be exclusively responsible for household tasks. Latino and Asian families are more likely to be closer to the traditional than are African Americans or Caucasians (Rubin 1994).

Class differences are somewhat ambiguous. Among middle-class couples, greater ideological weight is given to sharing and fairness. Working-class couples, although less ideologically traditional than in the past, are still not as openly enthusiastic about more egalitarian

divisions of labor. However, in terms of *who does what*, working-class families are more likely than middle-class families to piece together work-shift arrangements that allow parents to take turns caring for the children and working outside the home. Such arrangements may force couples to depart from tradition, even if they neither believe they should nor boast that they do (Rubin 1994).

Men's Family Work

The husband's role as provider is probably his most fundamental role in marriage. As Barbara Arrighi and David Maume (2000, 470) put it, “It is the activity in which they spend most of their time and depend on most for their identity.” In the traditional equation, if the male is a good provider, he is a good husband and a good father (Bernard 1981). This core concept seems to endure despite trends toward more egalitarian and androgynous gender roles. A woman's marital satisfaction is often related to how well she perceives her husband as fulfilling his provider role (Blair 1993). It is not uncommon for women to complain of husbands who do not work to their full potential. They feel their

husbands do not contribute their fair share to the family income.

Looking at marriages in which wives are “mutually dependent”—earning between 40–59% of the family income, such couples increased nearly 300% between 1970 and 2001. As many as 30% of dual-earner couples and 20% of all married couples fit such a pattern. In one-fourth of dual-earner couples, wives outearn husbands (an increase of 40% between 1987 and 2003). In 12% of dual-earner couples, wives earn *at least* 60% of the total income (Winslow-Bowe, 2006). Interestingly, neither pattern has a uniform effect on married life. Only when men have traditional gender attitudes despite finding themselves in nontraditional life situations and marriages do such income differentials negatively affect men (Brennan, Barnett, and Gareis 2001).

Men are traditionally expected to contribute to family work by providing household maintenance. Such maintenance consists primarily of repairs, light construction, mowing the lawn, and other activities consistent with instrumental male norms. (But, as one woman asked, how often do you have to repair the toaster or paint the porch?)

Men often also contribute to housework and childcare, although their contribution may not be notable in terms of the total amount of work to be done. Men tend to see their role in housekeeping or childcare as “helping” their partner, not as assuming equal responsibility for such work. Husbands become more equal partners in family work when they, their wives, or both have egalitarian views of family work or when such a role is pressed upon them by either circumstantial necessity or ultimatum (Hochschild 1989; Greenstein 1996). Men who believe they should act as traditional providers resist performing more housework or do so only reluctantly, whether their wives are employed outside the home or not. If both spouses share a traditional gender ideology (traditional beliefs about what each should contribute to paid and family work), men’s low level of household participation is not problematic.

Women’s Family Work

Although most women now earn salaries as paid employees, contributing more than 40% of family income in dual-earner households, neither traditional women nor their partners regard employment as a woman’s fundamental role (Coontz 1997). For those with traditional gender ideologies, women are not duty-bound

to provide; they are duty-bound to perform household tasks (Thompson and Walker 1991).

No matter what kind of work the woman does outside the home or how nontraditional she and her husband may consider themselves to be, there is seldom equality when it comes to housework. Women’s family work is considerably more diverse than that of men, permeating every aspect of the family. It ranges from housekeeping to childcare, maintaining kin relationships to organizing recreation, socializing children to caring for aged parents and in-laws, and cooking to managing the family finances. Ironically, family work is often invisible to the women who do most of it (Brayfield 1992).

Sociologist Ann Oakley (1985) described four primary aspects of the **homemaker role**:

- Exclusive allocation to women, rather than to adults of both sexes
- Association with economic dependence
- Status as nonwork, which is distinct from “real,” economically productive paid employment
- Primacy to women—that is, having priority over other women’s roles

Reflections

List the tasks that make up family work in your family.

What family work is given to women? To men? On what basis is family work divided? Is it equitable?

Most full-time housekeepers feel the same about housework: it is routine, unpleasant, unpaid, and unstimulating, but it provides a degree of autonomy. Full-time male houseworkers, however, do not as often call themselves *housekeepers* or *homemakers*. Instead, they identify themselves as retired, unemployed, laid off, or disabled (Bird and Ross 1993). Increasingly, they may call themselves *househusbands*, but they are less likely to do so than full-time female homemakers are to call themselves *housewives*. Many women find satisfaction in the homemaker role, even in housework. Young women, for example, may find increasing pleasure as they experience a sense of mastery over cooking, entertaining, or rearing happy children. If homemakers have formed a network among other women—such as friends, neighbors, or relatives—they may share many of their responsibilities. They discuss ideas and feelings and give one another support. They may share tasks, as well as problems.

■ Researchers Linda Thompson and Alexis Walker (1991) observe, “Family work is unseen and unacknowledged because it is private, unpaid, commonplace, done by women, and mingled with love and leisure.”



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Women in the Labor Force

Women have always worked outside the home. Like many of today’s families, early American families were **coprovider families**—families that were economic partnerships dependent on the efforts of both the husband and the wife. Although women may have lacked the economic rights that men enjoyed, they worked with or alongside men in the tasks necessary for family survival (Coontz 1997). Beginning in the early nineteenth century, “work” and “family work” were separated. Men were assigned the responsibility for the wage-earning labor that increasingly occurred away from the home in factories and other centralized workplaces.

Women stayed within the home, tending to household tasks and childrearing. But this gendered division of labor was never total. Single women have traditionally been members of the paid labor force. There have also been large numbers of employed mothers, especially among lower-income and working-class families, African Americans, and many other ethnic minorities. By the late 1970s, the employment rate of Caucasian women began to converge with that of African American women (Herring and Wilson-Sadberry 1993).

The most dramatic changes in women’s labor force participation have occurred since 1960, resulting in the emergence of a family form in which both hus-

bands and wives are employed outside the home. Although many viewed that family type as abnormal, in the 1980s married women’s employment came to be seen as the norm. Recent research indicates that women’s employment has positive rather than negative effects on marriages and families (Crosby 1991).

In 2002, more than 67 million women were employed in the civilian labor force. Women comprised 46.3% of the labor force, and 60% of adult women were employed. In comparison, 74% of adult men were employed (U.S. Census Bureau 2003, Tables 592, 596). African American women and Caucasian women had virtually the same rate of labor force participation (61.8% and 59.3%, respectively); Hispanic women were slightly less likely to be employed (57.6%).

Between 1960 and 2002, the percentage of married women in the labor force almost doubled—from 32% to about 61%; this compares to 77% of married men. During that same period, the number of employed married women between 25 and 34 years (the ages during which women are most likely to bear children) rose from 29% to 72%. More than 70% of married women with children were in the labor force in 2000, including 76.8% of those with children 6 to 17 years of age and 60.8% of those with children age 6 or younger (U.S. Census Bureau 2003, Table 597).

In 2002, there were more than 3 million single mothers in the labor force; of these, almost 60% had preschool-aged children (U.S. Census Bureau 2003, Table 598).

Why Women Enter the Labor Force

Four sets of factors influence a woman's decision to enter the labor force (Herring and Wilson-Sadberry 1993):

- *Financial factors.* To what extent is income significant? For unmarried women and single mothers, employment may be their only source of income. The income of married women may be primary or secondary to their husbands' incomes.
- *Social norms.* How accepting is the social environment for married women and mothers working at paid jobs? Does the woman's partner support her? If she has children, do her partner, friends, and family believe that working outside the home is acceptable? After the 1970s, social norms changed to make it more acceptable for white mothers to hold a job.
- *Self-fulfillment.* Does a job meet needs for autonomy, personal growth, and recognition? Is it challenging? Does it provide a change of pace?
- *Attitudes about employment and family.* Does the woman believe she can combine her family responsibilities with her job? Can she meet the demands of both? Does she believe that her partner and children can do well without her as a full-time homemaker?

Like men, women enter the labor force for largely financial reasons. According to Stephanie Coontz (1997), women's incomes keep approximately a third of dual-earner couples from falling into poverty. Economic pressures traditionally have been powerful influences on African American women. Among many married women and mothers, entry into the labor force or increased working hours are attempts to compensate for their husbands' loss in earning power because of inflation. In addition, the social status of the husband's employment often influences the level of employment chosen by the wife (Smits, Utee, and Lammers 1996).

Among the psychological reasons for employment are an increase in a woman's self-esteem and sense of control. A comparison between African American and Caucasian women found that personal preference was the primary employment motivation for about 42% of African American women and 46% of Caucasian women (Herring and Wilson-Sadberry 1993). Employed women are less depressed and anxious than nonemployed homemakers; they are also physically healthier

(Gecas and Seff 1989; Ross, Mirowsky, and Goldsteen 1991). A 34-year-old Latina mother of three told social psychologist Lillian Rubin (1994) the following:

I started to work because I had to. My husband got hurt on the job and the bills started piling up, so I had to do something. It starts as a necessity and it becomes something else.

I didn't imagine how much I'd enjoy going to work in the morning. I mean, I love my kids and all that, but let's face it, being mom can get pretty stale. . . . Since I went to work I'm more interested in life, and life's more interested in me.

I started as a part-time salesperson and now I'm assistant manager. One day I'll be manager. Sometimes I'm amazed at what I've accomplished; I had no idea I could do all this, be responsible for a whole business.

There are two reasons employment improves women's emotional and physical well-being (Ross, Mirowsky, and Goldsteen 1991). First, employment decreases economic hardship, alleviating stress and concern not only for the woman but also for other family members. A single parent's earnings may constitute her entire family's income.

Second, an employed woman receives greater domestic support from her partner. The more a woman earns relative to what her partner earns, the more likely he is to share housework and childcare.



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■ *Women seek the same gratifications from paid work that men seek. These include but go beyond wages.*

Understanding Yourself

The Division of Labor: A Marriage Contract



How do you expect to divide household and employment responsibilities in marriage? More often than not, couples live together or marry without ever discussing basic issues about the division of labor in the home. Some think that things will “just work out.” Others believe that they have an understanding, although they may discover later that they do not. Still others expect to follow the traditional division of labor. Often, however, one person’s expectations conflict with the other’s expectations.

The following questions cover important areas of understanding for a marriage contract. These issues should be worked out before marriage.

Although marriage contracts dividing responsibilities are not legally binding, they make explicit the assumptions that couples have about their relationships.

Answer these questions for yourself. If you are involved in a relationship, live with someone, or are

married, answer them with your partner. Consider putting your answers down in writing.

- Which has the highest priority for you: marriage or your job? What will you do if one comes into conflict with the other? How will you resolve the conflict? What will you do if your job requires you to work 60 hours a week? Would you consider such hours to conflict with your marriage goals and responsibilities? What would your partner think? Do you believe that a man who works 60 hours a week shows care for his family? Why? What about a woman who works 60 hours a week?
- Whose job or career is considered the most important—yours or your partner’s? Why? What would happen if both you and your partner were employed and you were offered the “perfect” job 500 miles away? How would the issue be decided? What effect do you think this would have on your marriage or relationship?
- How will household responsibilities be divided? Will one person be entirely, primarily, equally, secondarily, or not responsible for housework? How will this be decided? Does it matter whether a person is employed full-time as a salesclerk or a lawyer in deciding the amount of housework he or she should do? Who will take out the trash? Vacuum the floors? Clean the bathroom? How will it be decided who does these tasks?
- If you are both employed and then have a child, how will the birth of a child affect your employment? Will one person quit his or her job or career to care for the child? Who will that be? Why? If both of you are employed and a child is sick, who will remain home to care for the child? How will that be decided?

Women’s Employment Patterns

The employment of women has generally followed a pattern that reflects their family and childcare responsibilities. Because of the family demands they face, women must consider the number of hours they can work, what time of day to work, and whether adequate childcare is available. Traditionally, women’s employment rates dropped during their prime childbearing years, from 20 to 34 years. But this is no longer true; most women with children are in the labor force, regardless of age of child, marital status, and racial or ethnic affiliation.

Women no longer automatically leave the job market when they become mothers. Either they need the income or they are more committed to work roles than in previous generations (Coontz 1997). Among first-

time mothers, more than half return to their jobs within 6 months of giving birth and two-thirds have returned by the time their child celebrates her or his first birthday. Looking only at women who worked during their pregnancies, only 20% stayed at home for the entire first year of motherhood. For those who returned to work for the same employer as before childbirth, 89% worked at least as many hours—if not more—than they had before they became mothers (Johnson and Downs 2005).

Because of family responsibilities, many employed women work part-time or work shifts other than the 9-to-5 workday. Furthermore, when family demands increase, wives, not husbands, are more likely to cut back their job commitments (Folk and Beller 1993). As a result of family commitments, women tend to interrupt their job and career lives more often than do men.

Issues and Insights Paying a Price for Motherhood



Although raising children may be among the most meaningful and fulfilling work anyone can do, as writer and journalist Ann Crittenden (2001) notes, it is seriously undervalued in the United States. As a result, mothers pay a price that punishes them socially and economically, just for caring for their children.

Crittenden shows that women incur a steep economic penalty for having invested themselves in raising their children. Among the more extreme aspects of the cost of motherhood is her assessment that a typical, college-educated mother in America loses around \$1 million of lifetime earnings as a result of having had and raising a child. How? There are a variety of interconnected issues; a mother may have to forgo, for at least a time, some income she could have earned. She receives no Social Security for time in which she is not “employed” but is, instead, caring for and raising their children. She also cannot count on any other pensions to assist her in her “retirement years” and—if she divorces—cannot expect her contributions and sacrifices to count in her favor.

Sociologists Michelle Buddig and Paula England estimate that for the

cohort of women currently in their childbearing years, mothers incur a “wage penalty” of approximately 7% per child that fathers do not suffer. In attempting to account for why mothers pay a 7% “price,” they suggest that perhaps a third of the wage penalty results from motherhood leading to fewer years of continuous job experience and lost seniority. That leaves two-thirds of the motherhood penalty unaccounted for. They suggest that it may be the product of employer discrimination and the effects of motherhood on productivity (Budig and England 2001).

Crittenden also offers other examples of the problems women face when becoming mothers, including that a 30-year-old woman without children may earn only 90% of men’s wages, but a 30-year-old woman with children earns only 70% of men’s. The loss of income resulting from motherhood (“the mommy tax”) may amount to as much as \$1 million for college-educated American women. More than one-third of all divorced mothers have to go on welfare because child-support formulas don’t factor in the cost of being the primary caregiver.

- Fathers are statistically less likely than mothers to spend money on their children’s health and education.

- Eight states have laws protecting them from discrimination in the workplace.

Although these many aspects of “the mommy tax” are significant, Crittenden concludes that an even bigger price, perhaps the ultimate cost to women, is to not have children. A striking gender gap surfaced in a survey of 1,600 MBAs: although 70% of the males had children, only about 20% of the females did.

We recognize a potential danger in highlighting all of these statistics. One might conclude that, given the ways women are financially “punished” when they become mothers, perhaps women ought to rethink the desirability of becoming having children. Yet the issue is much more that changes should be made to lessen the price of motherhood. Crittenden makes more than a dozen recommendations for needed changes which could make a significant difference, such as extending paid parental leave, shortening the workweek, enacting divorce policies that would neither penalize mothers and children nor unduly reward either parent.

Crittenden notes that whatever changes like these could be put into practice would help move us away from the punishing and unfair ways that mothers have been made to suffer.

Researchers have found that a woman’s decision to remain in the workforce or to withdraw from it during her childbearing and early childrearing years is critical for her later workforce activities. If a woman chooses to work at home caring for her children, she is less likely to be employed later. If she later returns to the workforce, she will probably earn substantially less than women who have remained in the workforce.

Dual-Earner Marriages

Since the 1970s, inflation, a dramatic decline in real wages, the flight of manufacturing, and the rise of a low-paying service economy have altered the economic landscape. These economic changes have reverberated through families, altering the division of household

roles and responsibilities. Today, more than 60% of families with children under 18 years are two-earner families. This includes 66% of two-parent families with children 6 to 18 and 54% of families with children under 6 (U.S. Census Bureau 2003).

The sources of the dual-earner, or coprovider, household are many. Over the past 30 years, wages have *declined* for male high school and college graduates. Since 1973, men ages 25 to 34 have had their wages decline 25%. Sylvia Hewlett and Cornell West (1998) note that even during the economic expansion of the mid-1990s, men's wages dropped.

They point out that "32 percent of all men between 25 and 34 when working full-time now earn less than the amount necessary to keep a family of four above the poverty line" (1998). Among women, wages of high school graduates have also declined, but the drop was less because women started at lower wages. College-educated women saw their wages increase, although they remained well behind the wages paid to male college graduates (Vobejda 1994).

In 2001, the median income among families who depended on the wages of a male breadwinner was \$50,926. Families in which both husbands and wives were employed had median incomes of \$73,407. Families in which wives worked and husbands didn't had median incomes of \$39,566 (U.S. Census Bureau 2003, Table 690).

Economic changes have led to a significant increase in dual-earner marriages. Most employed women are still segregated in low-paying, low-status, low-mobility jobs—secretaries, clerks, nurses, factory workers, waitresses, and so on. Rising prices and declining wages pushed most of them into the job market.

Employed mothers generally do not seek personal fulfillment in their work as much as they do additional family income. Their families remain their top priorities.

Dual-career families are a subcategory of dual-earner families. They differ from other dual-earner families insofar as both husband and wife have high-achievement orientations, a greater emphasis on gender equality, and a stronger desire to exercise their capabilities. Unfortunately, these couples may find it difficult to achieve both their professional and their family goals. Often they have to compromise one goal to achieve the other because the work world generally is not structured to meet the family needs of its employees, as Donna H. Berardo and colleagues (1987) point out:

The traditional "male" model of career involvement makes it extremely difficult for both spouses to pursue careers to the fullest extent possible, since men's success in careers has generally been made possible by their wives' assuming total responsibility for the family life, thus allowing them to experience the rewards of family life but exempting them from this competing set of responsibilities.

Typical Dual-Earners

We are increasingly seeing that marital satisfaction is tied to fair division of household labor (Blair 1993; Pina and Bengston 1993; Suitor 1991). A husband wielding a vacuum cleaner or cooking dinner while his partner takes off her shoes to relax a few moments after returning home from work is sometimes better than him presenting her a bouquet of flowers—it may show better than any material gift that he cares. In a world where both spouses are employed, dividing household work fairly may be a key to marital success (Hochschild 1989; Perry-Jenkins and Folk 1994; Suitor 1991).

Although we traditionally separate housework, such as mopping and cleaning, from childcare, in reality the two are inseparable (Thompson 1991). Although fathers have increased their participation in childcare some, they have made smaller increases in the frequency with which they swing a mop or scrub a toilet. If we continue to separate the two domains, men will take the more pleasant childcare tasks of playing with the baby or taking the children to the playground and women will take the more unpleasant duties of washing diapers, cleaning ovens, and ironing. Furthermore, someone must do behind-the-scenes dirty work for the more pleasant tasks to be performed. Alan Hawkins and Tomi-Ann Roberts (1992) note the following:

Bathing a young child and feeding him/her a bottle before bedtime is preceded by scrubbing the bathroom and sterilizing the bottle. If fathers want to romp with their children on the living room carpet, it is important that they be willing to vacuum regularly. . . . Along with dressing their babies in the morning and putting them to bed at night comes willingness to launder jumper suits and crib sheets.

If we are to develop a more equitable division of domestic labor, we need to see housework and child-

care as different aspects of the same thing: domestic labor that keeps the family running. (See Hawkins and Roberts 1992 and Hawkins 1994 for a description of a program to increase male involvement in household labor.)

Housework

Standards of housework have changed over the last few generations, as wryly noted by Barbara Ehrenreich (1993):

Recall that not long ago, in our mother's day, the standards were cruel but clear: Every room should look like a motel room. The floors must be immaculate enough to double as plates, in case the guests prefer to eat doggie-style. The kitchen counters should be clean enough for emergency surgery, should the need at some time arise, and the walls should ideally be sterile.

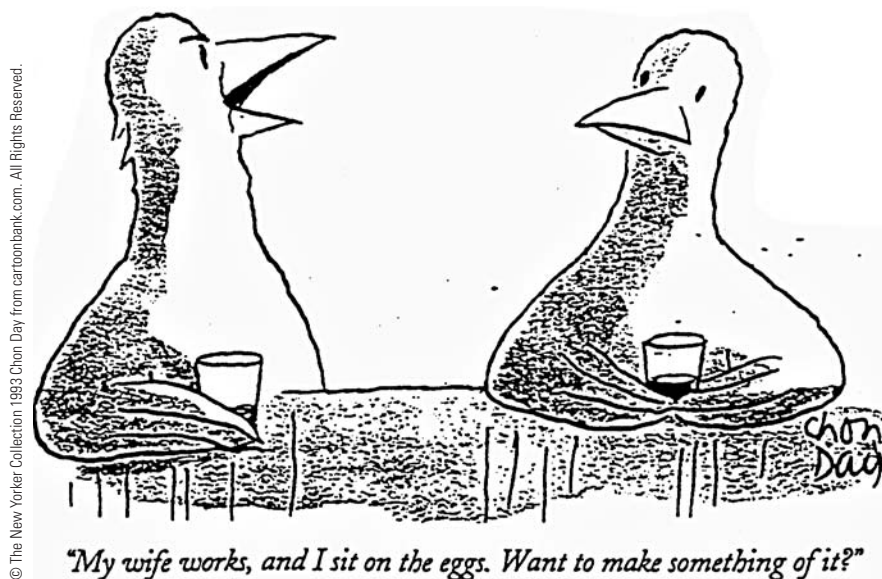
The alternative, we all learned in Home Economics, is the deadly scorn of the neighbors and probably the plague.

The engine of change was not the vacuum cleaner—which, in fact, seemed to increase hours spent in housework because it promised the possibility of immaculateness if its welder “simply” worked hard enough. What changed was that working women could no longer hold up the standards of their mothers—or

of household product advertisers. They now spend less time on housework. But Ehrenreich advises those who miss the good old days: “For any man or child who misses the pristine standards of yesteryear, there is a simple solution. Pitch in!”

Evidence indicates that although men do “pitch in,” possibly more often than in the past, they are nowhere near sharing the burden of housework. As noted earlier, housework remains clearly unevenly divided between women and men. Scott Coltrane (2000) reports that the average married woman does more than three times the amount of routine housework as the average married man (32 hours versus 10 hours per week). This includes the most time-consuming chores such as cooking, cleaning, grocery shopping, laundry, and cleaning up after meals. Recall, too, the data in Chapter 2: looking across more than a dozen countries, 65.8% of the males and 72.7% of the females reported that routine housework is usually or always done by wives.

Other studies estimate that men do between 20% and 33% of all housework (Arrighi and Maume 2000; Baxter 1997). Mary Noonan (2001) estimates that women spend 25 hours a week to men's 7 hours on traditionally female household tasks (such as doing laundry and preparing children for school) and an additional 6 hours to men's 4 hours on “gender neutral” tasks (such as paying bills and “chauffeur” family members). For more occasional tasks that comprise male household tasks, men perform 7 hours to



women's 2 hours. Totaling up all household tasks shows women with 33 hours a week to men's 19 hours.

As a result of the division of household tasks, employed married women have more to do, experience more stress, and have less leisure time than married men. They not only do more, they also "almost invariably" manage the housework that men do (Coltrane 2000). Even when at the office, many women, through planning and supervising, may be unable to escape entirely the burdens of their domestic responsibilities.

As indicated in Chapter 8, there are differences between cohabiting couples and married couples. One such difference is that cohabiting couples have more equitable divisions of household labor than do married couples (Baxter 2005). Cohabiting women also do significantly less housework than married women do (Shelton and John 1993). It seems that marriage, rather than living with a man, transforms a woman into a homemaker (Baxter 2005). Marriage seems to change the house from a space to keep clean to a home to care for.

Various factors seem to affect men's participation in housework. Men tend to contribute more to household tasks when they have fewer time demands from their jobs—that is, early in their employment careers and after retirement (Rexroad and Shehan 1987) or when they have jobs that demand fewer hours of actual time at work (Coltrane 2000; Arrighi and Maume 2000). They also participate more in housework when their hours and their wives' hours at work do not overlap (see the discussion of shift work later in this chapter). As their income rises, wives report more participation by their husbands in household tasks; increased income and job status motivate women to try to ensure their husbands share tasks. However, research by Julie Brines reviewed by Coltrane (2000) suggests that men who are economically dependent on their wives do less housework. Likewise, Barbara Arrighi and David Maume (2000) found that men whose wives earn the same or greater amounts of income may attempt to restore their masculinity by avoiding housework.

Other factors that appear to influence men's involvement in housework include the following:

- *Gender role attitudes.* Men who have more traditional gender role attitudes take on a smaller share of housework than do men who have egalitarian views.
- *Men's socialization experience and modeling of parents.* Although it does not seem to influence

women's participation in those same tasks, early parental division of labor acts as a strong predictor of men's involvement in the "female tasks" of housework (Cunningham 2001).

- *Men's status in the workplace.* Men who have their "masculinity challenged" at work reduce their involvement in housework as a way of avoiding feminine behavior (Arrighi and Maume 2000).
- *Men's age and generation.* Older men do less housework than younger men do. Arrighi and Maume speculate that this may be a reflection of generational change, with younger men having been socialized toward more participation than older men were.

Whether a couple has children or not is a factor affecting how much men participate in household labor. Even though the presence of young children increases women's and men's housework, it also skews the division of housework in even more traditional directions. Men tend to work more hours in their paid jobs and women tend to work fewer hours at paid work and more in the home. Women then end up with a larger share of housework than before the arrival of children.

One factor that may not be as strong a determinant as we might predict is the husband's **gender ideology**—what he believes he ought to do as a husband and how paid and unpaid work should be divided. As Arlie Hochschild's (1989) research showed, even traditional men can become more egalitarian if wives successfully use direct and indirect gender strategies. In some instances, repeated requests might be enough. In other cases, ultimatums may be necessary. Aside from these direct strategies, more indirect strategies—helplessness, withholding sexual intimacy, and so on—may work with husbands who otherwise would not do more.

Furthermore, necessity may create more male involvement. Wives with particularly demanding jobs or who work unusual hours (described later) may force their husbands to share more simply because they are not available (Gerson 1993; Rubin 1994). Women appeared to be more satisfied if their husbands shared traditional women's chores (such as laundry) rather than limiting their participation to traditional male tasks (such as mowing the lawn). African Americans are less likely to divide household tasks along gender lines than Caucasians.

We might assume that the stresses and inequalities of juggling paid work and domestic work undermine

women's well-being, but research on consequences related to marital, mental health, and physical health tells a much different story. Analyzing more than a quarter century of General Social Survey data, sociologist Jason Schnittker finds that "women who are employed, regardless of the number of hours they work or how they combine work with family obligations, report better health than do those who are unemployed" (American Sociological Association 2004).

Women in dual-earner families appear to be mentally healthier than full-time housewives are (Crosby 1991). In juggling multiple roles, they suffer less depression, experience more variety, interact with a wider social circle, and have less dependency on their marital or familial roles to provide all of their needed gratification. These psychological benefits accrue despite the unequal division of labor.

Emotion Work

Although we might not typically think about them as "work," or include them in a discussion of "family work," there are other tasks that need to be performed to generate and maintain successful and satisfying marital relationships. Such tasks are often referred to as **emotion work** and include the following (Stevens, Kiger, and Riley 2001):

- Confiding innermost feelings
- Trying to bring our partner out of a bad mood
- Praising our partner
- Suggesting solutions to relationship problems
- Raising relationship problems for consideration and discussion
- Taking initiative to begin the process of "talking things over"
- Monitoring the relationship and sensing when our partner is disturbed about something

Although these might not cleanly fit your notion of "tasks," they may be experienced as work by those who feel unevenly burdened by them. According to research by Daphne Stevens, Gary Kiger, and Pamela Riley (2001), women do more of the emotion work in their relationships and report being less than satisfied with how these "responsibilities" are divided. This has important consequences, because both men's and women's satisfaction with the division of emotion work in their relationships was significantly and positively

associated with their marital satisfaction (Stevens, Kiger, and Riley 2001).

Childrearing Activities

As we examined in some detail in the last chapter, men increasingly believe that they should be more involved as fathers than men have been in the past. Yet the shift in attitudes has not been matched by changes in men's caregiving behavior. One study (Darling-Fisher and Tiedje 1990) found that the father's time involved in childcare is greatest when the mother is employed full-time (fathers become responsible for 30% of the care compared with mothers' 60%; the remaining 10% of care is presumably provided by other relatives, babysitters, or childcare providers). The father's involvement is less when the mother is employed part-time (fathers' 25% versus mothers' 75%) and least when she is a full-time homemaker (fathers' 20% versus mothers' 80%). At the other extreme, roughly 2 million fathers are the primary childcare providers while their wives are at work.

Generalizing from research on parental involvement in two-parent families, we find the following:

- Mothers spend from 3 to 5 hours of active involvement for every hour fathers spend, depending on whether the women are employed or not.
- Mothers' involvement is oriented toward practical daily activities, such as feeding, bathing, and dressing. Fathers' time is generally spent in play.
- Mothers are almost entirely responsible for childcare: planning, organizing, scheduling, supervising, and delegating.
- Women are the primary caretakers; men are the secondary.
- David Maume (2006) reports that when men become fathers, they work more hours of paid employment; new mothers reduce their hours of work.

Although mothers are increasingly employed outside the home, many fathers have yet to pick up the slack at home. Children especially suffer from the lack of parental time and energy when their fathers do not participate more. If children are to be given the emotional care and support they need to develop fully, their fathers must become significantly more involved (Hochschild 1989; Hewlett and West 1998).

Why It Matters: Consequences of the Division of Household Labor

Marital Power

An important consequence of women's employment is a shift in the decision-making patterns in a marriage. Although decision-making power in a family is not based solely on economic resources (personalities, for instance, play a large part), economics is a major factor. A number of studies suggest that employed wives exert greater power in the home than that exerted by non-employed wives (Blair 1991; Schwartz 1994). Marital decision-making power is greater among women employed full-time than among those employed part-time. Wives have the greatest power when they are employed in prestigious work, are committed to it, and have greater income than that of their husbands. Conversely, full-time housewives may find themselves taken for granted and, because of their economic dependency on their husbands, relatively powerless (Schwartz 1994).

Some researchers are puzzled about why many employed wives, if they do have more power, do not demand greater participation in household work on the part of their husbands. Joseph Pleck (1985) suggests several reasons for women's apparent reluctance to insist on their husbands' equal participation in housework. These include (1) cultural norms that housework is the woman's responsibility, (2) fears that demands for increased participation will lead to conflict, and (3) the belief that husbands are not competent.

Marital Satisfaction and Stability

How do patterns of employment and the division of family work affect marital satisfaction? Traditionally, this question was asked only of wives, not husbands; even then, it was rarely asked of African American wives, who had a significantly higher employment rate. In the past, married women's employment, especially maternal employment, was viewed as a problem. It was seen as taking from a woman's time, energy, and commitment for her children and family. In contrast, non-employment or unemployment was seen as a major problem for men. But as our discussion of issues surrounding paid work shows, it is possible that the

husband's work may increase marital and family problems by preventing him from adequately fulfilling his role as a husband or father: he may be too tired, too busy, or never there. It is also possible that a mother's lack of employment may affect the family adversely: Her income may be needed to move the family out of poverty, and she may feel depressed from lack of stimulation (Menaghan and Parcel 1991).

How does a woman's employment affect marital satisfaction? There does not seem to be any straightforward answer when comparing dual-earner and single-earner families (Piotrkowski et al. 1987). This may be partly because there are trade-offs: a woman's income allows a family a higher standard of living, which compensates for the lack of status a man may feel for not being the "sole" provider. Whereas men may adjust (or have already adjusted) to giving up their sole-provider ideal, women find current arrangements less than satisfactory. After all, women are bringing home additional income but are still expected to do the overwhelming majority of household work. Role strain is a constant factor for women, and in general, women make greater adjustments than men make in dual-earner marriages.

Studies of the effect of women's employment on the likelihood of divorce are not conclusive, but they do suggest a relationship (Spitze 1991; White 1991). Many studies suggest that employed women are more likely to divorce. Employed women are less likely to conform to traditional gender roles, which potentially causes tension and conflict in the marriage. They are also more likely to be economically independent and do not have to tolerate unsatisfactory marriages for economic reasons. Other studies suggest that the only significant factor in employment and divorce is the number of hours the wife works. Hours worked may be important because full-time work for both partners makes it more difficult for spouses to share time together. Numerous hours may also contribute to role overload on the part of the wife (Greenstein 1990). African American women, however, are not more likely to divorce if they are employed. This may be because of their historically high employment levels and their husbands' traditional acceptance of such employment (Taylor et al. 1991).

Overall, despite an increased divorce rate, in recent years the overall effect of wives' employment on marital satisfaction has shifted from a negative effect to no effect or even a positive effect. The effect of a wife's full-time employment on a couple's marital satisfaction is affected by such variables as social class, the

presence of children, and the husband's and wife's attitudes and commitment to her working. Thus, the more the wife is satisfied with her employment, the higher their marital satisfaction will be. Also, the higher the husband's approval of his wife's employment, the higher the marital satisfaction.

Data on the effects of the division of domestic labor on marital satisfaction indicate a relationship. Couples who share report themselves as happier and are less at risk of divorce than couples in which men do little of the family work. This appears to be true regardless of whether couples' gender ideologies are traditional, egalitarian, or transitional (somewhere between the other two) (Hochschild 1989). Also, the fewer hours women spend on household tasks, the more time they can spend in "status enhancement" activities and the greater their marital satisfaction (Stevens, Kiger, and Riley 2001). Daphne Stevens, Gary Kiger, and Pamela Riley report that marital satisfaction is affected by the way couples divide each of the three dimensions of domestic labor: domestic work, emotion work, and "status enhancement" work (helping a partner's career development by building goodwill with the partner's clients or coworkers, ensuring that the partner has the needed time to commit to work, and so on). Women felt more resentment and less marital satisfaction when they do the majority of both domestic and emotion work. Only among women with traditional gender ideologies did this differ. For them, marital satisfaction was positively influenced by their feeling that they have fulfilled their marital obligations. In the case of status enhancement work, the more of such tasks women do, the more satisfied they and their husbands report themselves to be with their marriages. Nevertheless, the division of emotion work was most related to marital satisfaction, and the performance of status enhancement activities was least related (Stevens, Kiger, and Riley 2001).

Atypical Dual-Earners: Shift Couples and Peer Marriages

There are some interesting lifestyle variations among dual-earner couples. Couples with these lifestyles differ from more common two-earner couples in one of two ways: they have constructed household arrangements in which the parents work opposite, mostly

nonoverlapping shifts, and thus take turns working outside the home and caring for children, or they have consciously adopted a belief in equality and fairness into how they divide domestic responsibilities. As a result of either of these differences, such atypical couples show much higher rates of male participation in childcare and housework than among more typical dual-earners. Briefly consider each of these types.

Shift Couples

In 2001, nearly 15 million Americans worked hours other than the typical 9-to-5 or 8:30-to-4:30 daytime shifts. Harriet Presser, the leading authority on shift work and its consequences for individuals and families, notes that the proportion of Americans who work nonstandard schedules—evenings, nights, weekends, or on shifts that rotate—now exceeds 45%. Only 54.4% of Americans work Monday through Friday, on a fixed schedule, 5 days a week.

Presser (2003) identifies three macrolevel changes that have contributed to an increase in such work circumstances: changes in the economy, demographics, and technology:

- *Changes in the economy.* There has been a substantial increase in the service sector of the economy, which has a high prevalence of nonstandard schedules. Simultaneously, women's labor force participation doubled between 1975 and 2000, from one-third to two-thirds of all adult women.
- *Changes in demographics.* Both delayed age at marriage (by nearly 3 years between 1960 and 2000) and sizable increases in dual-earner couples have contributed to increased demand for entertainment and recreation at night and over weekends (Presser 2003, 4). In addition, as the U.S. population has aged, there has been a need for medical services available to people 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- *Changes in technology.* Computers, faxes, overnight mailing, and other communications technology have made round-the-clock offices a norm for many multinational corporations

Although such large-scale changes have expanded the opportunity to work atypical schedules, *why* do individuals choose to do so? More than 60% of individuals working nonstandard schedules identify job demands or constraints as the driving force behind their work schedules. These include such reasons as "they

could not get any other job, the hours were mandated by the employer, or the nature of the job required non-standard hours” (Presser 2003, 20). Only among mothers of children under 5 years do we find as many as 43.8% identifying “caregiving” needs as a reason for their employment schedule. Looking specifically at childcare arrangements, 35% of mothers and 7.6% of fathers of children under 5 years identify “better childcare arrangements” as a main reason for their nonstandard shifts.

Couples in which one spouse works such a non-standard shift and the other remains in a more typical shift are sometimes referred to as *opposite shift*, *split shift*, or simply *shift couples*. **Shift couples** structure their home and work lives into a turn-taking, alternating system of paid work and family work. When one is at work, the other is at home. When the at-work partner returns home, the at-home partner departs for work, giving them a kind of “hello, good-bye” lifestyle. Presser indicates that nearly 28% of dual-earner couples have at least one spouse working “other than a fixed day,” and in only 2% of dual-earner couples were both spouses employed in the same non-standard shift. Hence, about a fourth of all dual-earner couples are shift couples (Presser 2003).

When this lifestyle is the product of choice, shift couples may perceive it as a reasonable trade-off. Through it, they stress the importance of childrearing over the importance of marital relations. Spouses may not see each other much, but they strive to communicate frequently, even if doing so means notes on refrigerators, calls during breaks, or e-mail. Significantly, for the household to function, men are pressed to do a greater share of domestic work and especially childcare than among either traditional couples or more typical dual-earners (Presser 2003; Rubin 1994). If wives work second-shift (late afternoon through midnight) or third-shift (late night through morning) jobs, husbands must feed children dinner or breakfast, see that they do their homework, take baths, go to bed or get up for school, make lunches to take to school, and so on.

Aside from parental involvement, what does shift work do to family life? Much research is pessimistic about the effects of shift work. Harriet Presser reports that shift workers suffer more distress, greater dissatisfaction and higher risks of divorce. She also found that some shift combinations among dual earners increased men’s participation in housework and childcare (Presser, 2003). Summarizing these findings, Blanche Grosswald (2004) notes that shift workers have been found to have lower levels of marital satisfaction, more disagreements,

marital and sexual difficulties, higher divorce rates, and more problematic relationships with their children. Grosswald observed that 69% of respondents to the Families and Work Institute’s 1997 National Study of the Changing Workforce reported themselves to be satisfied with their family lives; however, among shift workers the results were as shown in Table 12.1.

There are some positive familial outcomes that result from shift work such as the abilities to take turns, to have a parent home with children when the other is at work, and to increase father–child closeness. Couples save money on childcare as well as reducing and reduce some of whatever stress parents might feel about outside caregivers. Additional economic benefits might include the opportunity to earn potentially higher wages and the flexibility to work a second job (Grosswald, 2004). However, Harriet Presser found that those who work nonstandard schedules are more likely to be economically disadvantaged than those who work more typical schedules,

Peer and Postgender Marriages

Among some dual-earner couples, there is explicit agreement that household tasks will be divided along principles of fairness. Many couples believe their family’s division of labor is fair (Spitze 1991). Among couples who can afford household help, husbands may be excused from many household chores, such as cleaning and mopping. Because of their incomes, they are allowed to “hire” substitutes to do their share of housework (Perry-Jenkins and Folk 1994).

It is important to note that an equitable division is not the same as an equal division. Relatively few couples divide housework 50-50. For women, fair division

Table 12.1 ■ Family-Life Satisfaction of Workers

Shift	Percentage “Extremely” or “Very” Satisfied with Family Life
Day	71
Evening	56
Night	54
Rotating	63
Split	67
Flexible	74
Total (All Shifts)	69

of household work is more important than both spouses putting in an equal number of hours. There is no standard of fairness, however (Thompson 1991). Because most women work fewer hours than men spend in paid work, and because wives tend to work more hours in the home, some women believe that the household labor should be divided proportionately to hours worked outside the home. Other women believe that it is equitable for higher-earning husbands to have fewer household responsibilities. Still others believe that the traditional division of labor is equitable, wherein household work is women's work by definition.

Middle-class women are more likely to demand equity; equity is less important for working-class women, who are more traditional in their gender-role expectations (Perry-Jenkins and Folk 1994; Rubin 1994).

Peer marriages (or *postgender marriages*, to use Barbara Risman and Danette Johnson-Sumerford's term) take concerns for fairness and sharing to heart in how they structure each facet of their relationships. Rarer than shift couples, they, too, depart from the model of typical dual-earners described previously. Whereas shift arrangements may be the result of choice, necessity, or circumstance, peer relationships typically emerge from egalitarian values or conscious intent. Peer or postgender couples base their relationships on principles of deep friendship, fairness, and sharing. Hence, they monitor each other's level of commitment and involvement, maintain equally valued investments in their paid work, and share household tasks and childcare.

Research by Pepper Schwartz (1994) and Barbara Risman and Danette Johnson-Sumerford (1997) indicate that such relationships avoid many of the trapings that often accompany more traditional divisions of labor, including female powerlessness and resentment and male ingratitude and lack of respect. Furthermore, children receive attention and care from both parents, and men develop deeper relationships with their children than commonly found. Although such couples are rare, they show that the inequities in either the traditional or the more typical dual-earner household are not inevitabilities. Indeed, couples can—and some do—commit themselves to “doing it fairly” (Risman and Johnson-Sumerford 1997).

Coping in Dual-Earner Marriages

Dual-earner marriages are here to stay. They remain stressful today because society has not pursued ways to alleviate the work–family conflict.

The three greatest social needs in dual-earner marriages are (1) redefining gender roles to eliminate role overload for women, (2) providing adequate childcare facilities for working parents, and (3) restructuring the workplace to recognize the special needs of parents and families. Coping strategies include reorganizing the family system and reevaluating household expectations.

Husbands may do more housework. Children may take on more household tasks than before. Household standards—such as a meticulously clean house, elaborate meal preparation, and washing dishes after every meal—may be changed. Careful allocation of time and flexibility assist in coping. Dual-earner couples often hire outside help, especially for childcare, which is usually a major expense for most couples. One of the partners may reduce hours of employment, or both partners may work different shifts to facilitate childcare (but this usually reduces marital satisfaction) (White and Keith 1990).

The goal for most dual-earner families is to manage their family relationships and their paid work to achieve a reasonable balance that allows their families to thrive rather than merely survive. Achieving such balance will continue to be a struggle until society and the workplace adapt to the needs of dual-earner marriages and families.

Reflections

The chances are good that if you cohabit or marry, you will be in a dual-earner relationship. How will you balance your employment and relationship or family needs?

At-Home Fathers and Breadwinning Mothers

An additional departure from both the typical dual-earner and the traditional family is the family type in which spouses switch places or reverse roles. Although the term **role reversal** may be somewhat more familiar to us, it may be more accurate to suggest that what such spouses do is switch traditional places; husbands move into the domestic realm and provide housework and childcare, and wives support the family financially with outside paid work. Calling them *role reversed* implies that men do and experience what women traditionally experienced and that wives approach work

and wage earning as husbands traditionally did. This appears not to be the case (Russell 1987; Cohen and Durst 2000).

Of the 23 million married-couple families with children under 15, in 2003, in 4.3% of them (1 million) fathers were home (U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement 2003). The reasons men give for staying home do not typically identify “to care for home and family” (only 15.6% of the 1 million at-home men stated this as their reason). Most men are home because of disability (45%), unemployment (11%), retirement (10.7%), school (8.9%), or other reasons (8.7%), but they can and often do provide care for their children. In contrast, 88% of the 6.8 million mothers who are out of the labor force and home with children under age 15 cite “to care for home and family” as their reason (U.S. Census Bureau 2003).

What happens to such couples? Based on research conducted in the 1980s by Graeme Russell and recent research by Theodore Cohen and John Durst (2000), we can point to five areas in which couples experience some impact from having switched places:

- *Economic impact.* Couples live on less money but spend less on childcare. Hence, they may not suffer dramatic declines, especially if women’s careers are enhanced and men’s occupations were not high paying. Men gain an opportunity to take a “time-out,” refocus, and try new career possibilities. They do, however, surrender the provider status and confront the reality of economic dependency. Interestingly, this dependency does not seem to have the same marital consequences for men as it does for at-home women.
- *Social impact.* Socially, men experience some isolation as they lose the primary source of social interaction—the workplace. In addition, couples may become the targets of curiosity, or even criticism, for their choices. Men, however, also receive supportive responses, especially from women. Women often receive envious reactions, especially from coworkers. In general, at-home fathers become visible in their domestic role in contrast to the invisibility that traditionally befalls housewives.
- *Marital impact.* This lifestyle leads to high levels of male involvement in housework and childcare. Although men don’t take over everything to the same extent that housewives do, they are likely to share or do most domestic work. In addition, couple relationships change. Whereas Russell (1987) found

the changes to be negative, Cohen and Durst (2000) found high levels of communication, empathy, and appreciation among the couples they studied. In some ways, men who are home full-time, like traditional men before them, benefit from having wives. Wives, in particular, know what it takes to care for households and children. Full-time housewives often are married to men who lack such understanding and appreciation. Women are also aware that their spouses have taken risks and made sacrifices by staying home and support them in ways that breadwinning husbands probably don’t support housewives.

- *Parental impact.* Perhaps the most noticeable area of impact is the enlarged relationship between fathers and children. Fathers get to know their children in ways that are not otherwise likely and may not even be possible. Children see fathers in non-traditional ways. Mothers maintain the same sorts of relationships as other employed mothers do with their children, but they have greater peace of mind. Children are not in day care, at the sitter, or home alone. They are home with dad.
- *Personal impact.* Being an at-home father changes the ways men look at their lives, resulting in a reshuffling of priorities and the construction of a new social identity. Breadwinning mothers may also enlarge their sense of themselves as providers, take advantage of the at-home resource, and make work a larger component of their own identities.

The increase in both actual involvement and social visibility of at-home fathers can be seen in a variety of ways and places. There are now a variety of websites (such as *Daddyshome.com*), a number of newsletters (such as *At-Home Dad*, which also has a website at <http://www.athomedad.com>), and an annual convention, which in 1999 drew more than 80 men from 20 different states, all catering to the needs and issues confronting at-home fathers (Marin 2000). There is good reason to think that the number of men with this lifestyle will increase in coming years, but it is difficult to know by how much.

Staging and Sequencing

What it means to be male and to be female is influenced not only by biology but also by the way in which families define those roles in their work and home life.

Role taking and role making are negotiated and renegotiated throughout the family life cycle and are influenced by changing patterns in society (Zvonkovic et al. 1996).

To reduce some of the complexity of the dual-earner lifestyle, many couples display a pattern of sequential work and family role staging. This pattern reflects the adjustments women try to make in balancing work and family demands. Many of women's choices about employment and careers are based on their plans for a family and whether and when they will want to work. The key event is first pregnancy.

Before pregnancy, most married women are employed. When they become pregnant, however, they begin leaving their jobs and careers to prepare for the transition to parenthood. By the last month of pregnancy, 80% have left the workforce. Within a year, two-thirds of these women have returned to employment. Those who return to employment are strongly motivated by economic considerations or need.

There are four common forms of sequential work and family patterns:

- *Conventional.* A woman quits her job after marriage or the birth of her first child and does not return.
- *Early interrupted.* A woman stops working early in her career to have children and resumes working later.
- *Later interrupted.* A woman first establishes her career, quits to have children (usually in her 30s), and then returns to work.
- *Unstable.* A woman goes back and forth between full-time paid employment and homemaking, usually according to economic need.

A major decision for a woman who chooses sequential work and family role staging is at what stage in her life to have children. Should she have them early or defer them until later? As with most things in life, there are pros and cons. Early parenthood allows women to have children with others in their age group; they are able to share feelings and common problems with their peers. It also enables them to defer or formulate career decisions. At the same time, however, if they have children early, they may increase economic pressures on their beginning families. They also have greater difficulty in reestablishing their careers.

Women who defer parenthood until they reach their middle career stage often are able to reduce the role conflict and economic pressures that accompany

the new parent or early career stage of the traditional pattern. Such women, however, may not easily find other new mothers of the same age with whom to share their experiences. They may find the physical demands to be greater than anticipated.

Some may decide that they do not want children because motherhood would interfere with their careers.

Reflections

Which work and family pattern will you adopt (or have you adopted)? What would its benefit be for you? Its drawbacks? Which pattern did your family of orientation adopt? What were its benefits for your parents? Its drawbacks? Does their experience influence your choice of patterns? How would single parenting affect the work and family pattern?

Family Issues in the Workplace

Many workplace issues, such as economic discrimination against women, occupational stratification, adequate childcare, and an inflexible work environment, directly affect families. They are more than economic issues—they are also family issues.

Discrimination against Women

A woman's earnings significantly affect family well-being, regardless of whether the woman is the primary or secondary contributor to a dual-earner family or the sole provider in a single-parent family. Furthermore, as we have seen, women's family responsibilities significantly affect their earnings. Given the importance, however, of women's wage contributions to their families, we need to consider at least briefly economic discrimination against women and sexual harassment. By affecting women's employment status and experiences in their jobs, these become important family issues, as well as economic issues.

Economic Discrimination

The effects of economic discrimination can be devastating for women. In 1997, women in the United States made 74 cents for every dollar that men earned. By 2001, median earnings of men who worked full-

■ *In dual-earner families, interrole conflict is often high as parents try to balance family and work obligations.*



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time, year-round were \$38,884; for women, the median was \$29,680, resulting in a **wage gap** wherein women earned 76% of what men did. Because of sizable differences in women's and men's wages, more women than men are condemned to poverty and federal assistance. Wage differentials are especially important to single women.

Women face considerable barriers in their access to well-paying, higher-status jobs (Bergen 1991). Although employment and pay discrimination are prohibited by Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the law did not end the pay discrepancy between men and women.

Much of the earnings gap is the result of occupational differences, gender segregation, and women's tendency to interrupt their employment for family reasons and to take jobs that do not interfere extensively with their family lives. Earnings are about 30% to 50% higher in traditionally male occupations, such as truck driver or corporate executive, than in predominantly female or sexually integrated occupations, such as secretary or schoolteacher. The more an occupation is dominated by women, the less it pays.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is a mixture of sex and power, with power often functioning as the dominant element. Such harassment may be a way to "keep women in their place." **Sexual harassment** can be defined as two dis-

tinct types of harassment: (1) the abuse of power for sexual ends and (2) the creation of a hostile environment. In **abuse of power**, sexual harassment consists of unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature as a condition of instruction or employment. Only a person with power over another can commit the first kind of harassment. In a **hostile environment**, someone acts in sexual ways to interfere with a person's performance by creating a hostile or offensive learning or work environment. Sexual harassment is illegal.

Some estimate that as many as half of employed women are harassed during their working years. Few women report their harassment (Koss et al. 1994). Nonetheless, sexual harassment can have a variety of serious consequences. Some people quit their jobs, others may be dismissed as part of their harassment. Victims also often report depression, anxiety, shame, humiliation, and anger (Paludi 1990).

Lack of Adequate Childcare

As we saw in the last chapter, even though mothers continue to enter the workforce in ever-increasing numbers, high-quality, affordable childcare remains an important but uncertain support. For many women, especially for those with younger children and for single mothers, the availability of childcare is critical to their employment.

Heather Boushey and Joseph Wright (2004) report that “over half of mothers of children under the age of six were employed—three-quarters of employed mothers worked 30 hours per week or more—and nearly all of this group—over 90%—reported using some kind of childcare.” Approximately four-fifths of employed mothers use childcare arrangements for their preschool-age children (Boushey and Wright 2004).

For most employed mothers with children 5 to 14 years old, school attendance is their primary day-care solution. Women with preschool children, however, do not have that option; in-home care by a relative is their most important resource. As more mothers with preschool children become employed, families are struggling to find suitable childcare arrangements. This may involve constantly switching arrangements, depending on who or what is available and the age of the child or children (Atkinson 1994).

Women also often use multiple arrangements—the child’s father, relatives living in or outside the household, day care, or a combination of these—before a child reaches school age. Of employed mothers, 30% have two childcare arrangements and 8% use three or more. In addition, 20% of working mothers use two day-care centers (Gullo 2000). For African American and Latina single mothers, living in an extended family in which they are likely to have other adults to care for their children is an especially important factor that allows them to find jobs (Rexroat 1990; Tienda and Glass 1985).

Frustration is one of the most common experiences in finding or maintaining day care. Changing family

situations, such as unemployed fathers’ finding work or grandparents’ becoming ill or overburdened, may lead to these relatives being unable to care for the children. Family day-care homes and childcare centers often close because of low wages or lack of funding. Furthermore, As Heather Boushey and Joseph Wright (2004) show, childcare is expensive:

On average, in 2001, a working mother using formal day care paid \$92.30 per week per child, which adds up to an annual cost of \$4,615 in 2002 dollars (this calculation assumes two weeks off for vacation—although many low-income mothers do not get vacations). . . . Nearly all mothers using formal or family day care paid for it and, in 2001, on average, this payment took up 9.0% of family income for formal day care and 7.4% for family day care. Working mothers are less likely to pay for relative care, but when they do, it can be a substantial burden: in 2001, on average, costs were \$66.20 per week, or \$3,310 for a 50-week year.

Other estimates suggest that costs may run between 10% and 35% of a family’s budget (Children’s Defense Fund 1998), depending on the family’s socioeconomic status. The high cost of childcare is a major force that in the past kept mothers on welfare from working (Joesch 1991).

Parents who accept the home-as-haven belief—that the home provides love and nurturing—prefer to place their children in family day-care homes. They

■ *About 10% of children are regularly cared for by grandparents.*



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believe that a homelike atmosphere is more likely to exist in family day care than in preschools or children's centers, where greater emphasis is placed on education (Rapp and Lloyd 1989).

Effect on Employment and Educational Opportunities

The lack of childcare or inadequate childcare has the following consequences:

- It prevents many mothers from taking paid jobs.
- It keeps many women in part-time jobs, most often with low pay, few or no benefits, and little career mobility.
- It keeps many women in jobs for which they are overqualified and prevents them from seeking or taking job promotions or training necessary for advancement.
- It sometimes conflicts with women's ability to perform their work.
- It restricts women from participating in education programs.

For women, lack of childcare or inadequate childcare is one of the major barriers to equal employment opportunity. Many women who want to work are unable to find adequate childcare or to afford it.

Childcare issues may also play a significant role in women's choices concerning work schedules, especially among women who work part-time.

Reflections

Of the family economic issues discussed previously, have any affected you or your family? How? How were they handled?

Inflexible Work Environments and the Time Bind

In dual-worker families, the effects of the work environment stem from not just one workplace but two. Although some companies and unions are developing programs that are responsive to family situations (Crouter and Manke 1994), the workplace in general has failed to recognize that the family has been radi-

cally altered during the last 50 years. Most businesses are run as if every worker were male with a full-time wife at home to attend to his needs and those of his children. But the reality is that women make up a significant part of the workforce, and they do not have wives at home. Allowances are not made in the American workplace for flexibility in work schedules, day care, emergency time off to look after sick children, and so on. Many parents would reduce their work schedules to minimize work-family conflict. Unfortunately, many do not have that option.

Twenty years ago, Carol Mertensmeyer and Marilyn Coleman (1987) contended that our society provides little evidence that it esteems parenting. It appears that little has changed. This seems to be especially true in the workplace, where corporate needs are placed high above family needs. Mertensmeyer and Coleman suggest that family policymakers should encourage employers to be more responsive in providing parents with alternatives that alleviate forced choices that are incongruent with parents' values. For example, corporate-sponsored childcare may offset the conflict a mother feels because she is not at home with her child. Flextime and paid maternal and paternal leaves are additional benefits that employers could provide employees. These benefits would help parents fulfill self and family expectations and would give parents evidence that our nation views parenting as a valuable role.

Unfortunately, policies alone do not guarantee that employees will follow them. In her book *The Time Bind: When Work Becomes Home and Home Becomes Work*, Arlie Hochschild (1997) describes the official policies and corporate culture at a large corporation that she calls Amerco to protect its anonymity. At Amerco, workers could use a number of family-friendly time-enhancing policies, including job sharing, part-time work, parental leave, flextime, and "flexplace" (where workers could work from home). Despite the availability of such options, Hochschild notes that employees rarely used these opportunities.

Hochschild notes that Amerco employees are typical of employees at other large corporations. Citing a 1990 study of 188 Fortune 500 manufacturing companies, and reports that although companies tended to offer family-friendly policies, few employees used them. Of the companies, 88% offered part-time work, but only between 3% and 5% of their employees chose to work part-time. In addition, 45% of the companies offered flextime, but only 10% of employees used it.

Fewer companies offered job-sharing (6%) or work-at-home (3%) options, but among those that did 1% chose to share jobs and less than 3% used flexplace options. This lack of use is especially puzzling given that Amerco employees acknowledge not having enough family time.

In accounting for the lack of utilization of work-place policies, Hochschild considers and rejects a variety of explanations. Can employees afford to work fewer hours? Do they fear being laid off? Do employees even know about policies? Do they have insensitive and insincere supervisors?

These explanations have partial validity. Some hourly employees do fear potential layoffs or reduced wages. There are some supervisors who seem reluctant to embrace and resentful at having to accommodate family-friendly policies. But the biggest reason employees do not use potential family time-enhancing initiatives is because they do not want to. They would rather be at work.

In recent decades, with the dramatic changes in the division of labor and the growth of dual-earner families, home life has become more stressful and tightly scheduled. There is too much to do, too little time to do it, and not enough appreciation or recognition for what is done. On the other end of the work–family divide, many workplaces in the United States have implemented “humanistic management” policies designed to enhance worker morale and productivity and to reduce turnover. Thus, at work, people find social support, appreciation, and a sense of control and competence, which makes them feel better about themselves. In other words, for some, work has become homelike, and home often feels like a job (Hochschild 1997).

Because Hochschild studied only one company, it is hard to know how far we can generalize from her research. Clearly, as we have seen, employed American parents often feel they face a shortage of time to spend with their families. Other researchers have failed to support Hochschild’s conclusions, at least to the same extent. For example, a study by Susan Brown and Alan Booth (2002), which uses the National Survey of Families and Households and is based on more than 1,500 dual-earner couples with children, indicates that Hochschild’s findings may not be generalizable.

Job status seems to be an important determinant of whether individuals see their jobs as more satisfying than their home lives. Brown and Booth claim that this is true only among workers in positions of lower occupational status. Also, respondents who have high

satisfaction with work and low satisfaction at home do not work significantly more hours at work. Only those who are satisfied with work, unsatisfied with home, and have adolescent children work more hours (Brown and Booth 2002).

Another study by K. Jill Kiecolt, based on General Social Survey data from 1973 to 1994, challenged several of Hochschild’s conclusions. She argued, for example, that a “cultural reversal” in favor of work over home had not taken place, and employed parents with children under age 6 actually are more likely to find home rather than work to be a haven.

Even if Hochschild’s findings are somewhat limited, her study is important for showing that policies are not deterministic (see also Blair-Loy and Wharton 2002). People must take advantage of policies. This suggests that people’s values must be directed more toward home and family. Furthermore, cultural reinforcement for using family-friendly policies must be more widespread and reflected in company “cultures.” If “time equals commitment” to a job, then work time can only be reduced at the risk of appearing undercommitted. By the same token, dual-earner family life must be made less stressful. One way in which this can occur is by men doing more of the “second shift” work discussed earlier, thereby reducing the overload and time drain that their wives more consistently feel.

Employees who feel supported by their employer with respect to their family responsibilities are less likely to experience work–family conflict. A model corporation would provide *and support* the use of family-oriented policies that would benefit both its employees and itself, such as flexible work schedules, job-sharing alternatives, extended maternity and/or paternity leaves and benefits, and childcare programs or subsidies. Such policies could increase employee satisfaction, morale, and commitment.

Living without Work: Unemployment and Families

Unemployment is a major source of stress for individuals, with its consequences spilling over into their families (Voydanoff 1991). Even employed workers suffer anxiety about possible job loss caused by economic restructuring and downsizing (Larson, Wilson, and Beley 1994). Job insecurity leads to uncertainty

that affects the well-being of both worker and spouse. They feel anxious, depressed, and unappreciated. For some, the uncertainty before losing a job causes more emotional and physical upset than the actual job loss.

Economic Distress

Those aspects of economic life that are potential sources of stress for individuals and families make up **economic distress** (Voydanoff 1991). Major economic sources of stress include unemployment, poverty, and economic strain (such as financial concerns and worry, adjustments to changes in income, and feelings of economic insecurity).

In times of hardship, economic strain increases; the rates of infant mortality, alcoholism, family abuse, homicide, suicide, and admissions to psychiatric institutions and prisons also sharply increase. Patricia Voydanoff (1991), one of the leading researchers in family–economy interactions, notes the following:

A minimum level of income and employment stability is necessary for family stability and cohesion. Without it, many are unable to form families through marriage and others find themselves subject to separation and divorce. In addition, those experiencing unemployment or income loss make other adjustments in family composition such as postponing childbearing, moving in with relatives, and having relatives or boarders join the household.

Furthermore, economic strain is related to lower levels of marital satisfaction as a result of financial conflict, the husband's psychological instability, and marital tensions.

The emotional and financial cost of unemployment to workers and their families is high. A common public policy assumption, however, is that unemployment is primarily an economic problem. Joblessness also seriously affects health and the family's well-being.

The families of the unemployed experience considerably more stress than that experienced by those of the employed. Mood and behavior changes cause stress and strain in family relations. As families adapt to unemployment, family roles and routines change. The family spends more time together, but wives often complain of their husbands' "getting in the way" and not contributing to household tasks. Wives may assume a greater role in family finances by seeking employment if they are not already employed. After the first few months of their husbands' unemployment,

wives of the unemployed begin to feel emotional strain, depression, anxiety, and sensitiveness in marital interactions. Children of the unemployed are likely to avoid social interactions and tend to be distrustful; they report more problems at home than do children in families with employed fathers. Families seem to achieve stable but sometimes dysfunctional patterns around new roles and responsibilities after 6 or 7 months. If unemployment persists beyond a year, dysfunctional families become highly vulnerable to marital separation and divorce; family violence may begin or increase at this time (Teachman, Call, and Carver 1994).

The types of families hardest hit by unemployment are single-parent families headed by women, African American and Latino families, and young families. Wage earners in African American, Latino, and female-headed, single-parent families tend to remain unemployed longer than other types of families. Because of discrimination and the resultant poverty, they may not have important education and employment skills. Young families with preschool children often lack the seniority, experience, and skills to regain employment quickly. Therefore, the largest toll in an economic downturn is paid by families in the early years of childbearing and childrearing.

Emotional Distress

Aside from the obvious economic effect of unemployment, job loss can have profound effects on how family members see each other and themselves. This in turn can alter the emotional climate of the family as much as lost wages alter the material conditions. Men are particularly affected by unemployment because wage earning is still a major way men satisfy their family responsibilities. Thus, when men fail as workers, they may feel they failed as husbands, fathers, and men (Rubin 1994; Newman 1988). As Lillian Rubin (1994) poignantly conveys in *Families on the Fault Line*, when men lose their jobs, "it's like you lose a part of yourself." Unemployed men may display a variety of psychological and relationship consequences, including emotional withdrawal, spousal abuse, marital distress, increased alcohol intake, and diminished self-identity (Rubin 1994). Katherine Newman (1998) suggests that when families suffer downward mobility as a result of male unemployment, relations between spouses or between fathers and children are likely to be strained. Although children and spouses

may be initially supportive, their support may wear thin or run out if joblessness lasts and other resources are unavailable, thus preventing families from maintaining their previous economic lifestyle.

Women, too, suffer nonmaterial losses when they lose their jobs, but those losses are different in degree and kind from those that men are likely to suffer. Men have more of their self-identities, and especially their gendered identities, tied up in working; success at work comes to define successful masculinity (Arrighi and Maume 2001). Women have other acceptable ways of maintaining or achieving adult status (as mothers, for example). Thus, although both women and men will suffer from lost work relationships, lost gratification, and even lost structure and purpose to their day, women have not put as many of their “identity eggs” into the “work basket” as have most men.

Coping with Unemployment

Economic distress does not necessarily lead to family disruption. In the face of unemployment, some families experience increased closeness (Gnezda 1984). Families with serious problems, however, may disintegrate. Individuals and families use a number of coping resources and behaviors to deal with economic distress. Coping resources include an individual’s psychological disposition, such as optimism; a strong sense of self-esteem; and a feeling of mastery. Family coping resources include a family system that encourages adaptation and cohesion in the face of problems and flexible family roles that encourage problem solving. In addition, social networks of friends and family may provide important support, such as financial assistance, understanding, and willingness to listen.

Several important coping behaviors assist families in economic distress caused by unemployment. These include the following:

- *Defining the meaning of the problem.* Unemployment means not only joblessness but also diminished self-esteem if the person feels the job loss was his or her fault. If a worker is unemployed because of layoffs or plant closings, the individual and family need to define the unemployment in terms of market failure, not personal failure.
- *Problem solving.* An unemployed person needs to attack the problem by beginning the search for another job, dealing with the consequences of unemployment (for example, by seeking unemployment

insurance and cutting expenses), or improving the situation (for example, by changing occupations or seeking job training or more schooling). Spouses and adolescents can assist by increasing their paid work efforts. Studies suggest that about a fifth of spouses or other family members find employment after a plant closing.

- *Managing emotions.* Individuals and families need to understand that stress may create roller-coaster emotions, anger, self-pity, and depression.

Family members need to talk with one another about their feelings; they need to support and encourage one another. They also need to seek individual or family counseling services to cope with problems before they get out of hand.

Reflections

Have you or your family experienced unemployment or job insecurity? How did it affect you? Your family? What coping mechanisms did you use?

Poverty

Although poverty and unemployment may appear to be largely economic issues, as we saw in Chapter 3, the family and the economy are intimately connected to each other, and economic inequality directly affects the well-being of America’s disadvantaged families. Poverty can drive families into homelessness. The poor have traditionally been isolated from the mainstream of American society (Goetz and Schmiede 1996). Poverty is consistently associated with marital and family stress, increased divorce rates, low birth weight and infant deaths, poor health, depression, lowered life expectancy, and feelings of hopelessness and despair. It is a major contributing factor to family dissolution.

Welfare Reform and Poor Families

Since the 1960s, when massive social programs known as the “war on poverty” cut the poverty rate almost in half, national priorities have shifted. In the last decade or so of the twentieth century, the war on

poverty became a war on welfare—or, as some describe it, a war on the poor. Instead of viewing poverty as a structural feature of our society—caused by low wages, lack of opportunity, and discrimination—we increasingly blame the poor for their poverty (Aldous and Dumon 1991; Katz 1990). They are viewed as having become poor *because* they are “losers,” “cheats,” “lazy,” “welfare queens,” and “drug abusers”—people undeserving of assistance. Poverty is viewed as the result of individual character flaws—or even worse, as something inherently racial (Katz 1990).

Nearly 13 million people received Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) benefits in 1996 (U.S. Census Bureau 1998, Table 605). In addition, 27 million people received food stamps; their monthly value averaged \$71. About 6.2 million children received free school breakfasts, and 7.2 million pregnant women, infants, and children under 2 years of age participated in supplemental food programs known as the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program (U.S. Census Bureau 1998).

There has been considerable antagonism toward welfare and welfare recipients. Much of the antiwelfare sentiment is based on stereotypes of welfare recipients, especially young unmarried mothers. (Whereas women receiving welfare are often described as “welfare queens,” there are no equivalent “welfare kings.”)

Joel Handler, a longtime welfare researcher (quoted in Herbert 1994), describes the stereotype of welfare recipients as “young women, without education, who are long-term dependents and whose dependency is passed on from generation to generation.” He further notes: “The subtext is that these women are inner-city substance-abusing blacks spawning a criminal class.” Furthermore, single mothers receiving welfare are stigmatized as incompetent and uncaring; some suggest that their children be placed in orphanages (Seyle 1994). Conservative thinker Charles Murray, for example, believes most adolescent girls “don’t know how to be good mothers. A great many of them have no business being mothers and their feelings don’t count as much as the welfare of the child” (quoted in Waldman and Shackelford 1994).

Welfare became a central, emotional issue in 1990s politics. Many Americans who opposed welfare viewed it as violating the work ethic and destroying the traditional family. They believed that a person uses welfare as a way to avoid working and that welfare undermined the traditional family by “encouraging” women to become single mothers (Waldman and Shackelford 1994). They accused unmarried adolescent mothers

of becoming pregnant to collect welfare benefits. But it is doubtful that adolescents are thinking of welfare benefits as they contemplate premarital sex. In fact, part of the problem is that adolescents often don’t make the connection between sex and pregnancy. Finally, studies indicate that government welfare policies had little to do with the rise of divorce, single-parent families, and births to single mothers (Aldous and Dumon 1991). Indeed, welfare benefits help stabilize families; those states with the most generous welfare benefits also have the lowest divorce rates (Zimmerman 1991).

Numerous approaches to welfare reform were considered on both the federal and the state levels. On August 22, 1996, President Bill Clinton signed into law the Welfare and Medicaid Reform Act of 1996, also known as the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996. This legislation, which became Public Law 104-193, was proclaimed as an effort to “end welfare as we know it.” Proponents in Congress believed that welfare had created a climate of irresponsibility and family pathology and saw the reform as a way to prevent or dramatically reduce out-of-wedlock pregnancy, out-of-wedlock births, and single-parent families. The legislation replaced AFDC with **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)**, which sharply reduced the period during which someone could receive governmental assistance and imposed more restrictive expectations on what recipients were compelled to do to remain eligible for assistance. TANF programs “include mandatory work- (public or private, subsidized or unsubsidized), education-, and job-related activities, including job training and job search, for the purpose of (1) providing such families with time-limited assistance to end their dependency on government benefits and achieve self-sufficiency; (2) preventing and reducing out-of-wedlock pregnancies, especially teenage ones; and (3) encouraging the formulation and maintenance of two-parent families” (Bill Summary, 104th Congress, 1996).

Beginning in October 1996, no family or individual was entitled to receive welfare help. Furthermore, recipients of TANF are limited to a maximum of 5 years, either consecutive or nonconsecutive, with exceptions allowed only for such misfortunes as battery or abuse victimization. The law requires that recipients be working within 2 years. The new legislation replaced AFDC entitlement with a block grant of federal funds given to states. States have the authority to decide how to provide assistance to eligible

recipients, and the aid can be of some form other than money. Each state is required to operate a statewide welfare program and to provide certain social services (such as childcare or health care for employed mothers) but the specifics may vary within and between states. After a period of steady growth from the mid-1980s on, as a result of welfare reform, welfare rolls were sharply reduced. In Table 12.2, the figures for 1995 are “pre-reform,” whereas the 2000 figures reflect the sharp reduction in welfare since the enactment of the 1996 reform act. As 2001 ended, the average number of monthly TANF cases was 57% lower than the number of AFDC cases pre-reform. The 5.4 million people receiving TANF was the lowest number to receive public assistance since 1961. In 2001, families on TANF received an average of \$351 per month (\$288 for one-child families, \$362 for two-child families, \$423 for three-child families, and \$519 for families with four or more children). By September 2003, there had been still further reduction. There were just over 2.0 million families and nearly 4.9 million individuals receiving TANF assistance (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2004).

Moderates and liberals stress the importance of education and work training to prepare welfare recipients for employment. They believe that affordable childcare should be made available for parents to work. Such solutions, however, entail spending public monies at a time many are demanding tax cuts and limits on spending. Moderates and liberals also criticize welfare programs that make children’s welfare support dependent on their parents’ reproductive or employment behavior (such as not having children if they are unmarried adolescents or finding employment, regardless of how low the pay). They point out that such programs penalize children if their parents “misbehave.” Finally, they note that state bureaucracies may be as or more inefficient and unresponsive as the

federal government. More important, states may not be equally willing to devote resources to helping welfare recipients out of poverty.

Other progressives argue that the problem was never welfare but poverty. People use welfare for the simple reason that they are poor. The best way to resolve welfare issues is by focusing on the poverty issues underlying it: low wages, unemployment, the high cost of housing, lack of affordable childcare, economic discrimination against women and ethnic groups, and a deteriorating education system.

No doubt our welfare system was in trouble, but punitive approaches that blame the poor for their poverty are not the only—and may not be the best—way to resolve the problem. Critics contend that more imaginative approaches are needed. To deal with childhood poverty, for example, we might use the approach used by all Western industrial nations (except ours): provide a minimum children’s allowance. A children’s allowance goes to all families and is based on the belief that a nation is responsible for the well-being of its children (Meyer, Phillips, and Maritato 1991). Because it is universal, no poor child is missed, nor is his or her family stigmatized as being “on welfare.” When we examine our attempt to reform and revamp the welfare system, we can’t help but wonder what effect the interplay between politics and economics will have on children. As the state creates jobs for parents, it must also pave the way to providing available and affordable childcare. But licensed day care is unlikely to meet the needs of the millions of welfare families and working poor who are mandated to work (Kilborn 1997). Furthermore, in cities such as New York, Chicago, and Boston, the cost of care for even one child may be almost equal to the earnings of a minimum-wage worker. This situation could encourage wider use of unqualified childcare providers or greater reliance on relatives.

Table 12.2 ■ Recipients of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) 1975-2002

	1975	1980 (AFDC)	1985	1990	1995	2000 (TANF)	2002
Total recipients (in thousands)	11,165	10,597	10,812	11,460	13,652	5,778	5,066
Percentage of U.S. population	5.2	4.7	4.5	4.6	5.2	2.5	NA
Families receiving assistance (in thousands)	3,498	3,642	3,692	3,974	4,876	2,215	2,047

NA means data not available

One consequence of welfare reforms has been the “re-extension” of the family. As many single mothers enter the workforce, as is mandated by the new policies, it is often grandparents, especially grandmothers, who step into the childcare void they leave. The number of children in grandparental care has increased by 50% in the past decade. The new welfare policies may force it even higher. Critics of the reforms say the poor with legitimate reasons for parental unemployment may be caught without a safety net, especially if the economy were to go into a recession (Livernois 1997).

Welfare reform continues to be of acute concern. Evaluation of the legislative changes enacted in 1996 will continue for years, along with various experimental programs. For now, it appears that neither the costs critics feared nor the benefits proponents projected of moving mothers to work have come to pass (Morris 2002). The ongoing challenge remains the same: We must find ways for people to have adequate food and shelter in an environment that facilitates the development of life skills and assists parents to succeed in the labor force. At the same time, we must provide for the safety, care, and guidance of our children.

Reflections

Do you believe that welfare helps or hinders families? Have you, your family, or your friends received welfare assistance? If so, were its effects positive, negative, or both? Why?

Workplace and Family Policy

Family policy is a set of objectives concerning family well-being and the specific government measures designed to achieve those objectives. As we examine America’s priorities, it is clear that we have an implicit family policy that directs our national goals. Given the host of issues raised in this chapter, we might argue that if families were truly the national priority we claim them to be, we would entertain and enact policy initiatives such as the following:

- Paid parental leave for pregnancy and sick children and paid personal days for child and family responsibilities
- Flexible work schedules for parents whenever possible and job-sharing alternatives

- Increased minimum wage so that workers can support their families
- Policies to ensure fair employment for all, regardless of ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or disability
- Pay equity between men and women for the same or comparable jobs and affirmative action programs for women and ethnic groups
- Corporate childcare programs or subsidies for families
- Individual and family counseling services and provision of flexible benefit programs

Once enacted, policies such as these must be supplemented by sincere cultural support for families and children. People must believe that if they commit themselves to their families they will not suffer unfair economic consequences. This is harder to convey and carry out than are most specific workplace policies.

Reflections

If you were to construct a coherent family policy that meets your needs and reflects your values, what would it be like? How would it compare to the preceding suggestions?

We also cannot help but compare the reality in the United States with that of other countries.

For example, the passage under President Clinton of the **Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) of 1993** finally gave unpaid, job-protected leave of up to 12 weeks for employees to care for an ill family member or take time off after childbirth.

However, because the leave is unpaid, many workers cannot afford to lose the income they would sacrifice for 3 months and therefore don’t use it. Also, the stipulation this unpaid leave applies only to workplaces with 50 or more employees leaves as many as half of U.S. workers unprotected by the policy. This is in contrast to Europe and Canada, where paid maternity leave is common (Gornick and Meyers 2004). For example, in Finland, mothers receive 44 weeks with about 66% pay, resulting in an estimate of 29 weeks. In Canada, leaves are 50 weeks long at 55% of wages replaced, (resulting in an estimate of 28 weeks.) In Italy, “maternity leave is mandatory for the first five months after

childbirth, and the benefit is 80% of the mother's earnings" (Henneck 2003).

Taking all of these into account, we concur with Gornick and Meyers' (2004) assessment of the harsh situation that exists for American families:

The U.S. is the extreme case even among the English-speaking countries. Most American parents are left to design private solutions to the dilemma of supporting and caring for children. They are left to negotiate, often unsuccessfully, with their employers for paid family leave, reduced-hour options, and vacation time. Most American parents rely on private markets for childcare, especially during the first four years of their children's lives. They pay a substantial portion of their earnings for this care at a point in their careers when they may be least likely to have accumulated savings or to have advanced to high wage positions. And, ironically, they are often purchasing poor-quality care that may jeopardize their children's healthy development, while simultaneously impoverishing an overwhelmingly female childcare work force.

Our marriages and families are not simply emotional relationships—they are also work relationships

in which we divide or share many household and childrearing tasks, ranging from changing diapers, washing dishes, cooking, and fixing running toilets and leaky faucets to planning a budget and paying the monthly bills. These household tasks are critical to maintaining the well-being of our families. They are also unpaid and insufficiently honored. In addition to household work and childrearing, there is our employment, the work we do for pay. Our jobs usually take us out of our homes from 20 to 80 hours a week. They are not only a source of income; they also help our self-esteem and provide status. They may be a source of work and family conflict as well.

Now that we have entered the twenty-first century, we need to rethink the relationship between our work and our families. Too often, household work, childrearing, and employment are sources of conflict within our relationships. We need to rethink how we divide household and childrearing tasks so that our relationships reflect greater mutuality. For many, poverty and chronic unemployment lead to distressed and unhappy families. We need to develop and support policies that help build strong families.

Summary

- Families are economic units bound together by emotional ties. Families are involved in two types of work: *paid work* at the workplace and unpaid *family work* in the household.
- Americans appear to be working more and facing family *time strains*. More fathers than mothers believe they do not have time for their families; more mothers than fathers report not having time for themselves.
- *Work spillover* is the effect that employment has on the time, energy, and psychological well-being of workers and their families at home. *Family-to-work spillover* is when the demands from home life reduce the time and energy available to succeed at work.
- *Role strain* refers to difficulties that individuals have in carrying out the multiple responsibilities attached to a role. *Role overload* occurs when the total prescribed activities for one or more roles are greater than an individual can handle. *Role conflict* occurs when roles conflict with one another.
- Evidence indicates that balancing work and family has become more difficult, especially for employed parents.
- The traditional division of familial labor is complementary: husbands work outside the home for wages and wives work inside the home without wages.
- There are four characteristics that define the *homemaker role*: (1) its exclusive allocation to women, (2) its association with economic dependence, (3) its status as nonwork, and (4) its priority over other roles for women.
- Women enter the workforce for economic reasons and to raise their self-esteem. Employed women tend to have better physical and emotional health than do nonemployed women.

- More than half of all married women are in dual-earner marriages. Husbands generally do not significantly increase their share of household duties when their wives are employed.
- Women do between 70% and 80% of daily housework and carry more responsibility for managing the division of housework. Women's household tasks tend to include the daily chores (such as cooking, shopping, cleaning, etc.) and childcare. Men's household tasks tend to be more occasional and often outdoors.
- Men's involvement in routine housework is affected by their gender role attitudes, their upbringing, their experiences and status at work, and their age.
- The division of paid and unpaid labor and the allocation of housework affect marital power, marital satisfaction, and marital stability (that is, the risk of divorce).
- Two contemporary arrangements are (1) *shift couples*, with spouses who work opposite shifts and alternate domestic and caregiver responsibilities and (2) households in which men stay home with children while women support the family financially.
- Nonstandard shift work has increased because of changes in the economy, demographic changes, and technological changes. It affects family experiences in both negative and positive ways.
- There are approximately 1 million fathers of children under 15 years who stay home full-time. In such households, we can identify marital, parental, economic, and social consequences that follow from this arrangement.
- Among the problems women encounter in the labor force are economic discrimination and *sexual harassment*. Families suffer from lack of adequate childcare and an inflexible work environment.
- Unemployment can cause both economic and emotional distress. Unemployment most often affects female-headed single-parent families, African American and Latino families, and young families.
- Welfare reforms have been enacted by the U.S. government. Stricter limits now exist in determining and maintaining eligibility.
- Family policy is a set of objectives concerning family well-being and the specific government measures designed to achieve those objectives.

Key Terms

abuse of power 443	role conflict 425
bifurcation of working time 423	role overload 425
coprovider families 429	role reversal 440
economic distress 447	role strain 425
emotion work 436	sexual harassment 443
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