



Gender Roles and Families

Livia Sz. Oláh, Daniele Vignoli, and Irena E. Kotowska

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Abstract

The chapter addresses the complex interplay between the new roles of women and men and the diversity of family life courses (focusing on heterosexual individuals) in advanced societies, most specifically Europe and the USA, from

L. Sz. Oláh (✉)

Department of Sociology, Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden
e-mail: livia.olah@sociology.su.se

D. Vignoli

Dipartimento di Statistica, Informatica, Applicazioni, University of Florence, Florence, Italy
e-mail: daniele.vignoli@unifi.it

I. E. Kotowska

Institute of Statistics and Demography, Warsaw School of Economics, Warsaw, Poland
e-mail: iekoto@sgh.waw.pl

the 1960s onward. The multiple equilibria framework and the gender revolution theory serve as the point of departure. Considering labor market changes as the main drivers of family and gender role changes, the chapter focuses on the development from the male breadwinner-female homemaker model to families with women as secondary earners, to dual-career families, and more recently to the female primary earner or breadwinner-mother model, along with the slow and delayed transition of the male gender role from primary family provider to involved, caring men and the new father. The review demonstrates gender role changes being closely intertwined with the de-standardization of family biographies leading to a growing diversity of relationships over the life course as well as increasingly complex family compositions and household structures. Every stage of the family life course relates to a range of options, starting with partnership formation (cohabitation, marriage, LAT) if at all, through becoming a parent (when, how many times, in which family type, biological or stepparent) or not, to partnership dissolution (divorce/separation) and family reconstitution, shaping and shaped by altering gender roles. Diverse policy and cultural contexts (norms, values, attitudes, perceptions – and multiethnic families) facilitate or hinder family and gender-role transitions, impinging societal development.

Introduction

Family biographies and living arrangements have changed substantially in advanced societies, most specifically in Europe and the USA, from the mid-twentieth century onward. The then relatively universal adult life path of early marriage followed by childbearing, and concluded with empty nest and spousal death, has been increasingly replaced by prolonged and less sequenced sets of life course transitions increasingly including family dissolution and reconstitution along with a previously unprecedented diversity of family configurations (Bruckner and Mayer 2005). Women's and men's educational and employment trajectories have become more similar across cohorts born before the 1960s, with women less and less likely to leave the labor market for good upon marriage and motherhood even though breadwinning has remained the main driver of men's life course. Life paths have remained gendered, explicitly recognized in the concept of the gendered life course (Moen 2001), highlighting continued inequalities between women and men in access to resources given gender-based division of tasks, notably earning and caring (Hagestad and Dykstra 2016).

Awareness of gendered opportunities and constrains, with focus on women's changing labor market attachment, impacting on family life has long influenced the literature concerned with family changes, notwithstanding the limited role the gender perspective played in life course research until quite recently. Family life courses have been shown to become increasingly diverse, with the extent of changes varying greatly by social contexts (for overviews, see Oláh et al. 2018; Van Winkle 2018). The idea of a de-standardization of family life courses, supported by analyses

of family patterns up to the early 2000s has been challenged by studies based on most recent data that suggest a halt or even a decrease in diversity, after a longer period of less and less similar family trajectories (see Van Winkle 2020). Theoretical advances have drawn attention to the possibility of a re-standardization of family life courses incorporating more stages though than in the mid-twentieth century (Huinink 2013), not yet underpinned by comprehensive but some empirical evidence (Fasang 2014), along with evolving gender roles. Thus the chapter addresses the complex interplay between family developments and gender role changes at both the macro and micro levels, also highlighting the importance of contexts.

To this end, the methodology of a narrative literature review has been adopted with the aim to strengthen existing knowledge by corroborating what prior studies have shown. Peer-reviewed studies published in highly ranked scholarly journals and keystone books, directly relevant to the study's main focus, gender roles and families, have been aggregated in the chapter. Relying on the broadest reasonable range of relevant scholarship allows readers both to obtain an overview of the present state of scholarly knowledge on topics that are currently matters of discussion and to further examine that research directly if desired.

The Changing Family Landscape

The “Golden Age of the Family,” as the period of the mid-1940s to mid-1960s is known in family research (see Skolnick 1978), has been the point of reference in contemporary scholarship focusing on family changes of the past half century in Europe and North America. This fact is all the more puzzling as the baby-boom era being unusual, has been widely recognized (as pointed out, e.g., by Cherlin 1990; Smock 2004; Van Bavel and Reher 2013). In the Golden Age, marriage was nearly universal, stable, and entered at young ages, while divorce and nonmarital family constellations were rare. Children were born to relatively young married parents, low levels of childlessness accompanied the high birth rates, and the nuclear family, that is, married couple with children, was the dominant family form (Bourgeois-Pichat 1981; Cherlin 2010). This was also the era of the male breadwinner-housewife model with women's pronounced dependence on their husbands as the only provider for the family, because entering marriage and/or motherhood usually ended women's paid work engagement (see, e.g., Lewis 1992; Pfau-Effinger 2004). However, the dynamics of partnerships and fertility have changed substantially from the late 1960s onward, marking the era of the Second Demographic Transition, named by Ron Lesthaeghe and Dirk van de Kaa (1986) who were among the first to recognize family-related trends becoming qualitatively different from the mid-twentieth century patterns (see also Lesthaeghe 2010; Van de Kaa 1987). Marriage as institution has weakened with important consequences for children's life chances, as highlighted in the diverging destinies concept introduced by Sara McLanahan (2004), becoming a major concern in American family research (see, e.g., Sweet and Bumpass 1990), sometimes viewed as materialization of family decline (see especially Popenoe 1988). Meanwhile, in Europe, the changes in childbearing trends

received special attention due to low/very low fertility fueling societal aging (see, e.g., Frejka et al. 2008).

In the literature, family changes have often been linked to the macro-level gender context (see, e.g., Cooke and Baxter 2010; Esping-Andersen and Billari 2015; Goldscheider and Sassler 2018). In the baby boom era with strong gender role specialization, only women with high socioeconomic status and thus able to support themselves could opt out of the marriage market in the USA (Torr 2011), similarly to European countries with less egalitarian gender roles today (Kalmijn 2013). Starting with the 1970s, however, retreat from marriage has increasingly characterized the disadvantaged segment of the American population (Cherlin 2010; Smock 2004), while also gender specialization diminished as seen in the continuous increase in women's paid work engagement (Goldin 2006; Goldscheider and Waite 1991; Oppenheimer 1997). Men's education mattered little for marriage in gender traditional societies in Europe where less-educated women have been most likely to marry, whereas a positive educational gradient for marriage emerged for both women and men in more gender egalitarian countries, related to cultural rather than economic considerations (see Kalmijn 2013).

The typical age of first union formation has changed little over time in the USA, whereas marriage has been increasingly delayed, especially among the less educated who opted instead for nonmarital cohabitation, often brief serial cohabitation given high instability of such unions (see Manning et al. 2014; Sweeney 2016). In Europe, in contrast, entry into a first coresidential partnership has been delayed, especially in Southern Europe where the postponement of marriage was not even linked to an increase in premarital cohabitation, unlike in Northern and Western Europe (see Perelli-Harris and Lyons-Amos 2015; Sobotka and Toulemon 2008). Cohabitation has been embraced by the entire social spectrum across Europe, as seen in the positive association between women's higher education and levels of cohabitation (at least for older cohorts), which also applies to marriage delay, although country context including gender relations and policy settings matters most for partnership patterns (see Kalmijn 2007; Kiernan 2004). Irrespective of the prevalence of consensual unions, out-of-wedlock childbearing has continuously increased, linked strongly to cohabiting couples, albeit with a considerable share of births to lone mothers in the USA and UK as well as Central-Eastern Europe (Sobotka and Toulemon 2008; Thomson 2014). In any case, nonmarital childbearing, especially in cohabiting unions, has been associated with disadvantageous social position in Europe and the USA alike (Perelli-Harris et al. 2010; Smock 2000).

Beyond the weakening connection between marriage and reproduction, fertility patterns have changed greatly as shown in the literature. Birth rates have declined, reaching critical levels in especially Southern and Eastern Europe in the late twentieth century (Kohler et al. 2002). The USA proved exceptional with overall fertility levels remaining above population replacement until quite recently. Across Europe, parenthood has been increasingly delayed in parallel with the fertility decline, whereas a shift to later childbearing emerged only among the highly educated in the USA (Frejka and Sobotka 2008; Rindfuss et al. 1996). Fertility was linked to female employment levels negatively at first, but the correlation appeared to have

turned positive from the mid-1980s, this being questioned though by more sophisticated analyses (Engelhardt et al. 2004; Kögel 2004). The latter studies demonstrated a weakening incompatibility of motherhood and paid work in certain contexts, especially so in Scandinavia. A study using more recent data up to 2017 has, however, shown that the association between female employment rates and fertility has indeed become positive, once women's paid work engagement reached sufficiently high levels gradually transforming the institutional setting (Oshio 2019). Also, concerns about women's new roles jeopardizing societal reproduction have been attenuated by completed fertility trends including also cohorts born in the mid- and late 1970s, except for Southern Europe, indicating the importance of societal context and gender equality for cohort fertility (Frejka et al. 2018; Myrskylä et al. 2013).

Along with growing diversity of family formation patterns, partnerships have become increasingly fragile. In the USA, divorce probabilities have varied strongly by educational attainment, with highest union stability in the advantaged strata (Amato and James 2010; Cherlin 1981). However, increasing female labor force participation and earnings were positively associated with the growth of divorce and separation in the 1970s and 1980s (Ruggles 1997), although a direct causal relationship has not been established (see Özcan and Breen 2012). Also across Europe, higher divorce rates were linked with higher proportion of women in paid employment in the 1990s (Kalmijn 2007). The previously positive educational gradient for women's union dissolution has weakened and possibly reversed recently, related to changes in female gender role (see Matysiak et al. 2014). Breakups have contributed to the increasing complexity of family constellations including children from previous relationships as well as joint children (Ganong and Coleman 2017), especially in less advantaged groups in both the USA and Europe, with varying prevalence across countries (Sweeney 2010; Thomson 2014). Possible links between (specific aspects of) macro-level gender context and prevalence of stepfamilies, however, have not been addressed in the literature.

Gender Roles in Transition

The pronounced growth of women's employment in the USA and Europe in the second half of the twentieth century, especially among married women and mothers, has been a key aspect of the social and economic development. Female labor force engagement has been facilitated by the structural shift from manufacturing to services along with the implementation of new technologies (demand side), and by changes in preferences and attitudes toward women's role in the home and in the public sphere (supply side) (Bernhardt 1993; Goldin 1990; Matysiak 2011). Numerous studies highlighted the gender differences in labor market outcomes (participation, employment and unemployment rates, pay gap, occupational segregation, employment patterns, returns to education, and labor market experience) from an economic perspective (see Del Boca and Wetzels 2007), but also impacts of the family on mothers' (parents') labor market attachment have gained increasing

research interest. Analyses of women's and men's labor market participation patterns have been complemented by couples' employment patterns (full-/part time for partners in a couple with/without children). Also, institutional settings in terms of welfare regimes, in particular labor market regulations and family policy measures, have been accounted for (Del Boca and Wetzels 2007; Mason and Jensen 1995). Since the 1990s, welfare state typologizations have increasingly recognized the importance of the gender dimension with respect to conceptualization of women's work, and the division of responsibilities between women and men for paid and unpaid work and care (Gornick et al. 1997; Lewis 1992).

Conceptualization of women's paid work and perception of their role as economic provider have been strongly linked to the notion of "gender system" (see Mason 1997), defined as expectations on women's and men's behaviors in the society. These expectations prescribe a division of labor and responsibilities between women and men as well as their rights and obligations. Hence, women's employment could be conceptualized in terms of evolving roles of women and men as regards reconciling economic provision and care responsibilities within the family. A strict role specialization is embedded in the male breadwinner-female carer model with the sole-earner husband and his homemaker-carer wife, while the modernized male breadwinner (female part-time carer) model allows for wives sequencing employment and family work (Gauthier 2005; Leira 2002). As women's labor force participation increased, the male breadwinner model has been gradually displaced, first by a model in which a father remains the main economic provider and a mother's labor market input while subordinated to her family duties supplements the household income, and subsequently by the dual earner model. Thus women's paid work engagement has become rather common, slowly accompanied but not matched by men's involvement in care and home responsibilities, resulting in the dual-earner – women's double burden model (Anxo et al. 2011). To release women from the "second shift," further progress in men's family role has been considered necessary with new fatherhood manifested by growing engagement of fathers in care and housework (Altintas and Sullivan 2017; Hofferth and Goldscheider 2015; Oláh et al. 2018). In the long run, the dual breadwinner–dual carer model is expected to materialize, with partners sharing responsibilities for both economic maintenance and for care and housework. As increasingly recognized in the literature, the transition toward dual earning, crucial for women's economic and social empowerment in both public and private spheres, needs to be considered also in the context of risks generated by changing labor markets (Blossfeld and Drobnic 2001; Kreyenfeld et al. 2012). Feelings of uncertainty given instability and discontinuity of employment trigger both partners/parents to participate in the labor force, thus reducing the risk of deterioration in the family welfare if one loses a job.

Increasing female employment rates and the redistribution of family responsibilities constituting two dimensions of the transformation of gender roles have been accompanied by a steady increase of educational attainment, first among men but lately also among women. Tertiary education has expanded in the past decades, and the shrinking gender gap in higher education turned to women's advantage by the mid-1990s further strengthening female labor market aspirations (Blossfeld and

Drobnic 2001; Esteve et al. 2012). In parallel, educational homogamy has become the most common pattern among couples, followed by partnerships in which the woman is more educated than the male partner (hypogamous couples). The latter trend along with labor market changes discussed above has contributed to the emergence of the female breadwinner model, a still relatively uncommon family type which is gaining significance in Europe and the USA alike (Jurczyk et al. 2019; Klesment and Van Bavel 2017). Educational improvements matter also for fathers' contribution to family tasks given more educated male partners' greater involvement in home chores as compared to their counterparts with less schooling (Altintas and Sullivan 2017; Henz 2019).

The transformation of gender roles and subsequently evolving family models have also influenced the latest developments in welfare regime theorizing (Esping-Andersen 2009; Gornick and Meyers 2003; Leitner 2003; Saraceno and Keck 2011). The social democratic regime type has been argued to best support the transition to the dual earner–dual carer model by promoting women's employment through both labor market and family policy measures with a steady focus on gender equality in the public and private spheres. High labor market participation of women, including mothers, is accompanied by considerably increasing time men allocate to child care and housework in response to the needs of children (and mothers) and men's own aspirations to become involved, active fathers (Altintas and Sullivan 2017; Hofferth and Goldscheider 2015). On the other extreme are the Mediterranean countries with the most familialized welfare regimes offering little policy support to reconcile paid work and family responsibilities, the latter seen as women's tasks. Low female and maternal employment rates accompany the high prevalence of the male breadwinner model with a predominantly full-time female carer, while in the rare dual-earner families, women's double burden prevails. Fathers' domestic contribution remains rather limited despite the steady increase of their involvement in home chores, exceeding that of fathers in the liberal and conservative welfare regimes who, however, more often contribute to child care and housework (Altintas and Sullivan 2017).

Countries of the liberal welfare regime and of conservative continental Europe display a transition to the dual earner–dual carer family model about halfway between those in the Nordic and the Mediterranean welfare clusters. The defamilialized institutional setting in the liberal group supports the modernized male breadwinner family (with female part-time carer), which reflects normative expectations about women's paid work, although rather frequent, to be subordinated to their family responsibilities. Fathers' involvement in family tasks differs greatly between the high and the low social strata signaling polarization of fathers' time allocated to the family (Altintas and Sullivan 2017; Henz 2019). In the conservative welfare regime type, substantial cross-country variations in labor market regulations, family policy, and normative views on gender (France and Germany being the main opposites) shape the specific conditions of gender role changes, notwithstanding family-centered state policy oriented toward the male breadwinner–female (part-time) carer family. Fathers' engagement with their children and the household chores show a modest increase with pronounced country differences (Altintas and Sullivan

2017). The hybrid welfare model of Eastern Europe with great differences in labor market and family policies resemble the Mediterranean welfare regime on the familization-defamilization continuum (Cerami and Vanhuysse 2009; Neyer 2013). Despite their long history with high female employment levels, traditional gender norms accompany labor market rigidities and recent shortages in child care places, fostering the dual earner–women’s double burden model as dominant arrangement, supplemented by that of the male breadwinner–female homemaker (Altintas and Sullivan 2017; Fahlén 2016).

Interlinkages Between the De-standardization of Family Life Courses and Gender Role Changes

One of the most fundamental social changes in industrialized countries in the past 50 years has been the shift toward greater gender equality, as highlighted above. Two recent theoretical frameworks have addressed this development. The first one has described the transition from gender-specialized to more gender-equal roles as a “gender revolution” (Hochschild and Machung 1990). Such transition has not been uniform, however (England 2010), and it has increasingly been seen as a process with two phases (Goldscheider et al. 2010, 2015). Women entering the public sphere and taking active part in politics, employment, and education has characterized the first phase according to this concept, followed by men becoming more involved in family matters in the second phase. The gender revolution framework thus puts changing emphasis on women and men in the process of obtaining gender equality: the first phase concerns mainly women and their participation outside the home, while the second phase concerns mainly men and their engagement in family tasks. Researchers generally agree that the first phase of the gender revolution brings along weak partnership ties and low fertility because of the “double burden” on women due to their employment and other public engagement without any concomitant change in men’s family engagement (Goldscheider et al. 2015; McDonald 2000). The second phase of the gender revolution in which men’s participation in household work and care will lead to a more gender symmetric arrangement of family responsibilities has barely started in most countries. A recent theoretical debate (see Goldscheider et al. 2010 as its culmination) has highlighted conflicting views on whether such development will strengthen the family as seen in more stable relationships and reasonable fertility levels.

The second approach is the multiple equilibria framework (Esping-Andersen and Billari 2015), offering somewhat similar narrative. The starting point is a “Beckerian equilibrium” (see Becker 1981), characterized by a nuclear family with a breadwinner man and a homemaker woman, early marriage and first birth, high fertility, low risk of divorce. With the onset of women’s revolution however, such an equilibrium is challenged by a “masculinization of women’s life courses,” resembling the first phase of the gender revolution discussed above which takes place in the public sphere. This brings about an “unstable equilibrium,” characterized by a lack of agreement between partners on various aspects of family life, and a lack of fit

between desires and outcomes. Such disequilibrium leads to low fertility, inequalities in income and opportunities. Then, as women's revolution progresses, a "feminization of men's life courses" arises with a focus on the private sphere, as in the second phase of the gender revolution. Such a step forward leads to a new equilibrium, the "gender-equality equilibrium," with men and women sharing paid work and domestic work and care tasks equally in couple relationships, reasonably high fertility, and low breakup risk.

Although developed societies follow such stepwise progress toward gender equality laid out in both theoretical frameworks, there is large variation in where in this process the different countries currently are (O'Connor 2013). Nordic countries are often viewed as forerunners in the process with regard to gender equality both in the public sphere and in the family. Countries of Southern Europe are lagging behind both in the public and the private spheres. The progress in Western Europe puts those countries between the two previous groups, while Eastern Europe seems to get stuck in the first step of the gender revolution, already achieved in the 1970s–1980s, with no substantial changes toward greater gender equality in the private sphere then and ever since. Despite progress, no country has achieved complete gender parity in either sphere so far, not even the Nordic countries, and many societies are considered to be trapped in the first stage of the process, facing a "stalled" (England 2010) or "incomplete" (Esping-Andersen 2009) gender revolution. The latter view has been questioned recently, taking into account that mechanisms of lagged generational change slow down the adaptation, although the division of labor continues to develop toward greater gender equality as high-quality time-use data reveal (Sullivan et al. 2018).

Gendering Family Complexity and Diversity

The macro-level changes embodied in the diversification of the family landscape and transitioning gender roles discussed above intensified research attention to micro-level implications, that is, the changing association between labor market attachment and education of women, men, couples, and the division of care in partnerships on the one hand, and family formation and dissolution on the other hand.

Gender Roles and Partnership Formation

Based on the rationale with emphasis on men's economic prospects and related family outcomes in the male-breadwinner model, a strain of research, particularly in the USA, has focused on men's weakening labor force position from the late 1960s onward in search to understand the marriage decline. Such decline in both aspects, that is economic potentials as well as marriage, was found to be more limited among highly educated men than for the less educated in the American society. The findings point to the continued importance of high socioeconomic status and good earnings potential for men's marriageability (Schneider et al. 2018), but less so for

cohabitation (Oppenheimer et al. 1997; Xie et al. 2003). Also in Europe, men's economic position has been shown to matter more for marriage entry than for cohabitation (Kalmijn 2011), the latter partnership form considered more suitable in unstable employment situations such as unemployment or temporary jobs (Nazio 2008) and related financial constraints, which increasingly characterize the current era of globalization and uncertainty (Mills and Blossfeld 2013).

Regarding prospective partners, women's increasing economic independence as a consequence of the expansion of the female gender role was seen in economic theorizing as the main force behind the decline in marriages (Becker 1981). Such reasoning has been increasingly challenged, however (Oppenheimer 1994, 1997). Moreover, a range of recent empirical studies in the USA and Europe have demonstrated that women's high socioeconomic status and income promote marriage formation rather than preventing it, except for Southern Europe where gender traditional norms prevail (Ono 2003; Shafer and James 2013; Van Bavel et al. 2018). The research has also shown that among both women and men, the less educated are the ones more likely to remain single in recent cohorts (De Hauw et al. 2017), as economic provision is an important aspect of the male and lately also the female gender roles. Women's earnings seem to matter little for entry into cohabitation, similar to men (Xie et al. 2003), this partnership form being less corroborative to gender traditionalism than marriages (Bianchi et al. 2014; South and Spitze 1994). Employment per se increases chances of forming a new union after a divorce or separation for men and women alike, as the labor market offers good opportunities to meet a new partner (De Graaf and Kalmijn 2003; Pasteels and Mortelmans 2017). The effects of income appear to be gendered, however, as low-income women are more likely to re-partner than higher-earner women, but greater earnings increase the likelihood of re-partnering for men (Dewilde and Uunk 2008; Sweeney 2002).

Assortative mating patterns have also shifted along the transformation from male-breadwinner to dual-earner societies. Educational homogamy has become a dominant pattern in first partnerships but not in re-partnering (Esteve et al. 2012; Schwartz and Mare 2005), followed by hypogamy (that is the female partner having more education than the male partner), with traditional educational pairings of more highly educated man and less educated woman becoming least common. Growing homogamy has been explained by structural changes related to the expansion of higher education that increases the number and proportion of more educated women and men across cohorts, as well as their opportunities to meet a prospective partner with similar level of qualification at the life course stage when own family formation starts (Blossfeld and Timm 2003; Blossfeld 2009). The structural aspect has been accompanied by a growing preference for a partner with high earnings potential, as economic provision has become an intrinsic feature of both the female and male gender roles. Educational hypogamy, although rather unconventional, has been shown not to challenge traditional power-relations in a couple, as men in such relationships nearly always out-earn their female partners both in the USA and Europe (Qian 2017; Van Bavel et al. 2018).

The tripartite model of intimate relationships classifying individuals as "single," "cohabiting," or "married" has increasingly proved inadequate, as research has

revealed that being single does not necessarily mean being without a partner. Intimate partners in stable couple relationships residing in separate households, so-called living-apart-together (LAT) relationships, have been seen to emerge at different stages of the life course, being the result of constraints and preferences alike (Carter and Duncan 2018; Pasteels et al. 2017). At younger ages, LAT is more often a stage in the family formation process that will lead to a coresidential partnership when circumstances and socioeconomic resources allow it. At more mature ages, however, LAT can be a preferred state combining autonomy and intimacy. It is a way of on-doing gender for women by relieving themselves of care-giving and other domestic burden with respect to the partner, and a best arrangement to protect children as well as economic assets from the hazards of re-partnering (Connidis et al. 2017; Lewin 2018; Upton-Davis 2012). Traditional gender relations however are not completely absent among LAT-partners, as seen in breadwinner-attitudes of men willing to provide financial support to their partners within the relationship and beyond (i.e., in case of death), and women providing domestic services despite emphasizing their modern values and egalitarian gender role orientations (Lyssens-Danneboom and Mortelmans 2014).

Gendering Parenthood

Evolving gender roles boosted research interest in the gendered transition to parenthood as well as in who remains childless or childfree, the latter referring to voluntary childlessness. Expectations related to gender stereotypes with highly educated career women and low-earner men less likely to become parents, often confirmed in earlier research (for an overview see Houseknecht 1987), have been increasingly replaced by a more nuanced picture. Reconciliation policies successfully addressing the opportunity cost of motherhood for highly educated women have reduced in Central-Eastern Europe and reversed the educational gradient of childlessness in the Nordic countries (see Jalovaara et al. 2019; Wood et al. 2014), but less so in other societies including the USA with lower prevalence of the dual-earner model (see Kreyenfeld and Konietzka 2017). As for men, education seems to matter less for whether to become a parent, unless indicating disadvantageous economic situation, especially unstable employment paths with experiences of unemployment and/or time-fixed contracts, increasing risk for childlessness, levels of gender traditionalism in the society notwithstanding (Keizer et al. 2008; Kreyenfeld and Konietzka 2017; Vignoli et al. 2012).

Female employment and earnings have thus become less of a hinder for entering motherhood while men's breadwinner capacity still matters for a couple having a first child. As the division of work becomes (more strongly) gendered among parents independently of their previous share of domestic tasks (see Schadler et al. 2017; Yavorsky et al. 2015 also for overview of studies of relevance), men's family involvement has gained importance, especially for couples' further childbearing. This has been increasingly acknowledged in research paying attention to fathers' care and/or housework engagement in addition to educational and employment

characteristics of parents in extending the family. A negative educational gradient has been found regarding second and third births for women in Central-Eastern Europe unlike other European countries (Wood et al. 2014), related to the higher opportunity cost (with respect to career advancement) for more highly educated mothers, the effect of which being reinforced by constraints to outsource domestic tasks along with gender traditional division of family responsibilities. Yet mothers' employment as such does not reduce the likelihood of second births there (Matysiak and Vignoli 2013) given the need of two earners to ensure a reasonable living standard for the family, whereas women's earnings diminish the chances of having another child in gender-traditional Southern Europe and Germany (Andersson et al. 2014; Matysiak and Vignoli 2013). With respect to multiple partner fertility, research has shown this being associated with low education especially, among both women and men in the Nordic countries and the USA (Hopcroft 2018; Jalovaara and Kreyenfeld 2020; Thomson et al. 2014), but even with high socioeconomic status among men in Norway (Lappegård and Rønsen 2013), and household tasks being shared more equally in stepfamilies across Europe than in first marriages (Snoeckx et al. 2008).

There is little research on educational pairings of couples and implications for childbearing. A relatively recent study (Nitsche et al. 2018; see also for overview of previous research) has however revealed that highly educated homogamous couples while postponing parenthood the most display highest second and third birth rates across Europe compared to other couples. At the same time, couples with a highly educated man and a less educated woman are least likely to have a second and further child despite entering parenthood early. Given that the latter educational pairing is in line with more traditional partnership patterns, the division of domestic and care responsibilities, although not directly addressed in the study, may also be more traditional in such couples than among two highly educated partners, which presents a feasible explanation to their lower rates of further childbearing. Other studies have indicated positive association between fathers' childcare and housework engagement and couples' likelihood to have a second child in the Nordic countries and the OECD (de Laat and Sevilla-Sanz 2011; Duvander et al. 2019; Oláh 2003), with a more U-shaped pattern seen for the USA (Torr and Short 2004).

Gender Roles and Partnership Dissolution

Women's rising economic independence being detrimental to family cohesion has been a prominent paradigm in economic theorizing (see especially Becker 1981) originating in trends of female employment and divorce increasing in tandem. The reasoning has pointed to wives' employment destabilizing marriages grounded in gender specialization and women's economic dependence on their spouses. The Second Demographic Transition framework has arrived to similar conclusion, considering employed women as forerunners in adopting new behaviors, such as the decision to interrupt an unhappy marriage, given their more liberal value orientation and disregard of social stigma (see Lesthaeghe 2010). A large body of empirical

research has sought to disentangle the mechanisms of the claimed positive association between women's socioeconomic status and partnership instability, focusing on the effects of educational attainment, employment and unemployment, and income. Similar aspects have been analyzed with respect to men in some studies, given implications of changes in women's role.

High educational attainment for women has been shown to increase the risk of divorce in gender traditional societies, like Italy and the Netherlands, whereas it has strengthened marital stability in the USA and Scandinavia, and men's high qualifications have been associated with reduced disruption risks independently of context (Kalmijn and Poortman 2006; Lyngstad and Jalovaara 2010). Evidence for the USA also suggests increasing stability of marriages among equally educated partners, and no effect on union dissolution of a woman being more educated than her husband (Schwartz and Han 2014), unlike high breakup risks for such couples in earlier marriage cohorts in the American context as well as in Europe (Blossfeld and Müller 2002). Wives' employment has been associated with higher divorce risks in gender-conservative European countries, such as Italy, Poland, and the Netherlands (Kalmijn and Poortman 2006; Vignoli et al. 2018), and for unhappy marriages in the USA (Sayer et al. 2011; Schoen et al. 2002), but with reducing the likelihood of a breakup in gender equal Scandinavian societies (Cooke et al. 2013). In the latter context, both the wife's and the husband's unemployment has been associated with increased dissolution risks (Lyngstad and Jalovaara 2010), unlike in the USA where only husband's unemployment had such effect (Sayer et al. 2011). Husband's higher income in a partnership has been shown to stabilize marriage, while wife's higher income has increased the risk of divorce in societies very different with respect to gender norms, such as the USA, Finland, and the Netherlands, and partners having similar income has strengthened cohabiting relationships (Brines and Joyner 1999; Jalovaara 2003; Kalmijn et al. 2007).

Arguments to study men's and women's contributions to unpaid work as well in a partnership has become increasingly influential in the literature (Cooke 2006; Greenstein 2000; Sayer and Bianchi 2000), based on the rationale that although female and male gender roles have not been changing at the same pace, gains of gender specialization have greatly diminished. While traditional gender division of domestic responsibilities once has been associated with greater partnership stability (Blossfeld and Müller 2002), this is no longer the case as research of the last decades has demonstrated. Fathers' housework and/or childcare input has been found to reduce the risk of partnership breakup, regardless of the female partners' employment status in the USA and various European countries alike, such as Germany, Sweden, Hungary, and the UK (Amato et al. 2007; Oláh 2001; Sigle-Rushton 2010). Even in the gender traditional context of Italy, men's domestic contribution has become a potent mediator in the association between women's employment and union disruption, the latter found to be detrimental for partnerships only in case of limited contribution to unpaid work by the male partner (Mencarini and Vignoli 2018). Studies have indicated that not only the actual division of domestic responsibilities affects risks for separation and divorce, but also its association with the perception of fairness, that is equity (Greenstein 1996; Thompson 1991), moderated

by gender ideology at the individual level in a particular macro context (Coltrane 2000; Lavee and Katz 2002). Consistency between gender role attitudes and the household division of labor practiced by the partners has been found crucial for relationship stability (Oláh and Gähler 2014), given the diversity of preferred gender arrangements in couple relationships.

Context Matters

The family and gender role changes experienced from the mid-twentieth century onward have been strongly connected to specific contexts in which they emerged and developed. As highlighted in the literature, addressing their interplay with structural factors, institutional settings, norms, values, and attitudes is necessary for a profound understanding of past, present, and future transitions.

Labor Market Changes, Division of Unpaid Work, and Reconciliation Policies

With respect to structural aspects of contexts shaping and shaped by family and gender role changes, three layers are focused at in the literature: the labor market, domestic responsibilities, and policies that facilitate work-life balance. The upsurge of women's labor force participation has been seen as the main driver of changes regarding these dimensions. The expansion of female gender role to incorporate economic provision, which upsets the balance of public-private spheres burdens laid on men and women respectively as established by the male breadwinner model, has been the point of departure both for the gender revolution theory and the multiple equilibria framework (Esping-Andersen and Billari 2015; Goldscheider et al. 2015). Trends toward "less family" in terms of fewer, later, and less stable marriages and postponed, low fertility emerged as initial responses in societies that were fore-runners regarding women's new role, notably the Nordic countries, spreading across Europe actual female employment levels notwithstanding, with similar development seen in the USA (Blossfeld 1995; Goldscheider and Waite 1991). Another key phenomenon recognized in the literature to strengthen both female labor force participation and new family patterns, especially in recent decades, is increasing economic uncertainty (Sayer and Bianchi 2000; Sobotka et al. 2011).

Women's extensive labor market engagement along with pronounced uncertainties in modern economies indeed demonstrates, as highlighted in the literature, the nonviability of the gender-specialized male breadwinner–female homemaker family (Oppenheimer 1994, 1997) which is increasingly replaced by the one and a half-earner and dual-earner models in advanced societies. The latter models, while better equipped to meet economic needs of a family, brought along challenges with respect to care and household tasks, long viewed as entirely women's domain (Saraceno and Keck 2011). Recognizing women's double burden, also called "the second shift" (Hochschild and Machung 1990) impinging their willingness for

family engagement, a strain of research has addressed the issue of gender equity with respect to the household division of work and family outcomes (as key contributions see McDonald 2000; Thompson 1991). Extensive empirical research has shown beneficial effects regarding fertility and partnership stability of men's engagement with their children and household tasks in various countries of Europe as well as the USA (Duvander et al. 2019; Kaufman 2000; Oláh 2001, 2003; Puur et al. 2008; Torr and Short 2004), but causality is difficult to prove. Fathers increasingly caring for their children has more lately also been specifically linked to labor market uncertainties due to economic crisis, especially if the mother has more stable labor force position (see Boyer et al. 2017, also for overview of this literature). In general, however, parents have been most likely to adhere to traditional labor division in the home independently of context, whereas childless couples have exhibited a large variety of arrangements from fully to not at all sharing paid and domestic responsibilities (DeRose et al. 2019). Central and East-European as well as Southern European societies have been primary examples of preserving mothers' exclusive responsibility for the domestic sphere, unlike more or less explicit expectations on men's input in Northern and Western Europe and North America. In any case, a convergence has been noted with respect to gender differences in housework over the past five decades, although mainly driven by a decline in women's housework time with limited changes along with less cross-country variation for men (Altintas and Sullivan 2017).

Various policy measures possibly influencing family formation and divorce propensities have also received substantial research attention, based on an economic rationale laid out by Becker (1981), among others, as paid work has increasingly become an important aspect of the female gender role. Labor force participation of medium and highly educated women, and that of mothers compared to women without children, has been shown to be especially responsive to whether and how family policies facilitate the combination of employment and family responsibilities (Andringa et al. 2015). A number of studies highlighted fathers' engagement in the care for their children being substantially shaped by policy designs, eligibility to sufficient financial compensation while on leave, along with accommodating workplace cultures (Fox et al. 2009, Hobson and Fahlén 2009; Mussino et al. 2019). Reconciliation policies have been found to play a role in the cross-national variation in gender role attitudes affecting feelings of ambivalence regarding gender appropriate behavior with respect to paid work and care (Sjöberg 2010). As for the impacts of social policy on fertility, a positive association with public childcare provision has often been shown (Rindfuss and Brewster 1996; Baizan et al. 2016) along with (smaller) beneficial effects for in-cash and leave benefits (Gauthier 2007; Luci-Greulich and Thévenon 2013). The debate between skeptics and proponents is, however, still ongoing given difficulties to prove causation. Reconciliation policies also have been found to matter for the link between female employment, and female and male inactivity on the one hand and divorce propensity on the other hand (Cooke et al. 2013; Härkönen 2015; Lyngstad and Jalovaara 2010).

Norms, Values, Attitudes

In parallel with the structural changes, new developments have been noted also in the normative context. A strain of studies have revealed that as the male breadwinner family has given way to family models that accommodate female labor market aspirations even after entering parenthood, women's support for gender specialization in marriage has declined in modern societies over the last decades of the twentieth century. Gender role attitudes have become more and more egalitarian up until the mid-1990s, and men's primary provider role has been increasingly questioned in the USA and Europe alike (Cunningham 2008; Fortin 2005). While women's dependence on their spouses, seen also at the societal level, has been shown to discourage egalitarian attitudes among both women and men (Baxter and Kane 1995), the spread of female employment has brought along growing acceptance of egalitarian gender norms as an increasing share of the population has had both first-hand experience of mothers in paid work, and acquired higher educational attainment, per se reducing support for gender traditionalism (Boehnke 2011; Ciabattari 2001). Policies have also been seen to matter for the approval of gender egalitarian attitudes in the population, notwithstanding mixed findings with respect to particular measures. Cross-country studies have found childcare provision for children below age 3 both to strengthen egalitarian gender attitudes and not being associated with such attitudes, and lack of effect of parental leave along with inverted U-shape relationship between the length of leave and gender egalitarianism, whereas workplace flexible arrangements and tax support for the dual earner–dual carer model have been shown to foster gender egalitarian attitudes (Lomazzi et al. 2019; Stickney and Konrad 2012).

Value changes have been related to a large extent to cohort replacement as well as a convergence in attitudes across educational levels with female and maternal labor force participation increasingly turning normative in advanced societies (Brooks and Bolzendahl 2004; Fortin 2005). Men have been found to hold less egalitarian attitudes than women independently of context, related to a slower pace of decline regarding their approval of the male provider ideology (Boehnke 2011; Ciabattari 2001; Fodor and Balogh 2010). With respect to gender norms influencing the division of domestic work within couples, gender traditionalism has been seen to characterize parents in general, with large variation in labor sharing among childless couples due to higher level of acceptance of egalitarian gender roles in Northern- and West-European societies and North America, but much skepticism toward gender egalitarian views in Central-Eastern Europe and Southern Europe (DeRose et al. 2019). In the latter contexts, Germany included, equity has been seen to be interpreted in terms of investing similar amount of time into paid work as into domestic responsibilities rather than sharing tasks equally (Hamplová et al. 2019; Köppen and Trappe 2019).

A strand of research related to the stalled gender revolution (see England et al. 2020 for an overview) has sought to look more in depth in norms and attitudinal changes over the 1990s compared to both earlier and later periods. For the USA, a new cultural frame has been shown to emerge then, based on a combination of

feminist egalitarianism and traditional familism. In this “work-family accommodation” frame, emphasis has been laid on women’s right to choose stay-at-home motherhood for their children’s sake as well as to preserve their own mental health given intensified time-demands at the workplace (Cotter et al. 2011). Thus separate-sphere essentialist ideology has been endorsed once again, similar to the male breadwinner model, but at the same time rejecting support for husband’s career as justification for such a choice. Analysis of gender role attitudes across Europe from the 1990s onward has revealed that the rapid decline in gender traditionalism has not been accompanied by the entire population embracing egalitarian views. Instead, three classes of nontraditional views emerged based on different combinations of egalitarianism, gender essentialism, and individual choice, each prevailing at various extents in a given country (Knight and Brinton 2017). Liberal egalitarians, the typically largest group, represent the total opposite of gender traditionalism; egalitarian familists, most common in Central-Eastern Europe, combine support for egalitarianism at the workplace with essentialist traditional family values, whereas flexible egalitarians support both traditional and nontraditional arrangements privileging autonomous choice in enacting gender roles. Growth in the two latter views with potential support for more traditional family values and adherence to women’s familial roles has been suggested to explain that the gender revolution has stalled, but egalitarian gender attitudes have strengthened again slightly in the 2000s (Cotter et al. 2011; Fortin 2005; Knight and Brinton 2017).

What About Migrants?

Migrants and their descendants constitute an increasing proportion of the population both in Europe and the USA. The presence of large immigrant groups with origins in traditional societies with respect to family and gender role patterns (Castles et al. 2014) is likely to have implications for present and future family developments and changes in gender norms and attitudes in the host countries. Single-country studies being however informative, comparative research seems to be better equipped to reveal the importance of context for various migrant groups’ work-family practices within and across countries.

A few recent studies analyzing at least four countries each have found various partnership formation and dissolution patterns between different immigrant groups within the same country as well as similar patterns across countries for the same immigrant group (Kulu and Hannemann 2016). More specifically, early and high levels of marriages and low prevalence of nonmarital cohabitation and of partnership breakup have been shown for migrants from gender-conservative areas, such as Turkey, South Asia, and the Maghreb region in their European host countries. In contrast, Caribbeans, Sub-Saharan Africans, and Latin Americans have exhibited modern family patterns, associated with the Second Demographic Transition, in the destination societies. Controlling for educational attainment has not changed the findings for either groups, highlighting the importance of socialization in the country of origin. Descendants’ family formation behavior has often shown an “in-between”

pattern partly resembling the natives' and partly the first-generation migrants' behavior. This indicates that both the minority subculture and the mainstream society influence partnership dynamics among the children and grandchildren of immigrants, with the strength of these dimensions varying across migrant groups, depending on the degree of intermarriage as well as intergenerational adaptation processes, seen also for the USA (Hannemann et al. 2018, 2020; Smock and Schwartz 2020).

Due to low or declining fertility for Europe and the USA, respectively, migrants' and their descendants' childbearing behavior is of increasing importance for keeping fertility at sustainable levels. Those with high-fertility-country origin have been more likely to exhibit fertility levels exceeding that of the natives, even though their fertility has become more similar to the majority population's in the host country across migrant generations (Kulu et al. 2017; Smock and Schwartz 2020). This again reflects the influence of socialization on the one hand as many in these groups have been raised in large families, and a sustained minority subculture as well as structural and cultural assimilation to the mainstream society for subsequent migrant generations on the other hand. Such attitudinal assimilation has been found also with respect to gender norms and female labor force participation among second-generation migrants in the USA (Muchomba et al. 2020) and in various European countries (see Kitterod and Nadim 2020, also for an overview of relevant studies). Hence, the fact that an increasing share of the population is of non-native origin may not necessarily hinder developments toward gender equality in advanced countries. However, an increasing supply of migrant women from gender-conservative cultures may upset recent patterns of assortative mating and increase chances for (especially native) men with traditional gender norms, nearly excluded from contemporary marriage markets, to find a partner (Maffioli et al. 2014). That can weaken but not halt the progress to gender equality.

Summary

The chapter has presented a comprehensive review of the literature on family and gender role changes in Europe and the USA from the 1960s onward. Taking the notion of gendered life courses as the point of departure, the complex interplay between family developments and the transition of women's and men's roles in the society and the family has been addressed at both the macro- and micro levels, also highlighting the importance of contexts. The main theoretical approaches with focus on these related transitions, namely the gender revolution and the multiple equilibria frameworks, have pointed to women's growing labor market participation being a main driver behind family and gender role changes. In addition, as revealed in the empirical literature of more recent decades, emerging and prevailing economic uncertainties have reinforced the male breadwinner family constituted by a married couple with children being increasingly replaced by family diversity accommodating women's new role as economic providers and men's newly seen engagement in family responsibilities.

New patterns of assortative mating, driven by women's increasing educational attainment based on their labor market aspirations and men's weakening labor force position, have contributed to gender relations becoming more egalitarian over time. However, while women's high education and own earnings have been increasingly seen as beneficial for family formation, reducing family stability only in gender traditional contexts, the importance of men's economic provider capacity has hardly diminished with respect to entering and maintaining partnerships as well as parenthood. Gender egalitarianism has been found more likely to characterize childless couples' division of work, with traditional arrangements prevailing among parents independently of societal gender role attitudes. Also the role of policies for family and gender role changes has been highlighted in the literature, even though with mixed findings regarding particular measures. As for developments in norms, values, and attitudes, it has been shown that although traditionalism has declined over time, elements of gender essentialism have been increasingly endorsed in new cultural frames along with emphasis on individual choice in recent decades, referred to as stalling the gender revolution. The fact that an increasing share of the population is of non-native origin in advanced societies has been, in any case, shown not to hinder developments toward gender equality, envisioned to strengthen the family.

Cross-References

- ▶ [Fair and Unfair Income Inequality](#)
- ▶ [Fertility and Female Labor Force Participation](#)
- ▶ [Gender and Income Inequality](#)
- ▶ [Gender and Intrahousehold Issues](#)
- ▶ [Gender and Precarious Work](#)
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- ▶ [Gender, Financial Crisis, and Labor Markets](#)
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- ▶ [Understanding Inequality Within Households](#)
- ▶ [Wealth Inequalities](#)

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