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Preliminary: Comments Welcome

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Abstract

Twenty years ago NICHD issued a request for proposals that resulted in the National Survey of Families and Households, a unique survey that has provided valuable data to a wide range of family scholars. This paper describes the efforts of an interdisciplinary group to build on the progress enabled by the NSFH and many other theoretical and methodological innovations since then. The paper reports on a new NICHD-funded project to develop plans for research and data collection to address the central question of what causes family change and variation. We outline the group's initial assessments of orienting frameworks, key aspects of family life to study, and theoretical and methodological challenges for research on family change.

Introduction

The Decade Reviews published by *JMF* provide a valuable opportunity for scholars to take stock of the progress we have made in understanding families and to think about the challenges that we must address for continued progress. A less frequent occurrence is a mandate from a federal funding agency to evaluate where we have been and propose where we should go to learn more about how families work. Over twenty years ago the Demographic and Behavioral Sciences Branch of the National Institutes of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) issued a request for proposals to “provide an assessment of the state-of-the-art of research in the family and household structure area, and recommendations regarding the content and strategy of a large scale data collection effort on the causes and consequences of changing family and household structure” (RFP No. NICHD-DBS-83-8, May 1, 1983, II-1, p. 5). The end result of that RFP was the launching of the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH), the most widely used data set to study the family during the past two decades.

In December 2002, NICHD issued another request for proposals: This time the charge to researchers was to “develop a model for a coordinated program of research and data collection for the study of family that would ...[address the questions]: a) What factors and processes produce family change in populations over time? b) What factors and processes influence variation in family change and behavior among racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, regional, and cultural groups, and among men and women?” (RFP NICHD 2003-03, Dec. 10, 2002, pp. C-1, C-2). In October 2003, two decades after planning began for the NSFH, a group of researchers at Duke University, University of Maryland, and University of California – Los Angeles, were awarded funds to work with NICHD to develop new models for understanding family variation and change. Since that time, researchers from Northwestern have joined the core planning

group. The charge from NICHD is an ambitious one that asks for plans beyond those necessary for an NSFH-like survey.

The charge requires a broad view of the methods and materials for studying change, a bold and inclusive approach to the theoretical developments that can inform an understanding of family change and variation, and a disciplined effort to integrate past contributions with proposals for new research. While the core group members are all centrally in the demographic community, our disciplinary orientations include anthropology, economics, psychology, and sociology. Yet a single group of researchers cannot address these NICHD-established tasks without the assistance of the broad community of family scholars. We are drawing on the expertise of others from both inside and outside the demographic community to ensure that the widest set of ideas is considered in shaping this integrated research program. The remainder of this paper summarizes our initial efforts to identify central challenges to new theories and outline an agenda of research on family change and variation. The description of our project that follows must be read in light of the evolving nature of our efforts: It is a starting point for what we hope will be a wider general discussion of the challenges of developing new models of family variation and change.

Two Decades of Progress

A number of family trends motivated the 1983 RFP that resulted in the NSFH: delayed marriage, smaller families, increasing numbers of mothers who combine paid work with caring for children, high divorce rates, cohabitation, and improvements in life expectancy that allow parents to see their children age through adulthood and their grandchildren form new families of their own. In 1983, existing data were inadequate for fully *describing* these key changes in family processes and the effects of these changes on individuals. Researchers wanted to know

more about family caregiving and childrearing, family extension and inclusion of nonfamily members, the division of household and family labor, and exchanges of time and money between households. The NICHD contract was awarded to Larry Bumpass and James Sweet at the University of Wisconsin. Together with their colleagues at Wisconsin and across the country, Bumpass and Sweet developed plans for a new omnibus survey that would collect data on family life unavailable in then existing sources. The result was the now well-known National Survey of Families and Households, a data set that remains a staple for research by family scholars.

The first wave of the NSFH was conducted in 1987-88, a 5-year follow-up conducted in 1992-94 and a third wave conducted in 2001-2002. The survey includes information about family members who co-reside as well as some kin, such as divorced parents, who no longer live together. NSFH also collected information about household members who were not related to the respondent by then-conventional definitions of family membership, including cohabiting partners. The longitudinal study design combined with the detailed life-history information obtained from respondents about their living arrangements in childhood, departures and returns to the parental home, and histories of marriage, cohabitation, education, fertility, and employment recognizes that the quality of family relationships are a function of past experiences as well as contemporary arrangements. Finally, the design interviews multiple members of the same household to provide insight into the different perspectives of husbands, wives, parents and adult children. Sweet and Bumpass worked closely with the broad community of family researchers to cover a wide variety of domains of family life and to allow researchers from a variety of theoretical perspectives to use the data (<http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/nsfh/>).

Family researchers have learned a great deal from the NSFH. But once there was expanded description of what was happening in families, understanding the mechanisms of change and the variability in family processes across groups became even more important. In 1983, the new theory of home economics was just beginning to spread beyond economics. Many other theories, such as neo-institutional theory, social network theory and theories of ideational change, were in their infancy. Our understanding of identification in causal models was more limited, as were empirical methods for testing modeling assumptions. Data collection was primarily interviewer assisted or self-administered paper and pencil surveys. Researchers rarely used other survey methods and nonsurvey approaches (e.g. administrative data or experiments) for large-scale projects. During the past two decades, there have been innovations in all these areas: data collection methods, analytic techniques aimed at causal inference, and theory.

Also, new questions about the family have emerged along with intellectual developments in several disciplines. Today, the role of biology and biological constraints receives much more attention because of both improvements in the measurement of biomarkers and significant advances in theories about their role in behavior. The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health), for example, collects various biomarkers to enhance studies of teenagers' resilience, (<http://www.cpc.unc.edu/projects/addhealth>). Other studies couple surveys with other types of data collection, such as ethnographic components, to provide a richer understanding of the context in which families live (for example, Welfare, Children and Families: A Three City Study, http://www.jhu.edu/~welfare/welfare_sum.htm) or match self-reported information about such things as work histories with administrative data such as Social Security Records (as in the Health and Retirement Study, <http://hrsonline.isr.umich.edu/>).

Families that were largely absent from analyses 20 years ago, for instance immigrant families and gay and lesbian families, have become more important as have persistent, and in some cases, increasing, differences across racial and ethnic groups in family patterns. New theories, new data, new analytic tools and new circumstances in American society have lead family researchers to ask questions not often posed in the past. How does the increase in life expectancy affect family life when four generations may be alive at the same time? To what extent are children and parents of cohabiting partners treated as part of the family? Why are marriage and parenthood linked for some race-ethnic and economic groups but not for others?

All these factors – new questions about family life, new developments in theory and method, the evolution of a number of large scale research projects tapping aspects of family life and pointing the way to possible methodological innovation – form the back drop for our project. We begin with a basic question about family life, proceed to outline four orienting conceptual frameworks, and then discuss the application of new theory and methods to unanswered questions in five key aspects of family life.

Project Overview and Strategy

The most basic question we ask is: Why do individuals organize into family units? Understanding why families exist and what they do guides our consideration of the factors and processes that may produce family change and variation. Interdisciplinary collaboration is essential to progress in understanding families. At least five disciplines provide major theories on why human beings organize into family units: Biology, Psychology, Economics, Sociology, and Anthropology. Not surprisingly, each discipline tends to emphasize the factors that the field understands best. Biologists emphasize the value of the family for the survival of human genes and the role of evolution in “hardwiring” human beings in ways that make family life attractive.

Psychologists apply a developmental lens to individual processes that affect family life such as identity formation, cognitive functioning, personality, and interpersonal relationships.

Economists emphasize individual choice and the benefits that accrue to individuals from family life that are impossible or more costly without it. Sociologists recognize that this choice is constrained by institutions and norms, inequality in the distribution of resources, power relationships, and the structure and composition of social networks. Finally, anthropologists focus on the meanings individuals assign to their choices, on the role that the family plays in the culture and organization of society as a whole, and on the competing interests that foster some family forms over others.

Although these disciplinary views are often interpreted as competing perspectives, our project stresses that family research has much to gain by integrating these views and exploiting the complementary nature of these explanations. Any project with interdisciplinary goals must consider how to translate theories that are discipline-specific into ideas that are accessible across fields. Our strategy is to begin with four orienting, conceptual frameworks: household and family decision-making, the role of biology in family and fertility processes, individual development across the life course, and the role of context in shaping family behavior and patterns. We then apply these to five key domains, or aspects, of family life: choices about entry and exit from couple relationships including cohabitation, marriage and divorce; decisions about when to have children and whether to have them within marriage; the relationship between childhood circumstances and adult outcomes; family relationships that cross household boundaries; and the changing interface between work and family life. U.S. families are the focus of our efforts. Yet explanations for family behaviors in the U.S. require comparisons across social and cultural

contexts – contemporary and historical – to locate the characteristics that are common aspects of family life and those that are not.

Orienting, Conceptual Frameworks

Our approach highlights four conceptual frameworks. We consider these frameworks at a reasonably high level of abstraction but include concrete examples of theoretical and empirical challenges that must be addressed to advance understanding of the causes of family variation and change. The frameworks echo aspects of the disciplinary foci described above, but we attempt to demonstrate where connections between the foci offer the potential for innovation in new research on families. All of the frameworks emphasize the problems of establishing causation. We address this at the end of the section.

Household and Family Decision-Making

There are many potential benefits to participation in family life. Families can provide some goods and services more efficiently than individuals or the market. Moreover, families may resolve differences among members' tastes and interests and negotiate compromises better than other groups because family members care about one another and know each other well, have long-term commitments to each other or because they share a common set of values or common understanding of their obligations to one another. There are also potential costs to family life, arising from compromises because individual family members have different preferences and needs. Understanding how individuals within families coordinate and make decisions, how they negotiate compromises and trade the perceived costs and benefits (now and in the future) of different choices lies at the heart of our attempt to better understand the family. The most dominant model of family decision-making (from neoclassical economics) assumes one member – the head – makes all decisions and does it in the best interest of family members

(Becker, 1965, 1981). While the model has provided a theoretical foundation for a broad array of important insights into the workings of the family, it is predicated on a set of assumptions that are difficult to reconcile with the realities of social and demographic behavior. Any decision that involves negotiation between two actors with divergent preferences or goals, e.g., the decision to divorce or leave the nest, can be difficult to model in the framework of this “unitary” family or household. Moreover, the empirical predictions of the model have been rejected in a wide array of settings and the recent theoretical literature has highlighted the individuality of each member of a family (McElroy and Horney, 1981; Blumberg and Coleman, 1989; Lundberg and Pollak, 1993; Chiappori, 1988, 1992, 2000; Browning and Chiappori, 1998).

Much of the theoretical literature has focused on couples who are assumed to bargain over the distribution of resources with the relative “power” of the man and woman governing the distribution of the “family surplus.” Bargaining and decision-making involving other actors, e.g., children, is much less developed. Children’s role in family decisions probably increases through childhood and adolescence as they begin to establish independence and consider moving away from their parents’ home. Adult children’s decisions about how to care for older parents may involve even more actors if siblings coordinate this responsibility among themselves and with their parents.

The distinction between families and households is also key, particularly for empirical research. The extent to which family members co-reside is an outcome of family decision-making. It reflects decisions about marital disruption, young adults choosing to strike out on their own and older adults living with their children. Most surveys are household-based and so, apart from important exceptions like NSFH and the Family Life Surveys, very little is known about non-co-resident family members. This has seriously impeded making progress on

understanding family change and variation.

Economic models of family decision-making would be enriched by incorporating insights about the process of conflict and conflict resolution from psychology (e.g., Gottman, 1994), the role of biology from genetics, the importance of social context and the environment in shaping behavior, and greater care in the measurement of “tastes.” There are at least four key questions and challenges that must be addressed with regard to decision making in families. First, what are the unique features of “family” as an institution that coordinates the sometimes conflicting goals of a collection of individuals? How do family members resolve conflicts and enhance the benefits of family membership as compared to membership in other social groups, e.g., clubs or work units? Second, how are the benefits and costs of family membership distributed within families and what explains inequality among family members? Third, how do norms and other aspects of the social and economic context affect the aspects of family life that are perceived as choices and the process by which families make decisions about these choices? Fourth, what study designs and measurement strategies will best capture variation in who makes family decisions, the criteria used to make decisions, and power differences among family members?

Role of Biology in Families and Fertility

People are biological creatures, inheriting an evolutionary history, endocrine process, and physiological form. This biological make-up may help us to understand human emotions, physical constraints and other factors that are important for family interactions. It is difficult to think about family dynamics without thinking about the “love” family members have for each other. It is difficult to think about marital fidelity without thinking about each partner’s “impulse control.” And it is difficult to think about marital conflict without thinking about “aggression.” While evolutionary biologists provide well-developed theories on the relationship between

emotions and family choice, increasingly, microbiologists and neurobiologists are finding specific pathways associated with these emotions. New work by neurobiologists shows that activity in specific parts of the brain is associated with feelings of “romantic love” and work by endocrinologists suggests that changes in specific hormone levels may be associated with “romantic attachment.” For example, dopamine and norepinephrine are associated with animal attraction and may be associated with the sensation of human romantic passion (Fisher, 2004).


While the use of microbiological and neurological data to study behavior is an exciting new approach, most of the studies remain descriptive. For example, bioassay technology is innovative and useful, especially when incorporated into longitudinal survey data collection but, bioassay data share many of the shortcomings of standard social science data collected in surveys. Typically, endocrine levels are measured at a point in time. Although there have been some experiments in which subjects were manipulated to measure response levels of endocrines, this type of bioassay collection often has not been linked to survey data. In addition, because endocrine levels are both *related to* behavior, and are *affected by* behavior, causality is extremely difficult to establish. The use of bioassay data in family research could benefit greatly from more careful observational and experimental analyses.

We see the incorporation of biological approaches into the study of family variation and change as an important challenge, in part because of the inherent difficulties of crossing the social and “natural” science divide. Yet bridging this gap is essential for theoretical and empirical advances in understanding families. We ask how evolutionary biology, behavioral endocrinology and other biological approaches can be more tightly integrated into behavioral theories of family formation, fertility, and other family behaviors such as the division of labor between women and men. A particular goal is to develop testable implications of theories and to

do this in conjunction with improvements in the measurement of important biological constructs.

Individual Development and Family Life

Psychologists are perhaps fifteen years ahead of family researchers in investigating how the nexus of biological constraints, social context and individual experiences collectively contribute to the development of personality and capacity. In describing individual development, psychologists no longer argue “nature versus nurture” but instead modern psychology casts individual development as “nature through nurture” (see Collins et al., 2000). Three important questions that link family choice with individual development are: How do individuals arrive at adulthood with the individual capacities and constraints that will lead to or limit healthy relationships? What role do (family) relationships play in the social-psychological development of adults? What mechanisms alter social-psychological functioning in adulthood? To answer these developmental questions, researchers must address a number of related “real world” questions about families. For example, what makes people happy and healthy in relationships? Why do some marriages function well and others breakup?

A concern with human functioning over the entire life span requires investigation into the ages or life stages at which competencies are typically acquired (for instance, when do children learn to trust?) and consideration of *how* these competencies are acquired (e.g., through social influences, childrearing practices, etc.). Childrearing appears to be particularly important to understand for individual functioning in adult relationships. While there is considerable ation across individuals in physiological, cognitive, and affective make up, no doubt affected by many sources (including an individual’s family environment), there is substantial continuity of characteristics within individuals over time (Caspi, 2000; Chase-Lansdale, Wakschlag, & Brooks-Gunn, 1995; Duncan & Magnuson, forthcoming). Genetic constraints and consistent

environmental influences account for this stability. Yet continuity over the life course in individuals' personality does not mean that paths are set at birth. In fact, central concerns in the developmental approach are to determine the degree of change that is possible as individuals age and the factors that account for this change. Both experimental and non-experimental evidence is accruing about mechanisms that can affect family function and affect social-psychological function of individuals.

Life course theorists, and the empirical work that flows from this tradition, emphasize the interconnections among transitions in multiple domains of life (e.g., work and family life) and socialization or anti-social behavior. Rich description of individuals' histories of transitions and the effects of past experiences on individuals' later lives provide insight into the periods when changes in multiple domains of life (family, work, health) offer the possibility of change from the path an individual is following or reinforcement of this path (e.g., Laub and Sampson's (2003) emphasis on the link between marriages and desistance from crime).

To advance understanding of family variation and change requires study designs that are longitudinal, to observe changes in individuals over time, as well as intergenerational to capture the effects of the strengths and weaknesses that parents pass on to their children. Designs for new research also must incorporate the types of variation within and between families that psychologists have identified as important. New designs should address the critical role played by genetic factors and various biomarker levels in shaping individuals' reactions to their social and physical environment. Using data on adopted children and twins who vary in their degree of relatedness may help specify these "nature through nurture" processes (Caspi et al., 2004; O'Connor, Caspi, DeFries, and Plomin, 2000; Collins et al., 2000, and Rutter, 1998, 2003). Broadening the focus of traditional designs beyond parents and children to include other social

actors who affect individuals' development (step kin, peers, and even co-workers) is likely to advance knowledge, although at the same time it increases the cost and logistical challenges scholars face. Finally, researchers should consider the feasibility of designing randomized experiments that assign individuals or families to interventions that offer the chance of more rigorously identifying sources of variation and change (Cowan & Cowan, 2002).

Contexts Shaping Families and Family Change

A central theme in the social history of the modern period is the view that there has been a progression from familial to non-familial modes of organization that removes the family from many of the functions it served in earlier times (Coleman, 1993; Hernandez, 1993; Popenoe, 1993; Thornton and Fricke, 1989). For example, schools socialize children; paid labor markets supplant farm- or household-based family economic production; and social welfare programs diminish the need for support from extended kin. However, this progression from family to non-family based modes of organization enlarges rather than limits the domains that require attention in any study of family change. Increasingly, to understand what families provide to members, one also must understand what other institutions provide. None of these non-familial modes of organization completely replaces the family. Rather, these contexts help set the boundaries within which family decisions are made.

Thus, three central challenges are: (1) to identify the relevant "contexts" for the study of family variation and change; (2) to determine the best ways to measure these contexts; and (3) to assess how to isolate the causal influences of these contexts on changes in family structure and family-related behaviors. Relevant aspects of context include social institutions, culture, social interaction, technology, macroeconomic and market forces, geography and the physical environment, and laws, regulations, and social policies. This is a long list, but it is not exhaustive.

A complete discussion of even these factors is beyond the scope of this paper. Here we discuss just three important contextual domains – culture, technological change, and laws and regulations – to illustrate the importance of context in understanding family variation across groups and over time.

Culture can be characterized as a shared meaning system that includes beliefs, values, and social norms. Culture influences the goals individuals set for themselves, the range of legitimate means for achieving these goals, and the cognitive categories that individuals use to make sense of the world, their own actions, and the actions of others around them. For example, changing ideology about the rights of women that accompanies the structural shift in their position within the economic, legal and political systems has increased the legitimacy of women's choice of childlessness especially when there is mismatch in rates of change in familial and non-familial settings (McDonald, 2000; Morgan and King, 2001). A challenge for research on family and fertility change in the United States is to identify race-ethnic and immigrant group differences in “repertoires” or “cultures” that influence options that individuals and groups think are possible for family behavior (e.g., whether it is acceptable to have a child outside of marriage or for an older, widowed mother to live alone instead of with adult children).

Technological change has profound implications for family behavior and family structure. Technology frequently changes norms by undermining their rationale or function. For example, new birth control technology may have undermined norms against premarital sexual activity in many countries by weakening the link between sex and pregnancy. In this way, technology is a distal cause; it produces change in family structure and behavior through its ability to change social institutions. And technological change can also change the importance of other constraints. For example, assisted reproductive technologies may alleviate to some degree physiological constraints on the timing of childbearing in women's lives.

Laws and regulations have an obvious impact on family formation and behavior. Laws define permissible behavior concerning marriage, cohabitation, and sexual activity. They define the legal rights and responsibilities of spouses in marriage to each other and to children. Moreover, they govern the process of divorce, and its economic and social consequences for families. Labor market regulation, tax policies, and social welfare benefits affect the level of earnings inequality at a point in time and across the life course, the level of employment protection, and the unemployment rate. They also affect the stability of a family's standard of living over time and the level of access to health services. Finally, family-related social welfare policies affect the cost of children through direct transfers, tax credits, or day care and educational subsidies. Taken together, the structure of law, regulation and social welfare policy are relevant for virtually every aspect of family structure and behavior.

Among the challenges in studying family change is determining the relevant contexts that affect and are affected by family behaviors and then determining how best to measure them. Indicators for some contextual factors are more readily available than for others. Researchers often can access administrative data from "national accounting systems." Dates of enactment and provisions of laws are often available, although it can be difficult to track how rapidly changes filter through the administrative and enforcement system and consistent measurement across time or across levels of geography is often lacking. Contextual measurement of the physical environment is only now beginning to be exploited (such as air quality and exposure to other environmental hazards). Recent advances by ethnographers in anthropology and sociology who describe rigorously how individuals understand the world around them, particularly the choices available to them and their perception of the normative value of these choices, provide a basis for improvements in measures of the cultural context in quantitative studies, such as surveys. Yet

there are some dimensions of context, culture being perhaps one, where determining how and what to measure is extremely important but also quite difficult. Finally, although the measurement problems pose challenges, the primary challenge in this domain is producing both theory and data that will help isolate the causal effects of context on family behavior. Causality is often murky because individuals have a degree of choice about the contexts in which they operate and collective actions on the part of individuals (e.g., more nonmarital unions or childbearing) may, over time, cause changes in context (e.g., norms about marriage). Although the difficulties with establishing a causal link between contexts and family behaviors are well understood, the solutions to these problems are imperfect and require much greater attention.

Causal Inference and Family Change

The frameworks we describe emphasize different theoretical approaches to families, but common to all is a concern with the ability to draw inferences about *why* families differ. Standards of explanation and criteria for establishing causation vary among disciplines. Therefore a multi-pronged approach in new research is essential.

Our efforts to understand family variation and change are informed by two broad approaches to causation. In one researchers explain family behavior by emphasizing the distinction between individuals' choices to behave in a certain way, for instance, deciding to get pre-marital counseling or moving to a better neighborhood, and the *effects* of participation in counseling or living in a good neighborhood. To use statistical language, these efforts seek "exogenous" sources of variation to try to pin down causal effects. We highlighted this problem in our consideration of family contexts, but it plagues researchers using other orienting frameworks as well. Researchers use a range of designs, including randomized treatment-control designs (e.g., Newhouse, 1993; Cowan and Cowan, 2002), observational data that exploit

naturally occurring variation, such as twin births or miscarriages to assess effects of teenage childbearing on mothers' welfare (Bronars and Grogger, 1994; Hotz, McElroy, and Sanders, 1997), or variation from changes over time or space in policies about welfare benefits or custody laws that affect how family members spend time and money (Rubalcava and Thomas, 2004; Seltzer, 1998). Statistical innovations also have improved efforts to establish causation in this tradition (e.g., matching "treatment" and "controls;" see Heckman, LaLonde, and Smith, 1999; Rosenbaum and Rubin, 1983).

A second approach to questions about why families differ emphasizes individuals' own explanations for their family arrangements. Listening to peoples' reasons for why they live as they do – why they are single or married, parents or not – and their accounts of the factors that influence them provides insight into cultural aspects of family change (e.g., Fricke, 2003). For instance, fathers' explanations for why they married and had children point to the necessity of considering employment, being a husband, and father as a "package deal" (Townsend, 2002). A successful integrated framework for explaining family variation and change must combine this with efforts to use the logic of experimental design and statistical analysis.

Key Aspects of Family Life

Beginning with these four orienting frameworks – family decision-making, attention to the role of biology, a developmental perspective on family life, and a focus on contexts that shape family change – and with our attention on causation, we hope to make progress on the conceptual development that must form the theoretical foundation for a comprehensive, interdisciplinary plan of study of family change and variation. Yet innovations in the conceptual building blocks of theories of family change also require empirical tests. We specify five substantive topics that draw on the overarching conceptual frameworks, but that also require

theorizing at a mid-level range. These topics are important aspects of family life and have been identified by interdisciplinary groups, such as the National Academy of Sciences, as key concerns for understanding families and the reproduction of society. We consider: 1. Union Formation and Dissolution; 2. Why Have Children? Biological and Social Constraints on Reproduction; 3. Caring for the next Generation: Families' Effects on Children's Wellbeing; 4. Intergenerational Relationships: Kin Obligations throughout Adulthood; 5. Family and (Paid and Unpaid) Work. In addition, these domains are a starting point that builds on contemporary policy debates about family variation and change.

Union Formation and Dissolution

Marriage has been the primary setting for childbearing and child rearing in the United States, both historically and continuing to the present. Marriage facilitates the division of labor between spouses, encourages the pooling of resources and investment in children and other public goods, and reduces the risks involved in long term exchanges, particularly the economic risks that married women incur by limiting labor force participation while raising young children. Marriage confers a set of rights and responsibilities on both husbands and wives; many of these rights are codified by law, and all are reinforced by norms and common social understandings.

Nonetheless, the incidence and durability of marriages and the link between childbearing and other family activities have undergone significant changes in the United States and in many other countries (Cherlin, 1992). Men and women increasingly delay entry into marriage. High percentages of African Americans and those with few economic resources never marry. Marriage no longer represents a binding lifetime commitment for many. Childbearing and rearing are no

longer restricted to marriage. All of these changes in the institution of marriage heighten the potential conflicts of interest between spouses as well as among prospective partners.

Family scholars and policy makers recognize the challenges of understanding the causes and effects of changes in marriage, cohabitation, and divorce. The theme of the annual meeting of the National Council on Family Relations in 2003 was “What is the Future of Marriage?” and *JMF* is publishing a symposium on marriage this fall. The U.S. Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics has sponsored two conferences on “Counting Couples” in the past 3 years, and several recent European and Asian conferences have been organized on the topic of marriage. At the same time, policy initiatives by federal and state governments to foster marriage and to improve the quality and stability of marriage, as well as the national debate about same-sex marriage, support the choice of union formation and dissolution as a key topic for understanding and modeling family variation and change.

Although the trends and differentials in union formation and dissolution are reasonably well documented, there is no consensus about the causes of the trends and differentials (Waite et al., 2000; Booth and Crouter, 2002; Casper and Bianchi, 2002; Smock and Gupta, 2002; Wu, 2000; Seltzer, 2003). At present, the field is characterized by a set of plausible theories that provide sometimes powerful interpretations of these trends. These include: cultural or ideational shifts; changes in the “gains to marriage;” changes in “trust,” norms about fairness and bargaining in interpersonal relationships; shifts in the normative and structural supports for marriage as a social institution; and evolutionary or bio-social factors. However, limitations in theoretical development, in data, and in methodology have precluded the kind of rigorous hypothesis-testing that could adjudicate among competing theories or establish the relative contribution of valid but partial explanations.

Cultural shifts in the meaning of marriage may be part of the broader secularization and individualization of western societies (Lesthaeghe, 1995). Cultural variation may also account for some of the differences in union patterns among subgroups in the United States, for instance Puerto Ricans' greater acceptance of childbearing in cohabiting unions compared with non-Hispanic Whites' (Landale and Fennelly, 1992; Oropesa and Gorman, 2000). Advances in cultural approaches to union formation and dissolution require greater attention to how ideas about marriage and parenthood differ among groups and how ideas about what is appropriate are shaped by individuals' (and couples') social environment or context.

At the same time that broad cultural shifts in the meaning of marriage have occurred, the costs and benefits of marriage have changed compared to other alternatives, including being single or cohabiting. The relative "gains to marriage" argument takes account of the rise in opportunities for sexual relationships outside of marriage, greater tolerance of single parenthood, declining marital fertility, and improved employment opportunities for women, all of which reduce the value of marriage. On the other hand, as husbands and wives are increasingly likely to earn income and share housework somewhat more equally, the qualities that (potential) spouses value in marriage may change to more fragile types of solidarity (e.g., emotional intimacy) than those of economic exchange in the breadwinner-homemaker division of labor. Despite the appeal of the cost/benefit explanation for change in union formation and dissolution, empirical tests face a number of measurement challenges. How individuals perceive their alternatives and the relative weight they assign to their perceived choices are important, but hard-to-observe variables. An even more difficult problem is the need for data that take into account that both (potential) spouses may perceive things differently.

If one of the benefits to marriage is "enforceable trust," an environment in which divorce

rates are high reduces spouses' ability to enforce the marriage contract and makes cohabiting and other nonmarital unions relatively more appealing. The degree of trust or trustworthiness may affect levels of marital investment, while changes in trust or trustworthiness may lead to rapid devaluation of past investment in the marriage. A burgeoning interdisciplinary literature is now developing on the dynamics of trust and trustworthiness (e.g., Ostrom and Walker 2002), but its implications for the dynamics of cohabitation, marriage, and divorce are as yet unknown.

Biologists and evolutionary psychologists are developing new theories about how biological predispositions may underlie emotions that form the “glue” in long-term relationships. These models provide an intriguing explanation for marriage and for marital conflict and thus a potential theory for divorce. The models privilege specific sources of marital conflict, in particular sexual infidelity, infertility, investment in “non-nuclear” relatives (including children from previous partnerships), and economic factors (“failure to provide”). The models adopt a broad historical focus, but they are not highly sensitive to recent environmental changes (e.g., rising female labor force participation, secularization, or the rise of gender egalitarian ideologies) that appear linked with recent trends in partnership states. Thus, their potential contribution is as yet undeveloped.

While useful research continues to accumulate, we still know relatively little about the intra-marital processes that generate satisfaction or conflict and union dissolution. We also know relatively little about the process of finding a partner or the capabilities that partners bring to the relationship. On the one hand, we have fairly solid evidence that a propensity to divorce is transmitted across generations (McLanahan and Bumpass 1988; Diekmann and Engelhardt 1999). Yet the argument that a higher societal rate of divorce reduces investments in marriage, thereby increasing the risks of divorce, has the character of post-hoc rationalization. Research on

marriage, cohabitation, and divorce has produced good descriptive information about trends and differentials among race-ethnic and other important subgroups. At the same time, existing knowledge does not provide sufficiently reliable predictions about the further evolution of trends in these rates.

Enhanced understanding of change in union formation and dissolution in the United States will require attention to several issues, some of which require improvements in data on union formation and dissolution. For example, nearly all theoretical approaches consider men and women as separate actors, yet few studies include information from both men and women or couples. There is also need for improvements in study design and measurement of central constructs, such as trust and perceptions of the costs and benefits of marriage, to enable more rigorous tests of theories about race-ethnic differences in union formation and dissolution. Determining what aspects of social context are important sources of change in unions is a critical concern that can be addressed, in part, by cross-country comparative analyses that take into account a range of social and institutional characteristics of the environment. Efforts to translate the rigorous theoretical approaches to causation that come from experimental and game-theoretic explanations for union formation and dissolution to larger-scale survey approaches may also be fruitful. Finally, the rapidly changing nature of marriage in the United States requires a continued emphasis on producing high quality data on trends and differentials. Investments in improving measurement of couples whether or not they live together is likely to benefit new theory and research on union formation and dissolution (e.g., Manning and Smock, 2003).

Why Have Children? Biological and Social Constraints on Reproduction

The parent-child dyad is a central component of any kinship study. The general trend toward lower fertility in the United States as well as in other developed countries motivates our

emphasis on the reasons people want children, when they want to have them, and whether the children are born in marriage, cohabiting or other nonmarital relationships, or to single mothers. Although fertility has declined in all developed countries, substantial variation remains as a result of variation across countries in the timing of childbearing. For instance in the United States and some Western European countries Total Fertility Rates (TFRs) are about 2 (children/woman), but Southern European countries have TFRs closer to 1.3. Country variation in childbearing provides a valuable opportunity for understanding the social processes that account for fertility change.

Because the decline in childbearing is due to smaller families and delays in when people have children, explanations for low fertility must distinguish between what demographers call the *demand* for children and factors that affect the *timing* of childbearing. Fertility decline in the United States has also been marked by a shift toward an increasing percentage of children being born out-of-wedlock. Because nearly a third of recent births are outside of marriage and because African Americans are much more likely to have children outside of marriage than are Whites, a particular goal in our treatment of fertility is to explore the relationship between childbearing and union formation and dissolution.

There are several well-developed theoretical approaches to explain the decline in the number of children couples want. These come from efforts to explain major fertility transitions. For example, reductions in the number of children have historically been related to increased child costs (Becker, 1981, 1991), a potential reversal of wealth flows (Caldwell, 1982), increased levels of (female) education, higher opportunity costs of women's time (Willis, 1973), and population policies (Gauthier, 1996). These factors still may be relevant. But new factors also may be at play. For example, the diffusion of low fertility norms and value orientations is

particularly emphasized in the second demographic transition theory (van de Kaa 1987), which argues that demographic change in developed countries since the 1970s is closely linked to ideational shifts towards more postmodern, individualistic and post-materialistic value orientations. This is the same type of ideational change explanation posited for declining marriage.

Theories focused on the timing of childbearing may be quite different than those focused on the number of children, and key factors may be related to other choices that have also changed greatly. These factors include increased incentives to invest in higher education and labor market experience, increased uncertainty in early adulthood, general economic uncertainty in Central and Eastern European transition countries, and inefficient housing markets leading to high costs of establishing or expanding independent households. Social interaction effects are likely to reinforce individually made choices about the desire to delay childbearing (Kohler, Billari and Ortega, 2002). These interaction effects occur due to social learning and social influence in the decision processes (Montgomery and Casterline 1996). As a consequence of these interaction effects, Kohler et al. (2002) argue that the delay of childbearing follows a *postponement transition* that shares many characteristics with the fertility transition in Europe or contemporary developing countries: It occurs across a wide range of socioeconomic conditions; once initiated, it results in a rapid and persistent delay in the timing of childbearing; and it is likely to continue even if the socioeconomic changes that initiated the transition are reversed.

In explanations for fertility decline, perhaps more than in any other family realm, technological change is likely to play an independent role in accounting for family change. The wide availability of the birth control pill, increased availability of abortion, and improvements in reproductive medicine that address the problems of infertility improve couples' (women's)

chances of having the number of children they desire when they want to have them. A potential pitfall of emphasizing technological innovations, however, is the assumption that the new technology will be used as its developers intended. Technology may have unintended consequences: For instance women in rural Gambia use Western contraceptive technology to increase fertility rather than to limit it (Bledsoe et al., 1998). Technological explanations also assume that couples (women) act consciously to control childbearing, but this is obviously not always true. A critical challenge for explanations of variation and change in childbearing is to identify the circumstances in which childbearing is the outcome of conscious decision-making and when it is not.

Major unanswered questions about recent fertility trends and differentials include: What are the likely future trends? How do these trends affect other aspects of family life in the contemporary United States? To what extent do past and future trends depend on institutional settings, social changes and technological progress? How can we explain the differences and similarities between the United States and other developed countries and differences among subgroups in the United States? Methodological challenges include how best to measure childbearing intentions, when and how to treat fertility as the outcome of a couple's rather than an individual's intentions, and how to cost-effectively acquire biomarker, social psychological, and demographic data on women and men as they pass through their reproductive years while at the same time protecting the rights of human subjects.

Caring for the next Generation: Families' Effects on Children's Wellbeing

In virtually every time and place, one of the most important responsibilities of the family is the care and nurturing of the next generation. Human fetuses require a relatively long gestational period for a healthy birth outcome. Human infants require many years of care by

adults. Once children can care for themselves physically, they still require substantial care before they are able to provide for their needs and function more or less autonomously. Given the skills required in modern societies and the length of time it takes to acquire advanced educational credentials, the number of years it takes children to achieve adult self-sufficiency is likely increasing in the United States and other developed economies. Hence, a sustained period of investment must occur for salutary child and young adult outcomes.

One way to conceptualize the process of caring for the next generation is to ask what families do or contribute to their children to promote healthy child development. Parents contribute shared genes and a family environment. Parents devote time and attention as well as financial resources to their children. The types of investments parents make in their children depend, in part, on children's genetic endowments and other characteristics. For instance, parents may spend more time with a child who is having trouble with school work than with her sibling who completes school assignments effortlessly. The effects of parents' investments on children's subsequent development also depend on children's characteristics. Although parents, especially those who live with their off-spring, are vitally important actors affecting children's welfare, they are not the only relevant actors. A key issue, in light of the incidence of divorce and non-marital childbearing (and childrearing) is the role of such actors as nonbiological parents and nonresident parents. In addition, grandparents and other kin as well as unrelated actors and institutions, such as peers, schools, neighborhoods, and the media either independently or in conjunction with the family, influence children's development.

Theory and research on child well-being must take into account the "linked lives" of parents, children, and other kin. A mother's psychological state affects how she spends time with children, her childrearing practices, the quality of her relationship with the children's father,

and, as a result, the father's relationship with the children. In addition, parents' mental health may be a function of children's health as well as a determinant of child outcomes.

New work on children's well-being also must build on advances in data collection that recognize genetic and biological characteristics of children that affect how their families treat them and how children respond to aspects of the social context (see, for example Schonkoff and Phillips, 2000). The Add Health study, for example, is designed to explicitly take account of genetic predispositions and the interaction of biological and environmental factors. Other studies like the PSID (Sandberg and Hofferth, 2001) devote attention to combining measures of parents' time with children and economic resources to provide a more complete picture of how parents trade off time and monetary investments in children. A particular challenge for new research on children's welfare is to determine the relevant actors who interact to affect children's development (coresident and nonresident parents, siblings and other kin, peers, schoolmates and neighbors) (Rutter, 1998) and how to measure their "inputs" into children. As in all of the other topics we consider, there is the problem of rigorously identifying causal effects when so much of how children develop depends on choices made by parents and other family members.

Intergenerational Relationships: Kin Obligations throughout Adulthood

Families are intergenerational by definition. Classic theories of family change treat the relative importance of the family of origin and family of procreation as the primary dimension indicating change (Goode, 1963; Harris, 1983). Characterizations of social class and race-ethnic variation in family experiences also emphasize group differences in the primacy of parent-child bonds over conjugal bonds (Rubin, 1976; Chatters and Jayakody, 1995; Schneider and Smith, 1978). One cannot describe family change and variation without considering relationships among family members in different generations.

Demographic change also motivates the study of intergenerational relationships. The aging of the U.S. population means that individuals will increasingly be members of multi-generation families (Uhlenberg, 1996; Bengtson, 2000). We know little about how increased life expectancy affects how family members interact with older and younger kin; nor do we know how the perception that life is long affects decisions about investments in children and grandchildren and expectations in each generation about providing and receiving help at different life stages (Hagestad, 2000). Debate about the Social Security system explicitly pits the interests of older and younger cohorts, ignoring that intergenerational family ties may crosscut cohort interests as when younger workers have grandparents who rely on Social Security income. We know little about the relationship between within-family transfers and support from public programs (McGarry and Schoeni, 1995). Most of what we do know ignores that family members may provide financial help or other assistance across three generations instead of only two, the potential for reciprocity in the long term, and the role in family exchanges played by quasi-kin, such as stepchildren, children of cohabiting partners, stepparents, and parents' cohabiting partners. Extending economic models of intra-family resource allocation to incorporate these new aspects of family life requires both theoretical and methodological innovations.

Changes in other demographic processes also challenge the received wisdom about parent-child relationships. Declining fertility means that parents have fewer children in which to invest but they also have fewer children who can provide aid as the parents age and need more assistance. Divorce and nonmarital childbearing may weaken ties to biological fathers (Cooney, 1994; Pezzin and Schone, 1999) at the same time they reinforce some grandparent-grandchild ties, as when grandparents raise grandchildren whose parents are unavailable. Cohabitation and remarriage create new ties that also may compensate for some of these losses (Wachter, 1998).

However, these changes in unions and the context for childrearing create quasi-kin ties that have ambiguous rights and obligations. Ambiguity about obligations is demonstrated in survey reports in which respondents exercise more choice about when to help step than biological kin (Ganong and Coleman, 1999). Demographic change requires that we consider how to collect data and extend existing theories about family relationships to take account of the new multi-generational relationships that are possible in U.S. families.

Understanding variation and change in intergenerational relationships requires a life time orientation rather than a focus solely on older kin. Most transfers are from parents to children, including financial transfers to adult children who are setting up households and new parents who need help with child care (Lye, 1996). Theories about how a family's culture affects transfers of time and money depend on information about how adults were raised (e.g., Hagestad, 2000; see Cox and Soldo, 2004). Understanding intergenerational relationships also requires a lifetime orientation because parents and children may act strategically, for instance, when children do things for their parents in anticipation of bequests. Theoretical advances treat transfers within families as repeated games, taking account of changes over the life course in children's ability to participate in the game (infants do not, but teenagers and certainly young adults do) (see Lundberg and Pollak, 2002). Research on intergenerational relationships often focuses on specific life stages, such as when children leave their parents' households, new home purchases, retirement, and widowhood, because these transitions offer the opportunity to observe outcomes important for theories about family change.

Theories about family change contrast intergenerational ties with conjugal ties, and hence, new research on families must consider union formation and dissolution and intergenerational relationships together. At a minimum, union dissolution in the parent or child

generation affects needs and resources available for transfers between generations. Cohort replacement and improvements in health at later ages mean that increasing percentages of grandparents will cohabit. These new relationships create another set of ambiguous kin ties (e.g., how should grandchildren and a grandparent's cohabiting partner treat each other) (Hagestad, 2000), that offer an opportunity to study how expectations about kin obligations develop.

Studying intergenerational relationships is particularly challenging because many of the relevant actors do not live in the same household. Household-based surveys can be used to identify nonresident kin, but the costs of obtaining locating information and interviewing other family members in different households are very high. Families in which some members are estranged or for whom the relationship quality is very distant are an important subset for understanding family variation, but they are likely to be the most difficult to study using household-based surveys.

Other avenues for innovation in models of variation and change in intergenerational relationships include exploring whether race-ethnic groups and members of different social classes differ in the “glue” that binds generations, spouses or nonmarital partners, and siblings, and, if so, why. We also know too little about gender differences in relationships between generations – when actors take for granted that they will share resources with another family member and when they make conscious decisions about resource sharing, and about the criteria women and men use (equity or equality) in allocating resources. Finally, addressing this broad set of questions is complicated by the fact that cognitive and emotional changes occur throughout life that affect attitudes about family members and recognition of short and long-term obligations.

Family and (Paid and Unpaid) Work

Throughout our discussions of orienting frameworks for theories about family change and key substantive topics is the theme of rising labor force participation of women, particularly mothers of young children. Women's labor force participation is implicated in variation and change in union formation and dissolution, fertility, childrearing practices and children's economic well-being, and the provision of care and financial exchanges between generations. We give "family and work" special attention instead of dealing with it entirely in the context of the other key topics we identify because of the unique importance of the labor market for the material welfare of American families and because we view shifts in the allocation of individual and family effort to caregiving and paid work as primary outcomes of ideational and economic change over the past century.

Families in market economies always face the questions of who will earn money and bring it back to the family and who will provide the care that children and other family members require and the support that the earner(s) needs. In the past in the United States, and still in many societies, market-work versus home-work time allocations were highly specialized along gender lines, with paid work handled by men and unpaid work in the home largely the domain of women. At the beginning of the 21st century, there continues to be variation among families with respect to this market-work versus home-work trade-off. Some segments of society and demographic groups still operate with a highly gender-specialized division of labor, particularly when there are two parents and very young children. However, it is now much more common, at least in developed societies, for both women and men to be engaged in paid market work and unpaid domestic work and/or family caregiving (Bianchi et al., 2000; Bianchi, 2000; Sandberg and Hofferth, 2001).

Families must always decide how to allocate time and money and the power of individual family members plays a crucial role in these allocation decisions. The concept of power has received a good deal of attention in the sociological literature (the classic study is that of Blood and Wolfe, 1965). Similar attention has been paid to this issue in the economics literature (Becker, 1991). There has been relatively little direct study of how U.S. families (re)allocate resources, such as money (Treas, 1993; Kenney, 2002) and how this changes as market work of women increases, approaches, or surpasses that of men in families. Nonetheless, there is evidence that when women control financial resources in the family, expenditure patterns change.

A less-gender differentiated division of labor between paid work and unpaid work can give rise to coordination issues at a family level and beyond. The labor market hours of one individual must increasingly be taken into account by the other individual to ensure adequate time for unpaid activities such as housework and child care. As Jacobs and Gerson (2001) show, the number of combined work hours has increased in two-parent families as more mothers have entered the paid workforce. Feelings of time pressure result from the joint nature of the paid work hours and the reduced overall adult hours in the home. At the same time, there are others, mostly the less-educated, who cannot get enough paid work hours or, when they do work many hours, are financially strapped because wages are low. This is especially true of single parents, most often mothers, who when they are the only adult living with children face considerable time and money pressures. Single parents also form an interesting and unique case because their work and family negotiations almost by definition cross household boundaries. If they are to balance paid work and childrearing with resources other than their own time and ability to command income in the labor market (or through the welfare system), they have to effectively obtain time

and money (e.g., child support) from the child's other parent, who by definition resides elsewhere. Alternatively, they have to negotiate assistance from extended kin or friends, either those who co-reside or those who live elsewhere. Tracking these complicated time and money flows to and from single-parent households is difficult to do in many data collections that use household-based sampling frames.

There are a number of ethnographic studies that describe strategies for combining work and family (e.g., Becker and Moen 1999) and new descriptive information from time diary studies and "beeper studies" on objective and subjective dimensions of work and family life (Robinson and Godbey, 1999; Bittman and Wajcman, 2000; Mattingly and Bianchi, 2003). However, what is missing from the research is strong evidence of casual connections between work and family stresses and poor child or adult outcomes.

There is also relatively limited information on the longitudinal, or life course, effect of different work and family decisions taken earlier in life. One exception is recent work by Joshi (2002) with British cohort data in which she estimates the effect of having children on a mother's accumulated lifetime work experience and earnings, and shows that effects can be substantial but primarily for the less educated. She shows that women's employment affects when they have children, but not how many they have and that mothers' employment has little effect on children's development. The use of cohorts of mothers and children represents an interesting attempt to study the "linked lives" of mothers and children and model the bi-directional flow of maternal employment decisions on family outcomes (child quality) and vice versa.

The NICHD has a separate initiative underway on work and family with a primary focus on work-family policies in employment settings. Our efforts emphasize other challenges: efforts to improve data on the dynamic linkages among market work, unpaid caregiving activities and

responsibilities, and family formation and dissolution decisions and intergenerational caregiving. A particular challenge is to consider how existing data can be modified to take account of both husbands' and wives' perspectives on their paid and unpaid work.

Addressing the Challenges: A Program of Activities

The questions posed by NICHD are extremely broad. To produce a “coordinated program of research and data collection” requires going beyond conventional large-scale, single-method survey designs to collect data on families. But existing designs have many strengths that will continue to support research on families. Improvement of our understanding of family change and variation calls for an integrated strategy of data collection. This includes new studies as well as enhancements to existing data collections, for instance special topical modules or add-on studies of important subgroups already included in major ongoing surveys. Designs that include multiple methods of data collection are likely to be more fruitful than single method studies in addressing the theoretical and methodological challenges that family scholars face.

Because new data collections are expensive, it is essential to conduct pilot studies to evaluate the feasibility of new strategies. Many of the questions family scholars must address require thinking “outside the box” of conventional approaches to family research. This is a high-risk strategy with the potential for great rewards, but also the potential for failure. In order to choose how to allocate resources to new research, it is useful to conduct pilot projects that fit three criteria. First, the projects must address questions that arise in multiple areas of family research. Second, they must advance knowledge at the intersection of multiple disciplines. And, finally, pilot efforts must balance the need for innovation against continuity with previous and on-going efforts to study family variation and change.

An example of the type of project that would meet our initial criteria based on our discussion of conceptual building blocks and key stages in family life is the problem of obtaining information from family members whether or not they live in the same household. Race and ethnic groups vary in norms about co-residence and in the degree to which nonresident kin (grandparents, biological fathers after nonmarital childbearing or divorce) are involved in children's lives. Without new, cost-effective methods for reliably sampling and interviewing nonresident family members both descriptive and theoretical efforts to study race and ethnic differences in family life are severely hampered. Questions about when single mothers move in with parents or how adult children share responsibility for older parents require information about family members who live apart.

Family research and theory has long recognized that important aspects of family life span household boundaries, but most surveys designed to study families use household-based samples. Existing data from large surveys, such as the NSFH and the Indonesian Family Life Survey, use "proxy" reports from members of the household about kin residing elsewhere. In some cases the study tries to interview nonresident family members, as when parents of NSFH respondents were interviewed in wave 2, and fathers of infants sampled in the Fragile Families study were interviewed whether or not they lived with the baby's mother. In other cases, longitudinal studies, like the PSID and the NLSY 1979 and 1997, continued to interview family members who shared a household in the baseline interview but who subsequently moved elsewhere. Studies like these provide insight into the conditions that are more successful in locating, interviewing, and obtaining high quality information about extra-household family members.

Existing data alone cannot solve the problem of studying families across households. There are likely to be great payoffs to new theories and pilot research projects testing innovations in ways to obtain respondent cooperation and higher quality information, including locating information, about nonresident kin. Particular concerns for questions about variation and change include improving the accuracy of reports about step- and quasi-kin (e.g., children and parents of cohabiting partners) because the incidence and importance of these family members differ among groups and over historical time.

Finally, it is clear that to improve theories and research about family change requires the efforts of the entire community of family scholars. We have offered this description of how we view the challenges for the future but even as we are writing it advice from family researchers is informing our work and modifying our perspective. The development of a research agenda requires this assistance so that, in the end, we can meet the goal we affirmed by beginning this project: developing a shared public good that is the worthy successor of the NSFH and the multitude of other advances in data collection, methods and theory in family research of the past two decades.



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