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Family Policy, Socioeconomic Inequality, and the Gender Revolution

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INTRODUCTION

As is well known, there have been major changes in family processes in industrialized countries, frequently referred to as the "second demographic transition" (SDT) (Lesthaeghe 2010; Van de Kaa 1987). These include a retreat from marriage and an increase in childbearing and rearing outside marriage, all appearing to weaken the family by reducing its centrality and stability, frequently with negative effects on its members. These changes have been linked with the growth in female labor force participation.

However, evidence is accumulating that the link between family weakening and female employment has attenuated and even reversed, at least at the macro level, as a result of continued changes in gender relationships. Female employment has become ubiquitous, even expected, suggesting that the first half of the gender revolution is advancing rapidly as women come to share the public sphere with men. Further, there is evidence that families benefit from men's increasing contributions of time to the care of their children and their homes, so that unlike the first half of the gender revolution, the second half might actually strengthen families, increasing union formation, fertility, and marital happiness, and decreasing union dissolution (Goldscheider, Bernhardt, and Lappegård 2015). Most dramatic is the fertility turnaround. The countries of southern Europe that once had the highest levels of fertility, particularly Spain, have had the lowest levels of fertility for several decades (Brewster and Rindfuss 2000; Brinton and Lee 2016). The highest fertility in Europe is now found among the countries with the highest levels of female labor force participation. However, these countries also have the world's most generous policies for reducing work–family conflict, including universal, subsidized, high-quality child care and generously paid family leave, and have the lowest levels of socioeconomic inequality of all industrialized countries (see Chapter 1).

This makes it unclear how much the pro-family effects of the continuing gender revolution are due to family policies or perhaps low levels of socioeconomic inequality and how much to actual increased male family involvement. The picture is further clouded by the problem that so much research on these issues is done either in the United States, which has few policies supporting the family and drastic levels of socioeconomic inequality, or in the Scandinavian countries, which are so different in both these dimensions. There are few, if any, class differences in these pro-family patterns of increased fertility and union stability in the Scandinavian countries (Goldscheider, Bernhardt, and Lappegård 2015). In the many other countries undergoing gender change at work and at home, however, particularly those with high socioeconomic inequality, the greatest changes appear to have occurred primarily among those with the highest class positions, particularly among the most-educated (Cherlin 2016; Esping-Anderson and Billari 2015). Do these class differences challenge hopes for strengthening families among substantial segments of these populations, as Cherlin (see Chapter 3) has argued?

While we do not dismiss the importance of extrafamilial support that reduce parents' work–family conflict or the possibility that socioeconomic inequality might delay the growth in men's involvement in the family, we make a cultural argument that rests on the basic structural change in women's roles – the growth in labor force participation. We argue that changes underway reveal a broader shift in attitudes toward family roles and responsibilities that go beyond the effects of state policies and include, although often in surprising ways, members of both higher and lower classes, even in highly unequal societies. Fundamentally, there appears to be an expansion of men's roles to increasingly incorporate involvement with their homes and children in a broader array of roles than was found as recently as the mid-twentieth century. We consider studies examining whether, like other large social changes, behavioral changes linked with the gender revolution are first evident among the more educated, which can further exacerbate class differences, that then attenuate as attitude change diffuses to the wider population. We draw on examples from recent studies of gendered family behavior in order to assess the roles of family policy and inequality in delaying or accelerating the effects of the gender revolution on the family.

WHAT AFFECTS THE GENDER REVOLUTION?

Why might societies with weak or no family policies, or those with high levels of socioeconomic inequality be less likely to move toward completion of the two parts of the gender revolution? To address this question, we need to think about what factors underlie the progress of both halves of the

gender revolution. We briefly summarize research on both its first part (the growth of female labor force participation) and then its second part (the growth in men's involvement in their homes and families), and see whether connections to generous family policies and low socioeconomic inequality emerge.

The Growth of Female Labor Force Participation

There is a substantial literature on factors favoring the growth of female labor force participation. In addition to the overwhelming effect of industrialization (see the review in Pampel and Tanaka (1986), in which they show that the relationship is actually curvilinear, as early increases in energy use actually forced women out of the labor force), the major classic studies have emphasized the importance of the growth in the demand for "female labor" beginning in the post-World War II years and accelerating in the later decades of the twentieth century (Goldin 1990; Mincer 1962; Oppenheimer 1970). Continued industrialization resulted in the emergence of occupations quite different from agricultural and early industrial jobs, which required both substantial physical strength and long hours. More recent research, however, has also emphasized the importance of the long-term rise in female education (Walters 1984), which began in the late nineteenth century, and led eventually to women surpassing men in the attainment of college degrees in the last few decades of the twentieth century (DiPrete and Buchman 2013). At least initially, in the late nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century, this did not reflect reverse causality, in that the pursuit of educational attainment was justified as necessary for becoming a successful wife, mother, and homemaker (Walters 1984). Not until the growth in female labor force participation in the second half of the twentieth century did female education increase in response to the growth of economic opportunity.

The demographic transition from high to low fertility and mortality was also important, as it made it no longer feasible to define all of women's adult years as needed for childbearing and rearing (Stanfors and Goldscheider 2017; Watkins, Menken, and Bongaarts 1989). Increased earnings no doubt mattered as well, although analyses of the negative effects on earnings of women's concentration in "pink-collar" occupations (Cotter et al. 1997) suggest that women were eager to earn *anything* that could contribute more to their families than they were able to do with just their domestic skills and time. The crumbling of the "marriage bar" (Goldin 1990; Stanfors and Goldscheider 2017), which for so long prevented married women from taking many jobs, such as teaching, contributed as well.

The growth of female labor force participation emerged in response to these interrelated economic, social, and demographic changes primarily over the second half of the twentieth century. While women's employment has not reached parity with the labor force participation of men, it has reached the point where most women expect to spend much of their adult lives in employment (and most men expect their partners to do so as well). This creates an additional incentive for women to work, and to obtain more education in order to prepare for better jobs (e.g., those with more pay and better working conditions). It has also altered men's expectations of desirable attributes in a spouse; if their wives will be working, one who can earn more is preferred to one who is unlikely to earn much (Goldscheider and Kaufman 2006; Schwartz and Han 2014).

Clearly, these major changes in the structure of industrializing societies have been critical for increasing female labor force participation, and hence, are also likely to affect men's increasing involvement in the family, about which much less is known. However, if, as Cherlin and others argue, supportive family policies and socioeconomic inequality are also critical for encouraging or delaying the second half of the gender revolution, and perhaps also the first half, it is important to assess these impacts. How might social policies and greater socioeconomic inequality affect women's labor force participation, the first half of the gender revolution? We address these issues in the following sections, and then address the same issues for the second half of the gender revolution.

Family Policy and the First Half of the Gender Revolution

Until recently, few governments outside the (former) Soviet sphere of influence enacted policies explicitly to support women's employment.[1] Nevertheless, some policies developed for other purposes often affected women's likelihood of being employed, both positively and negatively. The most common direct policy involves the development of quality, subsidized child care, allowing women to outsource some of their family

[1] In the central and Eastern European countries under state socialism, policies supporting women's labor force participation were extensive: Child care, generous maternity leave, female education on par with male, pronatalist housing policies, birth and child allowances, and supposedly equal pay for women. Moreover, the inefficient economies created a high demand for labor, which was met by female labor (Frejka 2008). By 1990, all these countries had relatively high levels of female labor force participation, but with the abandonment of these policies, female labor force participation (and fertility) collapsed (Sobotka 2011), perhaps because none of the policies had encouraged men's participation in the tasks at home.

responsibilities (without having to involve their male partners). The United States developed an extensive network of child-care facilities during World War II, as women were needed to replace the men who had been conscripted (Skocpol 1995), although it was dismantled after the war ended.

Some other European countries encouraged female employment more permanently. The Scandinavian countries' initial response to the increased demand for labor in the post-World War II period was to encourage employment for mothers, going beyond the provision of subsidized, high-quality child care to provide up to a year of paid family leave, which allowed new mothers to maintain their connection with their employers while being able to care for their tiny infants. These countries preferred to meet the need for a growing labor force by supporting female employment rather than encouraging the immigration of male workers (while making it more likely that women would stay home), which was the policy choice taken by Germany in this period (Kamerman and Kahn 1991).

Policies with indirect effects on female labor force participation have primarily been those designed to increase fertility, although there are others, such as retirement plans and family-level vs. individual-level taxation, that have strong effects as well. As early as the 1930s, some countries experiencing dramatic fertility decline linked with the Great Depression, such as France, introduced baby bonuses, hoping to encourage more couples to take on the costs of childbearing. Others instituted family allowances and paid maternity leave, so that rather than the money being tied to childbearing, it was tied to (women's) child-rearing, often for an extended period, as in Germany.

In each case, the pro-fertility policies were designed to support a traditional division of labor in families, in which women stayed home, and could afford to stay home, to care for their families. Interestingly, there was little evidence that either of these policies was successful (Friedlander and Goldscheider 1979).[2,3] Research examining the relationship between length of parental leave and women's subsequent career progression has generally found that more

[2] In the 1960s, Romania took a more direct, heavy-handed approach to increasing fertility, banning abortion and contraception. While it had a dramatic short-term impact, as couples were forced to carry unwanted children to term, fertility shortly thereafter reestablished its downward trend (David 1970), as couples found alternative sources of birth control, essentially bootlegging contraception.

[3] Recent government exhortations designed to increase fertility have resulted in amused and indignant condemnation; even government officials retrospectively deride attempts to raise birth rates by appealing to nationalist sentiment. A September 2016 advertising campaign in Italy, designed to promote "Fertility Day," was withdrawn after an outraged backlash against the images. Even Prime Minister Matteo Renzi criticized the campaign: www.france24.com/en/20160903-italy-recalls-fertility-campaign-after-social-media-backlash

generous leave hampers longer-term earnings (e.g., Aisenbrey, Evertsson, and Grunow 2009).

Policies designed to reinforce mothers' ability to combine work and family might have a stronger effect on female employment, particularly by introducing subsidized, high-quality child care and job-protected, paid maternity leave. Although these policies tend to reinforce women's family roles by making the "second shift" less onerous, they also encourage the attainment of well-paid jobs, as the payments received during leave are normally tied to prebirth earnings. The need to attain a well-paid job before taking family leave also greatly reduces teen childbearing; job protection means a parent need not search for work after taking leave, which hastens the return to work even for the United States' unpaid Family and Medical Leave Act (Klerman and Leibowitz 1999).

Evidence that the provision of high-quality, subsidized child care supports female labor force participation also comes from a recent study comparing German-speaking residents in Belgium with those in an adjacent area in Germany (Klüsener, Neels, and Kreyenfeld 2013). These two regions' family patterns closely resembled each other prior to Belgium's introduction of family-friendly policies; thereafter, these two regions diverged in terms of both fertility (German fertility continued to fall while that of German-speaking Belgians did not because the German-speaking region of Belgium had much lower childlessness and higher completed family size than in Germany) and especially female labor force participation. By 2001, the proportion of mothers with children aged 0–2 in full- or part-time employment was only 30.1% in western Germany, compared with 60.5% of similar mothers in the German-speaking region of Belgium (Klüsener, Neels, and Kreyenfeld 2013). This is a clear case in which family-friendly policies not only support higher fertility but also, even more clearly, increase female labor force participation.

However, as we will discuss below in our consideration of the effects of policy on the second half of the gender revolution, policies that encourage men to share more of the family leave appear to have been even more successful in incorporating men into the care of their homes and families. Whether or not such policies are necessary for increasing men's involvement in the care of their homes and families, as we will see, they clearly help.

Inequality and the First Half of the Gender Revolution

Although the relationship between family policy and female labor force participation is fairly clear, that between socioeconomic inequality and female

labor force participation is much less so. The primary studies have focused either on macro-level analyses of countries' levels of female labor force participation, mostly from the 1980s, or on more microstudies of how changes in inequality focused on how husbands affect married women's response. More problematic (and interesting) is the fact that given a rapid change in behavior, there is also a substantial change in the relationship between women's behaviors in the family and economic context.

The first major macrostudy (Semyonov 1980) undertook a comparative analysis of the social context of women's labor force participation. The study used data from sixty-one countries for the 1960s and 1970s and found that women were less likely to be economically active in societies where inequality was high. This was followed with an analysis of a much narrower set of countries (sixteen) but which included longitudinal data for five time points between 1955 and 1975 (Ward and Pampel 1985). In contrast to the broader analysis, however, this study found that increases in inequality increased female labor force participation. There were a number of other differences between the two studies, including the controls applied, however. It is not clear whether further studies of this question have been undertaken.

There are more, and more recent, analyses, primarily by economists, which examine how the labor force participation of married women responds to their husbands' earnings, motivated by the rapid increase in inequality in men's earnings and the initially high level of women's responsiveness to their family's economic well-being. Early studies of female labor force participation showed that family characteristics had a larger impact on married women's employment than the women's own characteristics. Small children were a major deterrent to married women's employment, as was husband's income; women were much more likely to work if they had no small children and their husbands' incomes were low (Blau and Kahn 2007). Hence, increases in inequality of male incomes have contributed to the increase in female labor force participation, as the growth-in-inequality losers (the number of men with low incomes) is always far greater than the growth-in-inequality winners (the number of men at the top of the earnings pyramid). The relationship between inequality in men's earnings and female labor force participation, however, is not strong, because while declines in male employment and earnings have been greatest for low-wage men, employment and earnings gains have been largest for wives of middle- and high-wage men (Juhn and Murphy 1997). This is because over the last few decades of the twentieth century, American women's labor force participation became much more responsive to their own characteristics (education, work experience) than they had been in the past (Leibowitz and Klerman 1995), so that in this way they became more like

men. Further, educational homogamy has strengthened, so that inequality at the family level increased, as highly educated men and women married and both earned, while couples with few resources struggled (Karoly and Burtless 1995).

The Growth of Male Family Involvement

Any attempt to understand the growth of male involvement in the tasks of their families and homes must first recognize that not that long ago, men were highly involved in such tasks: Training their children and providing wood, water, and far more to their homes in the household-based agricultural economy. With industrialization came the construct of "separate spheres" as men left agriculture and took on the industrial and commercial jobs that were emerging in the new economy, leaving women behind in the home. It took more than a century until the social, economic, and demographic changes underway reached the point where women could join men in the public sphere as well. By then, the home had taken on its gendered nature, as a place for women and children (Stanfors and Goldscheider 2017), making it more challenging for men to include domestic tasks as part of their responsibilities.

Men resist not only the gendered tasks in the home, which causes a problem in their relationships, but also the gender-linked tasks in the labor market, which is a problem for their role as provider, given that, with the decline in agriculture, the decline in manufacturing has meant that the jobs "real men" used to take have been vanishing (see Chapter 3). We know much less about the factors that increase men's involvement in the home, and hence the progress of the second half of the gender revolution, than we do about the growth of women's labor force participation, but it is important to examine what we do know, particularly how it might be linked with family policy and socioeconomic inequality, as Cherlin worries (see Chapter 3).

Family Policy and the Second Half of the Gender Revolution

Many of the Scandinavian countries (and Quebec) have developed policies to address the second half of the gender revolution directly, by encouraging men to take a portion of what is now called "family" (rather than "maternity") leave (Duvander and Johansson 2015). Such policies require that, to gain, and not lose, the full benefit, each parent has to take some of the paid leave. If only one parent takes family leave, the duration is less than if each parent takes some, with lost leave ranging from one to three months. As a result, nearly all couples

take at least the minimum required for the second parent (often called "daddy days," given that women continue to take most family leave). In Norway, 89% of fathers take most or all of the daddy days, with similar levels in Iceland (88%) and Sweden (86%) (Haas and Rostgaard 2011). Evidently, even managers in private industry do not want their workers to actually lose a paid benefit.

A major problem with assessing the impact of policies on citizens' behavior is whether the causal arrow is being correctly interpreted. Perhaps only more egalitarian countries enact egalitarian policies. Alternatively, men who take advantage of such policies may be selective, in that they are just more family-oriented than other men. In Sweden, for example, the fact that men who take more family leave with a first child are more likely to go on to have additional children than those who take less (Oláh 2003) might just reflect their greater family orientation. However, a recent study addressed this latter issue. Duvander (2014) has shown that although Swedish men with more familistic attitudes do indeed take more family leave, this is also the case for men with more egalitarian attitudes (controlling for their attitudes toward families).

The question of path dependency – that more egalitarian countries are more likely to enact egalitarian policies – is challenged by a recent analysis of trends in men's home involvement in the United States compared with the Scandinavian countries. Despite (or perhaps because of) the lack of policies reducing work–family conflict, the United States' levels and trends in men's share of housework and child-care time closely approximate those in Scandinavia (Stanfors and Goldscheider 2017). This is despite the fact that the ratio of female to male labor force participation is considerably lower in the United States than in the Scandinavian countries – about 85% in 2014 compared with ratios closer to 95% in Norway, Sweden, and Finland – reflecting the lack of public policies, such as child care, that support female labor force participation (Frejka, Goldscheider, and Lappegård 2018). This suggests that more US families are forced to depend on male involvement (perhaps coupled with shift work) to care for children while both parents are employed than in countries with policies reducing work–family conflict.

Another series of studies that attempt to hold cultural values (and hence path dependency) constant but vary potential family policies are "experiments" done in the United States (e.g., Pedulla and Thébaud 2015; Thébaud and Pedulla 2016). Respondents were young, unmarried, and childless, and were asked about their future work–family arrangements (essentially, who should be the primary earner and who the primary homemaker). In one study (Pedulla and Thébaud 2015), some respondents were randomly provided a scenario that asked them to imagine that there were policies in place that

included paid family leave, subsidized child care, and the option to work flexible hours, and then asked about their preferred work–family balance. The results were dramatic, at least for women. More highly educated women (those with some college education or higher) who were told these policies would be virtually universal chose a work–family balance of equal sharing (94.5%) compared with similar women who did not receive this information (more than 30 percentage points less). Among less-educated women, the differences were also sharp, but smaller (82.2%, given the presence of these family-friendly policies; over 20 percentage points more than similar women who could not assume the presence of such policies).

Interestingly, men were much less responsive to the presence or absence of family-friendly policies (and differences were not significant). This finding suggests that men who had not confronted the possibility of work–family conflict had not really thought about it. Nevertheless, a substantial majority of men – both those with some college or more and those with high school or lower – gave egalitarian responses (about 70%).

A second study (Thébaud and Pedulla 2016) explored this gender difference, and established that men's preferred work–family arrangement was conditioned by their understanding of their peers' attitudes, not policy. The results showed that in scenarios where supportive work–family policies were available, men who were asked to assume that most of their peers preferred gender-egalitarian relationships were significantly more likely to prefer such arrangements for themselves. The researchers did not test to see whether similar results would have obtained if men had partners who did or did not prefer egalitarian relationships, or whether the families they had grown up in featured father involvement in the domestic sphere, which also has a strong impact on men's domestic participation (Lahne and Wenne 2012).

Inequality and the Second Half of the Gender Revolution

There is no question that in many parts of the industrialized world there are sharp differences in domestic sharing by socioeconomic status (Evertsson et al. 2009), as there are in other family patterns. In the United States, socioeconomic differences in family patterns seem to reflect nearly different universes (Lundberg and Pollak 2015), as Cherlin has dissected in his most recent book (Cherlin 2016), and as do Sassler and Miller (2017). The college-educated are currently far more likely to get and remain married, have children within marriage, and yet experience relatively egalitarian work–family relationships than those with educational levels of high school or lower, shaping what Sara McLanahan (2004) has termed the "diverging destinies" of young Americans

from more and less advantaged backgrounds. Cherlin (2014) therefore argues that the second half of the gender revolution may only be emerging among the more educated (and perhaps most rapidly in a context of strong state support for families).

The issues revealed in recent research suggest that the patterns are extremely complex, which makes tracking class differences particularly challenging. Most fundamentally, the "private sphere" of family tasks is heterogeneous (like the public sphere), with the biggest divides between child care and housework, and within those two categories, between routine and less routine activities (Craig and Mullan 2013) and between taking responsibility and implementation (Raley, Bianchi, and Wang 2012). As we will show, men's entry into this complexity has varied over time and by class.

For example, men's time in child care and housework has been increasing more rapidly on weekends rather than weekdays (Neilsson and Stanfors 2014), a pattern that favors men with regular hours. Co-resident men are more involved than those who do not live with their children, which also favors the more educated, who are less likely to separate from their children, in part because their behaviors often undermine relationship stability as well as consistent child involvement (Barber et al. 2017; Cherlin, Chapter 3; Edin and Nelson 2013). Nevertheless, many non-co-residential fathers remain involved (Tach, Mincy, and Edin 2010).

Further, context appears to matter as well. Far more research is needed to disentangle these issues, but here we will focus on the effects of class (normally indicated by her education, but sometimes by his) on housework and child care, the second half of the gender revolution. We focus primarily on class differences and changes in child care. Child care is more consequential than housework, as perhaps the most fundamental domestic investment activity. Housework is both less problematic to ignore (beyond the most basic level) and easier to outsource. There is also considerable variation in how housework is measured over time, and too few studies have empirically explored class differences in the ways that dual career couples juggle family responsibilities.

The general finding is that fathers with more education are more involved with child care than fathers with less education. In the United States, more educated fathers have particularly increased their involvement in basic caregiving and teaching time, and have increased their belief in the importance of fathers in children's lives (Amato, Meyers, and Emery 2009; Hofferth et al. 2014; Raley, Bianchi, and Wang 2012; Sayer, Bianchi, and Robinson 2004). These findings are similar to those from a cross-national study of four countries (Australia, Denmark, France, and Italy) (Craig and Mullen 2013), that found, as well, that it was fathers' education rather than mothers' that mattered.

Nevertheless, a growing body of both quantitative and qualitative research is documenting that less-educated men are also viewing child care involvement as a central role (Carlson, Hanson, and Fitzroy 2016), but may perform their engagement differently than do fathers who are professionals (Edin and Nelson 2013; Shows and Gerstel 2009). Some research suggests that although men in the working/service classes express strongly gender-differentiated views, they often find themselves actually *living* quite egalitarian lives (Usdansky 2011). This finding reinforces a concern that such men might understate their household contributions.

THE CHANGING GENDER REVOLUTION

Might these effects of family policy and class on men's involvement in the tasks of their homes and families, the second half of the gender revolution, also be changing, much as changes have occurred in the determinants and consequences of women's labor force participation, the first half of the gender revolution? If so, do these changes suggest that we should be more or less worried about the necessity for supportive family policies and the problems of socioeconomic inequality for the possibility of gender equality in the home (Cherlin 2014; Cherlin, Chapter 3), and the demographic benefits of higher fertility and more stable unions gender equality seems to be linked with? This trend is a relatively new one, even newer than the growth of female labor force participation, and many changes take time.

That change takes time is evident in a study that focused on the effects of family policies, which appear to be strengthening, at least in Scandinavia. It addressed the question of under what circumstances couples adjust their balance of work and care in a more traditional direction after the birth of a child, and under what circumstances they do not. All research, starting with studies of United States couples of the 1970s (e.g., Morgan and Waite 1987), had found such a "traditionalization" until Dribe and Stanfors (2009) showed that while Sweden in the 1980s and 1990s had followed this pattern, this was no longer the case starting about 2000. Neilsson and Stanfors (2013) found the same pattern for the other Nordic countries. These are countries that had had such policies for nearly a generation, yet their impact was clearly increasing.

Neilson and Stanfors (2013) also explored changes for other countries, such as Germany, Italy, and Canada, where policies are less supportive of families, to see if similar changes were observed. They found that in all the non-Scandinavian countries they studied, gender differences had attenuated, at least to some extent, though the traditionalizing effect of parenthood had not totally vanished. In addition, in both Canada and Germany there was

a considerable move toward equality on weekends, which is also the case in the United States (Yeung et al. 2001).

Further, there has been considerable growth in the prevalence of family supportive policies. New, stronger policies have been introduced in Canada (in Quebec), Germany, and the United Kingdom. Even in the United States, individual states have introduced policies that reduce work–family conflict by providing some paid family leave (California, New Jersey, New York as of 2018, Rhode Island, and perhaps the District of Columbia). Hence, to the extent that the growth in family-friendly policies supports the second half of the gender revolution, it seems unlikely that a major slowdown is in prospect.

The effects of socioeconomic inequality on sharing in the home also seem to be changing. A widely found pattern is that the more educated lead many types of social change, so that differences by education widen early in the change process and then attenuate as the new behavior diffuses more generally. More educated women led the decline in breastfeeding early in the twentieth century, and led, as well, its resurgence in the last third of that century, followed by the less-educated (Goldscheider and Waite 1991). Sullivan's (2010) research on men's involvement in the private sphere of the family supports this model. She examined changes in British and United States' men's contribution to domestic work and child care and found differences by education that were attenuating for housework, as the less-educated "caught up" with the more educated, yet differences were widening for child care, as the more educated led the later increase. In a further study, Sullivan, Billari, and Altintas (2014) found a fertility "catch-up" in countries with lowest-low fertility that also experienced recent increases in the contribution of younger, more highly educated fathers to child care and core domestic work. They interpret this result as suggestive evidence for a process of cross-national diffusion of more egalitarian domestic gender relations.

Other evidence comes from studies of gender-role attitudes. Most prominent among these are two analyses by Pampel (2011a,b). The first analyzes the relationships between education and gender-egalitarian attitudes in historical depth for the United States and finds for the range of cohorts born between 1900 and 1985 that structural change leads to adoption of new ideas and values supportive of gender equality by the more educated, but that the new ideas later diffuse to other groups through cultural processes. He obtains similar results in a cross-national study of roughly the same cohorts born in nineteen countries, showing that the effects of education first strengthen early in the growth of gender egalitarianism and then weaken as other groups come to accept the same views.

These results reinforce our view that studies indicating the power of educational differences in gender-related behavior are really showing a transient barrier to the progress of the gender revolution. Clearly, there is considerable resistance to men's sharing more at home, reflecting the continued strength of what is sometimes called "gender essentialism": the view that men and women are fundamentally different, making it appropriate that men should be providers and women carers. To the extent that men and women hold these views, men are less likely to want to share family responsibilities (and women are less likely to want them to do so).

However, while class appears to be linked with ideas about gender essentialism, with those in lower positions clinging more strongly to gender-typed behavior, it seems that these differences are changing and that there is class convergence. Unfortunately, ideas about gender essentialism are common not just among young adults making decisions about their planned work–family balance, but also among family scholars who promote ideational approaches to the analysis of gender roles. The most prominent in this group are Catherine Hakim (2001), Arland Thornton (2001), and Ron Lesthaeghe (2010).

Of these, Hakim is perhaps the most strident, claiming in her analysis of "preference theory" that most women would prefer to be employed no more than part-time, with little consideration that such a preference might reflect the lack of family-friendly policies (and sharing partners) that reduce women's work–family conflict. A recent test of Hakim's preference theory (Vitali et al. 2009), for example, examined links between individual-level preferences and both fertility outcomes and fertility intentions in a variety of settings. Counter to expectations based on the theory, they found that while there was the expected relationship between actual fertility and work–family lifestyle preferences, there was no relationship with fertility intentions.

Others have found no association between fertility intentions and employment outcomes among highly educated women, suggesting that constraints (discrimination), more than preferences (ideation), operate to shape women's employment choices (Cech 2016; Sassler et al. 2017). In fact, Hakim's argument that women's work decisions are predominantly based on their personal preferences has been met with fierce criticism (e.g., Crompton and Lyonette, 2005; Halrynjo and Lyng 2009; Hechter, Kim, and Baer 2005; McRae 2003; Stahli et al. 2009). Those who have used various data sets to test her theory generally find that country-level policies and social context play more important roles than preferences in women's employment retention or return after childbearing.

Thornton and Lesthaeghe are more oblique, in that Thornton sees gender equality as part of a set of ideas he calls the "developmental paradigm" (Thornton 2001) that falsely promotes the expectation for universal change, in this case, toward gender equality, while Lesthaeghe (2010) considers gender issues too minor to notice more than briefly. There is no question that attitudes toward gender essentialism have potency, at least in the short term. A recent paper (Brinton and Lee 2016) shows that an important factor in maintaining lowest-low fertility in southern Europe and East Asia is the high level of gender essentialism and hence the lack of supportive social policies in these regions that support male involvement in family roles.

Nevertheless, other research increasingly finds that young men coming of age in the early twenty-first century express desires for greater family involvement, even if they expect to assume the traditional provider role (Gerson 2010), and that more involvement is associated with positive outcomes, such as greater sexual frequency and satisfaction with sexual relationships (Carlson, Hanson, and Fitzroy 2016). There is also much evidence, including by Thornton and Young-DeMarco (2001), updating an earlier paper by Thornton and Freedman (1979), that gender essentialism eroded rapidly in the 1970s and 1980s in the United States. There remains, however, a substantial level of essentialism among young adults, particularly young men with less education (England 2011; Sassler and Miller 2011).

Although Cherlin (2014) argues that contemporary women will continue to reject young men who are unlikely to be strong providers as marital partners, there is a solid body of quantitative and qualitative evidence that such views do not preclude cohabiting unions (Kaufman 2000; Sassler and Goldscheider 2003; Sassler and Miller 2011; Smock, Manning, and Porter 2005) and childbearing (Edin and Kefalas 2005; Tach, Mincy, and Edin 2010). The increasing proportion of unions in which the female is the primary provider suggests the strength of these views is eroding (Raley, Mattingly, and Bianchi 2006; Vitali and Bruno 2016). Additionally, long-established views that men will be more educated than their partners have eroded as women surpass men in educational attainment; in fact, couples where the female partner has more education than the male partner are now no more likely to disrupt than when couples are educationally homogamous (Schwartz and Han 2014). Although the least economically attractive men may be less desirable as partners and parents, this may be more a result of their behaviors – substance abuse, violence, infidelity, and incarceration – than their role as providers (Barber et al. 2017).

Further, men who enter into marriage may increasingly be drawn from those who express and exhibit more gender-egalitarian views. Qualitative

research on cohabiting couples in the early twenty-first century has found that men who anticipated more equal sharing of household chores, as well as men who actually participated more in household labor, were considerably more likely to become engaged over time, and their partners were more satisfied with their relationships, than were those who performed little household labor (Miller and Sassler 2010; Sassler and Miller 2017). This is a shift from what was found among those cohabiting in the 1970s and 1980s, when egalitarian men were more likely to cohabit than marry directly, relative to young adults expressing more gender-conventional views (Clarkberg, Stolzenberg, and Waite 1995). Further, 1980s cohabiting couples who exhibited more conventional divisions of labor had a greater likelihood of transitioning into marriage than their couple counterparts who engaged in more egalitarian divisions of labor (Sanchez, Manning, and Smock 1998). This is now much less the case (Miller, Sassler, and Kusi-Appouh 2011). Less-educated men, in contrast, often express a disinclination to assume responsibility for household labor (Sassler and Miller 2017). In fact, some have suggested that the weaker partnering options for the most economically disadvantaged men can, in part, be due to their rejection of available jobs that are often in gendered occupations like caregiving or nursing, where steady employment could translate into their becoming more marriageable (Reeves and Sawhill 2015). There is evidence that this, too, is changing, particularly among minority and immigrant men (Roos and Stevens 2018).

CONCLUSION

This review of studies examining the determinants of the two halves of the gender revolution, and in particular, the effects of family-friendly public policies and socioeconomic equality, does not strongly support Cherlin's concerns that the absence of these two features present a serious barrier to the ongoing gender revolution. Certainly, female labor force participation is facilitated by the availability of subsidized, high-quality child care, together with a program of family leave that keeps infants home for much of their first year of life. Yet the evidence from the United States of high male participation in family life suggests that these policies also substitute for male involvement in the home, delaying the second half of the gender revolution. Children gain when public policy promotes parental leave, because the combination of six to twelve months of family leave and high-quality child care gives children the developmentally ideal form of care – from parents in infancy and thereafter from skilled professionals in the company of other children as toddlers. An analysis of Nordic family policies concluded

that the major gainers from these policies were children, who experience great continuity of care and high levels of parental investment, followed by men, who gained closer relationships with their children. Even in these countries, however, women still find themselves juggling the tasks of work and family, their long leave-taking delays their career development (Bjornberg 2013) and if they have more than one child (sequentially) reduces their earnings (Stanfors and Nystedt 2017).

Socioeconomic inequality might be more of a problem for the spread of gender egalitarianism, but the evidence suggests that it too can be addressed (see, for example, higher levels of paid leave provided for less economically advantaged parents in California). Nevertheless, even in the short term, the major problem with high levels of socioeconomic inequality, particularly in the absence of family-friendly policies, is that children suffer. What are needed are policies that ease not only women's work–family conflict but also men's good provider conflict. As Cherlin emphasizes, it is not just that men in the lower half of the income distribution are too "essentialist" to attract a modern partner, but that they are too poor to do so. They have increasing difficulty attracting a long-term partner, and hence the opportunity for any co-resident parental relationship. Further, the decrease in male, otherwise known as "good" jobs, that in the United States context come with health benefits, sick and family leave, and savings for eventual retirement, is increasingly a problem for men who want to form and maintain a family. As automation reduces the numbers of such jobs, policies that would make men's family lives better would have to include some sort of permanent income floor.

Thus it seems that inequality and the lack of family-friendly public policies will certainly not prevent the completion of the second half of the gender revolution, although they might impede its progress. With the ending of the separate spheres, many women will no longer be barred from more productive work to the economic benefit of their families and national economies. Further, many men will be able to develop richer and deeper relationships with their children as they can spend more time with them and with their partners, whose lives they can more fully share, benefiting them all. This does not mean that a totally equal life will be normatively required for all couples, which would likely be a straitjacket as confining as the separate spheres. As the gender-orientation revolution has allowed men and women to choose partners of whatever sex their fundamental biology has programed them for, and yet still be able to parent, so heterosexual men and women can chose lives and partners that let them express whatever balance of masculine and feminine characteristics they feel most comfortable with (Udry 1994).