

**Gender, Work, and Family in the United States:
What Do We Know From Social Science Research?**

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INTRODUCTION

We review social science knowledge on how the intersection of work and family is structured by gender in the contemporary United States. Sociologists, social psychologists, and demographers have arguably done the majority of the relevant research, although other disciplines have also played a key role. These include economics, psychology, and anthropology. Methodologically, our review emphasizes quantitative studies based on nationally representative survey data, although we also interweave insights drawn from qualitative studies and from nonrepresentative samples.

The topic of “work, family, and gender” is prominent these days in the social sciences, but its roots go back in many disciplines for quite some time, including our own (sociology and demography). Demographers, for example, have been interested in the interrelationships between work and family, and well aware of a “conflict” between the two for women, for decades. There are numerous examples of articles published in the U.S. flagship population journal (*Demography*) on this topic since its inception in 1966. Early examples include “Mobility, Non-familial Activity, and Fertility” (Tien, 1967), “Family Composition and the Labor Force Activity of American Wives” (Sweet, 1970), and “Women's Work Participation and Fertility in Metropolitan Areas” (Collver, 1968), to name but a few.

The specific task of our chapter is to review and synthesize social science research on aspects of the intersection of work and family that are relevant to gender (see Perry-Jenkins, Repetti, & Crouter [2000] for a review of the work-family literature in the 1990s). While this literature is large and continuing to grow, in a sense this is not too great a challenge because gender is clearly one of the driving themes of social science research on work and family. In fact, one of the conclusions emerging from our review is that gender is arguably the central characteristic structuring individual workers’ experiences of work and family.

Our chapter proceeds as follows. We first consider the issue that has arguably received the most attention from researchers interested in gender, work, and family: that of the domestic division of labor. We discuss housework, other forms of domestic labor, and parenting in turn. Second, we examine the

labor market consequences of the division of domestic labor for men and women. Finally, we discuss the implications of the intersection of work and family for the well-being of men and women.

THE DOMESTIC DIVISION OF LABOR

By domestic labor, we refer to all of the labor that goes on to maintain the well-being of families and households, but when performed by a family member is usually unpaid. As we shall see, although housework has by far received the most attention in the literature, this includes more subtle types of labor. According to our definition, parenting is also a form of domestic labor, but we treat this topic separately later in this chapter.

The central theme of housework research is that, despite the substantial rise in women's employment levels over the past three decades, domestic labor has seemed to remain primarily "women's work." A large literature, and one that is continuing to grow, documents three major findings with a high degree of consistency (see Coltrane [2000] and Shelton & John [1996] for reviews).

First, women do substantially more housework than men, and this is especially true for married men and women. Although estimates vary based on data, sample, and how housework is measured, there is consensus about this basic pattern. For example, South and Spitze (1994), using data from the first wave (1987-88) of the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH), report that married men do about 18 hours per week compared to about 37 for married women (see also Bianchi et al. [2000]). While the gender gap is smaller for unmarried men and women (e.g., those who are cohabiting, divorced, or single), women still perform more domestic labor than men.

Second, married women's movement into paid employment has not been accompanied by an equivalently dramatic increase in the amount of housework done by husbands. Thus, scholars suggest that responsibility for the "second shift" of housework has fallen primarily on women (Hochschild, 1989). While the gender differential in time devoted to housework has narrowed somewhat over time, studies show that this is more a result of a decrease in women's housework time than a substantial increase in men's housework time. One study, drawing on data from time diaries, finds that married women's time doing housework declined from about 34 hours per week in 1965 to 19.4 hours in 1995. Married men's

time in housework doubled from 1965 to 1995, but from a very low absolute value, increasing from 4.7 to 10.4 hours (Bianchi et al., 2000).

A third important research finding is that not only do women perform significantly more housework than do men, but they also perform different *types* of household tasks (Blair & Lichter, 1991; Meissner, 1977; Twigg, McQuillan, & Ferree, 1999). Women tend to perform chores that take place inside the home, are routine, daily, and closely associated with childcare – meal preparation, housecleaning, laundry, and cleaning up after meals. These types of tasks have often been termed “female” or “feminine” because women have more often performed them. Offering little discretion as to when they are performed, they bind one into a fixed, even rigid, daily schedule. In contrast, traditional “male” tasks (e.g., household repairs, automobile maintenance) are more often performed by men. They tend to have a well-defined beginning and end, are more likely to take place outside the home, offer discretion as to when the task is performed, and may even be experienced as leisure. And, what have been defined as “neutral” tasks, including driving, paying bills, and shopping, tend to be shared more equally between men and women (e.g., Bianchi et al, 2000; Blair & Lichter, 1991 Noonan 2001b).

Measurement Issues

There are several measurement issues relevant to interpreting research on housework. First, data sources vary in their definition of housework. In some studies, time spent caring for children is included as housework, although most focus on the accomplishment of specific household tasks (e.g., laundry, meals). For example, the NSFH, the most popular source of data for recent studies on housework in the United States, asks respondents how much time they spend in a series of activities but excludes childcare.

A second important issue is that studies vary in terms of how the data are collected. In the NSFH, for example, the respondent is asked to provide an absolute number of hours doing specific tasks. Time diaries, on the other hand, are based on logs that account for time spent on various activities, usually for a 24-hour period. This method is thought to obtain the most accurate estimates; it produces much lower estimates of time spent on activities than the NSFH (Bianchi et al, 2000) but may underestimate simultaneous activities (i.e., doing the laundry and feeding the baby).

Nonetheless, the important point is that although the reporting of hours may inflate time spent on housework, estimates from different methods are highly correlated. Moreover, if one is interested in *differences* between men and women, it is not terribly problematic because evidence suggests that tend to overestimate their contributions and to double-count time in simultaneous activities (see Coltrane, 2000; Robinson & Godbey, 1997).

Other Domestic Labor: Emotion, Kin, and Caring Labor

Conventional measures of housework are arguably missing some important domains of domestic labor that qualitative studies suggest are more commonly performed by women. For example, the behind-the-scenes responsibility for household management appears to be usually performed by women (Hochschild, 1989). This may include a range of tasks such as thinking through menus that will please the tastes of various family members, arranging doctor's appointments for children, buying a present for a birthday party one's child is attending, arranging for repairs or deliveries, and a host of other activities (DeVault, 1991; Hochschild, 1989; Mederer, 1993).

Two specific kinds of such work have been termed "emotion work" and "kin work." Erickson (1993) defines emotion work as "the management of one's feelings to create an observable facial and bodily display. Within a personal or familial context, this work tends to involve the enhancement of others' emotional well-being and provision of emotional support" (1993: 888). Erickson finds, albeit with a nonrepresentative sample, that wives perform more emotion work than husbands. "Kin work," sometimes also termed "kinkeeping" is usually defined as the work required to sustain ties with relatives and caring for them (e.g., staying in touch, sending out holiday cards, organizing family gatherings). Gerstel and Gallagher (1993) use a measure of kinkeeping that includes the practical (e.g., giving a ride, preparing a meal, repair help, etc.), the material (e.g., lending/giving money; giving a gift), and personal support (e.g., talking through personal problems; providing advice of many different kinds). They find that wives help a significantly larger number of kin, and spend nearly three times as many hours helping kin per month than husbands.

What Accounts for Gender Differences in Domestic Labor?

To date, the central research question in the social science literature on domestic labor is one we referenced earlier: why, in the face of dramatic increases in women's employment and earnings, has housework seemed to largely remain “women's work”? While a host of studies on housework have examined a broad range of variables and topics, the literature is most concerned with assessing the forces behind the gender gap. In this endeavor, three theoretical perspectives are dominant: time availability, relative resources, and “doing gender.”

Time Availability. This perspective suggests that the division of household labor is rationally allocated according to the availability of household personnel in relation to the amount of housework to be done (Coverman, 1983). Time availability is typically operationalized with variables such as employment status or hours worked. Individuals who work more in the labor market are expected to do less housework. More recently, studies have operationalized “availability” with additional measures such as employment schedules and the use of flexible work-family policies because these variables are thought to more precisely identify “availability” to do housework (Presser, 1994; Silver & Goldscheider, 1994).

This perspective has generally received considerable support. Findings from many studies show that wives' employment hours are a statistically significant predictor of husbands' and wives' housework time. When women work more hours in the labor market, they do less housework and their husbands do more (Barnett & Barusch, 1987; Blair & Lichter, 1991; Coltrane & Ishii-Kuntz, 1992; Coverman, 1985; Greenstein, 1996b; Hiller & Philliber, 1986; Kamo, 1988; Shelton & John, 1993). Research has also found that housework is shared more equitably in couples that work non-overlapping shifts (Presser, 1994).

At the same time, the direction of causality is not resolved in this perspective. It is quite likely that domestic responsibilities *affect* employment and employment hours, especially for women. As we discuss in a later section of this chapter, women still often reduce their employment upon parenthood.

Relative Resources. This perspective is based on the notion that the resources (such as wages, education, or occupation) an individual brings to a relationship determine how much housework he/she

does. This is thought to be due to the quest to maximize efficiency (Becker, 1991), or as the outcome of power processes (Blood & Wolfe, 1960). The efficiency perspective assumes that the division of labor is consensual and that the partner doing more housework will have less leisure; the other makes neither assumption. In housework studies, resources are typically measured as earnings, with the theory predicting that individuals with higher wages will do less housework. Like the time availability perspective, the direction of causality is also at issue: earnings are likely to partially be a result of the domestic division of labor and not simply a cause.

In general, many studies find that as wives earn more money, or as their relative contribution to couple income increases, they do less housework (Bianchi et al., 2000; Blair & Lichter, 1991; Brayfield, 1992; Hersch & Stratton, 1994; Kamo, 1988; Orbuch & Eyster, 1997; Presser, 1994; Shelton & John, 1993; Silver & Goldscheider, 1994; South & Spitze, 1994). Other studies find that highly educated women do less housework (Bianchi et al., 2000; Greenstein, 2000; Hersch & Stratton, 1994; Orbuch & Eyster, 1997; Sanchez & Thompson, 1997; Shelton & John, 1993; South & Spitze, 1994).

Doing Gender. The gender gap remains even with the inclusion of variables representing time availability and relative resources. Increasingly, researchers are drawing on the “doing gender” perspective to explain why gender remains the most important predictor of housework time. This perspective argues that domestic labor is a symbolic enactment of gender relations (West & Zimmerman, 1987). That is, women and men perform different tasks “because such practices affirm and reproduce gendered selves, thus reproducing a gendered interaction order” (Coltrane, 2000: 1213). By performing housework, or doing various types of housework, a woman or man demonstrates to self and to others his/her gender as well as reinforce a gendered division of labor.

One frequently cited example of this perspective is Brines’ (1994) study. Contrary to predictions from the relative resources perspective, she finds that men who are more economically dependent on their wives do *less* housework than average (see also Bittman et al., 2003; Greenstein, 2000). Other studies have tried to examine the “doing gender” theory by examining time spent in housework across various marital statuses. The idea is that the gender divide should be most marked when men and women are

doing their “performances” in front of one another. Consistent with this, South & Spitze (1994) find that the largest gender gap in housework is for married persons, compared to persons in other marital statuses (see also Gupta [1999] for a longitudinal analysis that lends even greater support to the doing gender perspective).

Summary. Housework studies vary considerably in focus, operationalization of concepts, data employed, and dependent measures, making comparisons across studies difficult. Despite this variation, the evidence suggests that time availability and resources do matter for the gender gap in housework. The “doing gender” approach, while difficult, if not impossible, to falsify, adds a compelling dimension of explanation for observed patterns. It should also be noted that many studies include attitudinal measures; they generally show that men and women with traditional gender attitudes share less housework than men and women with more egalitarian attitudes (Blair & Lichter, 1991; Coltrane & Ishii-Kuntz, 1992; Greenstein, 1996b; Kamo, 1988; Presser, 1994; Sanchez 1994; Twiggs, McQuillan, & Ferree, 1999). However, similar to the causality issues raised by the other perspectives, it may well be that attitudes follow behavior.

GENDER AND PARENTING

This section discusses gender and the intersection between paid work and parenting. Our focus is on parental involvement with children in married and single parent families. But given that most children living with only one biological parent live with their mothers, we also touch on the issue of nonresidential parenting, a form of parenting much more common for men than for women.

Married Mothers’ and Fathers’ Time and Activities with Children

Two of the most important patterns in terms of time with children echo those found for housework. First, fathers devote less time to childrearing than mothers whether or not mothers are in the labor force (Pleck, 1985; Sandberg & Hofferth, 2001; Yeung et al., 2001). Using time diary data from the 1997 Panel Study of Income Dynamics, Yeung et al. (2001) report that, on weekdays, children’s total time engaged with fathers is 67% that of mothers; on weekends, the comparable figure is 87%. Second, the amount of time married fathers devote to childrearing has increased substantially over recent decades. Based on time

diary data (Americans' Use of Time), Bianchi (2000) reports that in 1965, fathers spent approximately 25% of mother's time primarily in childcare. By 1998, the ratio had risen to 56% of mother's time (see also Sandberg & Hofferth, 2001).

What predicts fathers' time with their children? A few variables seem to exert more consistent effects than others. First, studies show that fathers spend more time with their children when the children are young (Barnett & Barusch, 1987; Marsiglio, 1991; Pleck, 1985). Second, fathers' work hours typically have a negative effect on the time with children (Glass, 1998; Marsiglio, 1991; Nock & Kingston, 1988; Pleck, 1985; Yeung et al., 2001). Third, employment schedules matter. Studies show that fathers are most likely to take care of their children when they work different hours than their wives (Brayfield, 1995; Presser, 1988), and that fathers' time with children is maximized when couples work non-overlapping schedules (Casper & O'Connell, 1998; see also Presser, 1998 and Estes, Noonan, & Glass, 2003).

Finally, reminiscent of housework, there appear to be gender differences in the types of activity mothers and fathers engage in with children. For instance, research has found that when men spend time with their children it is commonly in the form of "interactive activities," such as playing or helping with homework, rather than in "custodial" activities such as bathing and feeding. The latter is more often done by mothers (McBride & Mills, 1993; Robinson & Godbey, 1997).

Single Parenting

Trends in marriage, divorce, and nonmarital childbearing have led to sharp increases in the prevalence of single parent households. In these cases, the residential parent will have added responsibility – not only will he or she need to attend to domestic labor and parenting, but will also, in most cases, be employed.

Perhaps the most important fact relating to gender is that the vast majority of single parent households are led by women. There are roughly 11,725,000 single parents in the U.S. Of these, 82.5% are female (Fields & Casper, 2001). From the perspective of children, the gender differential is even higher because female single parent households include more children, on average, than that of their male counterparts. Of all children living with a single parent, only about 10% are living with their father

(Fields, 2001). A second fact relating to gender concerns economic well-being. While employment rates are relatively high for female single parents, they are still lower than that of male single parents (77% vs. 84%) (Fields & Casper, 2001). Additionally, female single parents are twice as likely to be poor as their male counterparts (34% vs. 17%).

There has been little research specifically devoted to understanding domestic labor in single parent homes. One study suggests that while single mothers and single fathers interact with their children and engage in housework more similarly than do married mothers and fathers, there are still gendered patterns. Hall, Walker, & Acock (1995) find that single mothers report spend substantially more time on feminine household tasks per week, while single fathers spend about twice as much time as single mothers on “masculine” tasks. Also, single fathers spend less time in private talk and more time playing with children than single mothers.

Nonresidential Parenting

Although married fathers have become more involved over time in childrearing responsibilities, another, less optimistic, picture of fatherhood has emerged. Given that women constitute the vast majority of single parents, a much more common form of parenthood for men than for women is nonresident parenthood. And it is well known that many children have limited contact with their biological fathers (Furstenberg, 1988).

At the same time, recent research shows that many men who live apart from one set of biological children ultimately assume paternal responsibility for new biological or stepchildren through cohabitation or remarriage; this pattern has been termed “child swapping” or “serial parenting” (Furstenberg, 1988; Manning & Smock, 2000). For example, Manning, Stewart, & Smock (2003) find that half of all nonresident fathers have parenting responsibilities beyond a single set of nonresident children, and that nearly three-quarters of those who are remarried or cohabiting have responsibilities for other children.

These findings highlight the challenges in accurately identifying and even defining what an “involved father” is in a society where nonmarital childbearing, cohabitation, divorce, and remarriage are commonplace. While some men may be less involved with some children, these patterns also suggest the

possibility that many men are forging new ties to the children with whom they live.

LABOR MARKET IMPLICATIONS OF THE DOMESTIC DIVISION OF LABOR

In this section, we discuss the labor market consequences of parenthood and marriage. A relatively long tradition of social science research, going back thirty years or so, has focused on the consequences of these for women (Cramer, 1980; Hanson, 1983; Hudis, 1976; Mincer & Ofek, 1982; Mott & Shapiro, 1978; Presser & Baldwin, 1980; Stolzenberg & Waite, 1984). A key finding, and one continuing to the present, is that parenthood and marriage, directly or indirectly, decrease women's earnings and earnings potential. As discussed below, this is not typically the case for men.

Parenthood

How does parenthood affect men's and women's labor market outcomes? There are several key findings that have been replicated with different data sets. First, women have typically reduced their labor market involvement to absorb childbirth and childcare responsibilities, while men have not. That is, parenthood has asymmetrical effects for men and women in terms of employment. Drawing on nationally representative panel data of young men and women spanning over 30 years (1966-1998), Noonan (2001a) examines the behavior of two birth cohorts of married men and women to identify employment responses to first-time parenthood. Figure 1 shows patterns of employment around the time of childbirth for the two cohorts of married women. Clearly, women's responses are changing: the more recent cohort has higher levels of employment at all months, but still reducing employment close to the time of childbirth. Figure 2 shows the identical data for married men. The figure is striking in underscoring temporal stability of men's employment responses to parenthood; there is no detectable trend (see also Lundberg & Rose, 2000). Similarly, other studies show that men are likely to increase their work hours and women to decrease theirs upon parenthood (Jacobs & Gerson, 2001; Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 2000; Moen, 1985).

[Figures 1 and 2 about here.]

Second, studies that have explicitly examined tradeoffs between work and family document that women are much more likely to report making them in ways that inhibit earnings or earnings potential. Carr (2002) finds that, overall, two-thirds of women report having made a trade-off to accommodate

children compared to less than one-fifth of men. Tradeoffs were defined in this study as stopping work, cutting back on hours of employment, or taking a less demanding or more flexible job. Another study shows the kinds of tradeoffs made differ by gender, with men substantially more likely to report that they took on *more work* to meet family responsibilities and to miss a family occasion due to work demands (62% vs. 37% for women) (Milkie & Peltola, 1999).

A third key finding is that there appears to be a wage “penalty” to motherhood, net of effects of children on work experience, with a growing literature showing that mothers earn less than women without children. Studies that control for a wide array of human capital (e.g. work experience, education, etc.) and job characteristics report that women experience wage penalties ranging from 2 to 10% for one child, and from 5 to 13% for two or more children (Anderson, Binder, & Krause, 2003; Avellar & Smock, 2003; Budig & England, 2001; Hill, 1979; Korenman & Neumark, 1991; Lundberg & Rose, 2000; Taniguchi, 1999; Waldfogel 1997, 1998). Further, this penalty appears to have persisted over recent decades. Avellar & Smock (2003) examine the possibility that the motherhood penalty has declined over time by estimating identical models with comparable data on two cohorts of young women; they find that the penalty has remained stable.

Fourth, unlike the case for women, studies suggest that children are positively associated with men’s earnings; men appear to experience an earnings premium for having children. Depending on model specification and the age and number of children, studies show that children increase men’s wages between 3 and 5% (Cohen, 2002; Daniel, 1995; Hersch & Stratton, 2000).

Marriage

With respect to marriage, the most prominent finding is that married men experience a wage premium; findings are more mixed for women (e.g., Waite, 1995). Even after accounting for selection processes into marriage and other characteristics (e.g., jobs and human capital), estimates suggest that married men receive a wage premium of anywhere between 5 and 30%. (Daniel, 1995; Hersch & Stratton, 2000; Korenman & Neumark, 1991; Loh, 1996; Waite, 1995). In contrast, there doesn’t appear to be a marriage premium overall for women. One study suggests that black women experience a 2.8% marriage premium,

although white women experience a marriage *penalty* of 4.4% (Daniel, 1995).

While difficult to disentangle and not mutually exclusive, the most common explanations posed for this phenomenon are that (1) more productive men marry (a “selection” effect) and (2) marriage makes men more productive (causation). The latter could occur because of the division of labor between husbands and wives. That is, married men are able to spend more time and energy in the labor market than non-married men because wives take much of the responsibility for housework and childrearing. A third possible explanation, potentially in combination with the first two, is employer discrimination in favor of married men. For example, employers may treat married men better than non-married men, offering them wage-enhancing promotions or additional training.

A few studies have suggested that the male marriage premium has declined over time (Blackburn & Korenman, 1994; Gray, 1997; Loh, 1996), possibly because of less traditional gender role specialization within marriage. However, Cohen (2002) shows that the decline in the premium is overstated when, as done in earlier studies, cohabitators are included in the “never-married” group (Cohen, 2002).

WORK, FAMILY, AND WELL-BEING

Social scientists have also examined linkages between a couple’s division of labor and various aspects of well-being, including mental health and marital quality and stability. We briefly discuss each in turn.

In terms of mental health, a number of studies find that housework time is associated with increased depression for women (Glass & Fujimoto, 1994). If husbands help with the housework, wives are less depressed (Ross, Mirowsky, & Huber, 1983). Additionally, one study indicates that only hours spent in low-schedule-control tasks (i.e. feminine tasks) lead to more psychological distress (Barnett & Shen, 1997; see also Lennon, 1994). Although this relationship exists for both men and women, its consequences are greater for women because they disproportionately perform such tasks (see Table 1). Wives may also be affected by perceived equity in performance of housework. Bird (1999), using longitudinal data with a control for prior mental health status, finds that men’s lower housework contribution accounts, in part, for wives’ higher depression levels.

Tradeoffs made between work and family have subtler psychological consequences as well, and this

appears true for both men and women. Carr (2002) finds that Baby Boom (b. 1944-59) and Baby Bust (b. 1960-70) women who cut back on employment hours had lower levels of self-acceptance (i.e., self-esteem). In a qualitative portion of the study, however, there is compelling evidence that mid-life men (age 59) experience feelings of regret (Carr, forthcoming). A common theme was the pressure they felt to comply with the “good provider role”; these men connected this pressure to their inability to select professions they found personally rewarding or to take career risks. Most also regretted how their breadwinning activities constrained their involvement as parents, saying that they wish they had spent more time with their children when they were young.

Several studies link satisfaction with the division of domestic labor to marital quality and marital stability (Erickson, 1993; Frisco & Williams, 2003; Voydanoff & Donnelly, 1999). Suitor (1991), for example, finds that satisfaction with the division of housework is moderately related to both wives' and husbands' marital quality across almost all life-cycle stages. There are also studies that attempt to elucidate the *mechanisms* by which inequality in housework translates into a sense of unfairness, and thus, presumably, with marital satisfaction (Baxter & Western, 1998; Greenstein, 1996a; Pleck, 1985; Sanchez & Kane, 1996).

The few studies that directly measure marital instability, rather than satisfaction or perceptions of instability, come to similar conclusions. Frisco & Williams (2003) examine the relationship between perceived fairness of the division of housework, marital happiness, and divorce in dual earner marriages (see also Greenstein 1995, 1996b). The authors find that perceived inequity in the division of household labor is negatively associated with both husbands' and wives' reported marital happiness, and positively associated with the odds of actual divorce among wives.

Finally, it should be noted that there are aspects of the structure of employment that appear to have effects on marital quality, but are not inherently gendered. One example is the temporal structure of work. Presser (1999) reports that only 30% of employed people work a standard work week (e.g., 35-40 hours, Monday through Friday, on a fixed daytime schedule). Among two-earner couples, 28% include at least one spouse who works other than a fixed daytime schedule and 55% have one spouse working weekends.

In a related study, Presser (2000) finds evidence of rather substantial negative effects of nonstandard work schedules on union stability; she finds, for example, that night and rotating shifts substantially increase the odds of instability for couples with children (see also White & Keith, 1990). While the causal mechanisms aren't currently well understood, certainly some part is due to the stresses of lack of leisure time together.

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

In summary, we would make a few broad observations. The first one is rather commonplace, and that is the co-occurrence of stability and change. On the one hand, the bulk of childrearing and domestic labor continues to be borne by women. And this, we would argue, has critical ramifications for women's strides towards equality in the labor market and thus the economic status of themselves and their children should they become single parents (Holden & Smock, 1991).

On the other hand, while the pace of change in men's contributions to domestic labor has been slower than women's contributions to paid labor, leading many to speak of a "stalled revolution," the direction of change seems clear to us. Over the past few decades, men have increased their domestic labor, both absolutely and relatively, are increasingly involved in childcare, and increasingly likely to espouse egalitarian gender roles. These are substantial shifts. We would also point to Carr's (2002) findings of cohort change in reported work-family tradeoffs among men. Only 10 percent of the oldest men (b. 1931-43), but 20 percent of the Baby Boom men, and one quarter of Baby Bust men made a work-family trade-off.

Second, it seems to us that there is another tradeoff that some women have been making, and one that is important to recognize for what it implies about the continuing difficulty of juggling work and family for women. Childlessness is a growing phenomenon in the U.S., perhaps the ultimate "balancing" being done. In 2000, almost 20% of women were childless at ages 40-44, an age range often used by demographers to proxy ultimate fertility; by these ages, women are nearing the end of their childbearing years. As shown in Figure 3, the proportion has roughly doubled between 1976 and today.

[Figure 3 about here.]

Moreover, childlessness varies in a way suggesting that women with high levels of human capital are most likely to forgo childbearing. For example, in 1998, roughly 29% of 40-44 year old women with bachelor's degrees were without children compared to about 14% for those with high school degrees or less. Similar differentials occur when women are stratified by occupation; among those with professional and managerial occupations, over 26% were childless in 1998 compared to 17% for women in other occupations (Bachu & O'Connell, 2001). Other evidence indicates that women with the most extreme demands from employment (executives at corporations, etc.) have much higher rates of childlessness, in some subgroups nearing 50% (see, e.g., Crittenden, 2001; Hewlett, 2002).

As stated in our introduction, demographers have been wrestling with the relationship between women's employment and fertility for some time. In the classic 1959 Hauser and Duncan volume, *The Study of Population*, the author of the chapter on work identifies the most critical questions for demographers to ask about working behavior. Listed first is the following:

“Just how is the fertility pattern of a woman related to her participation (or non-participation) in the working force? Does one “cause” the other, is there a feedback interrelationship, or are both phenomena manifestations of underlying factor? Under what conditions will more or fewer women be in the working force, and how will such behavior seem to affect the birth rate...?” (Jaffe, 1959: 608)

The answer to the last, we think, is variable historically and cross-nationally, and dependent on the structures in place – in workplaces, in families, in government – to support the tasks of parenthood.

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