

Topic Review

The Family Contexts of Gender Development in Childhood and Adolescence

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Abstract

We review research on the family's role in gender development during childhood and adolescence. Our discussion highlights children's dyadic family relationship experiences with their parents and siblings; additionally, we describe ways in which the larger system of family relationships, including gendered dynamics in the marriage and the differential family experiences of sisters versus brothers may have implications for gender development. We also emphasize the significance of contextual factors—ranging from situational demands and affordances to forces emanating from the larger social ecology—in family gender socialization. We conclude that family experiences may have a more important impact on gender development than has previously been believed, and we highlight directions for future study. These include: (1) applying more complex models of parent socialization and family dynamics to the study of the family's role in gender development; (2) expanding on research directed at the socialization of sex differences to study how family dynamics are linked to individual differences in girls' and boys' gendered qualities and behaviors; and (3) further exploring how contextual factors exert an impact on gender socialization in the family.

Keywords: gender development; family processes; family relationships

In this paper we review research and theory on the family's role in gender development during childhood and adolescence. Grounded in traditional models of socialization, specifically social learning and psychoanalytic perspectives, much of this work has focused on parents' differential treatment of girls versus boys and stressed the ways in which parents interact with their children as a potentially important basis for sex differences. We begin our review with a summary of this work, noting, as others have, that this research uncovered surprisingly limited evidence of parents' role in gender socialization (e.g., Lytton & Romney, 1991; Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974). Expanding our scope to highlight recent work on parental socialization (e.g. Bugental & Goodnow, 1998; Collins, Maccoby, Steinberg, Hetherington, & Bornstein, 2000; Parke Ornstein, Rieser, & Zahn-Waxler, 1994) and family system dynamics

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(e.g., Whitechurch & Constantine, 1993), we suggest that traditional paradigms may not capture the complexities of gender socialization in the family, and as such, that extant research may underestimate the family's role in gender development.

With respect to the role of parents, whereas traditional socialization perspectives focused almost exclusively on parents as interaction partners for their children, more recently proposed models direct attention to phenomena such as how parents manage their children's everyday activities from afar (e.g., Parke *et al.*, 1994), the cognitive and affective processes that moderate parental behavior and practices (e.g., Bugental & Goodnow, 1998), and child effects on parenting (e.g., Collins *et al.*, 2000). These newer and more complex models call for expanding the scope of research on parenting in general, and they suggest new directions for research on gender socialization, as well. To exemplify potentially fruitful directions for research on gender socialization in the family we draw on Parke *et al.*'s (1994) tripartite model of parental roles, a model which directs attention beyond parents' role as interaction partners to their activities as *opportunity providers* and *instructors* for their children.

Drawing on the family systems literature (e.g., Whitechurch & Constantine, 1993) we also move beyond the focus on the parent-child dyad evident in extant research to consider other subsystems in the family, specifically, the marriage and sibling subsystems. Consideration of the larger system of family relationships is important, first, because children acquire information about gender roles and norms via their exposure to other dyadic relationships in the family. For example, children may observe sex-typed behaviors in their mothers' and fathers' interactions with one another or be exposed to a sex-typed division of labor in the marriage relationship. Experiences with different family members also provide a point for social comparisons: children's schemas about gender roles may be shaped by their differential experiences with their mothers versus with their fathers and by the differential treatment of sisters versus brothers in their families. Siblings, indeed, have been relatively neglected in the story of family gender socialization. We suggest that sibling influences may be both direct, as when sisters and brothers serve as models or social partners, as well as indirect, as when they serve as sources of social comparison, help to shape the structure of their families, and influence everyday family activities and routines. In our consideration of the family as a system, we emphasize that, in the face of the substantial literature on the sex-typed differential experiences of girls versus boys based on *between-family* comparisons, much less is known about the differential experiences of sisters versus brothers from studies that use *within-family* comparisons as their reference point.

The family contexts of gender development are diverse and dynamic. An ecological perspective on the role of the family in children's and adolescents' development holds that knowledge of the larger environments in which families are embedded is central to understanding the ways in which families work to socialize children (Bronfenbrenner & Crouter, 1983). Data from historical and cross-cultural analyses highlight striking differences across time and place in proscribed roles for girls and boys in their families, and corresponding differences between the social roles of women and men (Coltrane, 1996; Degler, 1980; Edwards & Whiting, 1980; Mintz & Kellogg, 1988). Discussion of concepts and findings from these literatures is beyond the scope of this review, but an appreciation of the role of the larger context of family gender dynamics would be informed by a multidisciplinary framework.

In this review, we highlight research that has moved away from a universal model of gender development to adopt an ecological perspective on family socialization influ-

ences. One relevant line of study examines how family structure (e.g., single parent, same-sex parent families) may have implications for gender development. Clearly, the structure of the family, in particular whether the family includes opposite-sex parents and/or opposite-sex siblings, can afford or constrain opportunities for sex-typed patterns of family roles, relationships and activities. An ecological perspective, however, emphasizes the need to move beyond the 'social addresses' implied by family structure to an examination of the *family processes* that may underlie individual differences in gender roles, attributes or attitudes. An ecological perspective also alerts us to the fact that families may include influential members beyond those studied to date, such as extended kin, step-parents and siblings, foster siblings, and non-biologically related household members. An understanding of how experiences with such family members have implications for gender development awaits future research.

Parents' Role in Gender Development

Highlighting parents' role in their children's gender development, early social learning theories (e.g., Mischel, 1966) pointed to the ways in which parents shape their children's behavior via displays of warmth, encouragement, and control in the context of everyday interactions; contemporary researchers from a social learning perspective have sought evidence for parents' differential treatment of girls versus boys. A second early perspective on gender development was the psychoanalytic account that placed children's differential relationships with their mothers and fathers at the center of family socialization influences (Freud, 1962). More recent writings within this tradition also target the interconnections between children's relationships with their mothers versus their fathers in explaining gender development (Chodorow, 1978). In the following pages we review research grounded in these two traditions, research pertaining to parents' differential treatment of girls versus boys, and work on children's differential experiences with mothers versus fathers.

Do Parents Treat their Daughters and Sons Differently?

As we have suggested, this question has long been a central concern of researchers interested in gender development. Important reviews of the relevant literature have been published over the years, including Maccoby and Jacklin's (1974) seminal volume, Lytton and Romney's (1991) meta-analysis of research on the differential socialization of girls and boys, and most recently, a meta-analysis focused on the ways in which mothers and fathers talk to their children (Leaper, Anderson, & Sanders, 1998). We begin by discussing parents' influences in the context of their social interactions with their children. We then borrow from a recent conceptualization of parental socialization that highlights the multidimensional nature of parents' socialization activities (Parke *et al.*, 1994); borrowing from this model, we consider how parents' activities as instructors and opportunity providers may play a role in their children's gender development.

Parents as Interaction Partners. In the face of expectations from social learning theory that differential treatment of girls and boys can account for sex differences in children's gender development, when the focus is on general domains of parental behavior and studies use between-family comparisons, the empirical literature suggests that such differential treatment is not pronounced. In *The psychology of sex*

differences, Maccoby and Jacklin (1974) summarized data from over 70 studies published between 1936 and 1973 that reported on differences in parents' behaviors toward girls versus boys, including their frequency of interaction, affection, restrictiveness, permissiveness of dependency, reactions to child aggression, pressure for achievement and encouragement of sex-typed activities. Based on this body of work, the authors concluded that girls and boys are treated with a 'surprising degree of similarity' (p. 362) by their parents.

Importantly, many of the studies that were the foundation for this review were conducted prior to the feminist movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s. If birth cohort is a factor in parents' sex-typed treatment of children, we would expect that evidence of the differential socialization of girls and boys would have emerged from Maccoby and Jacklin's review. Instead, particularly with respect to the socialization of personal-social attributes like cooperation, independence, and aggression, early work suggested that the primarily middle-class, white, North American parents, who were the focus of most of the targeted studies, treated girls and boys similarly. When sex differences in children's experiences with parents emerged, as in the greater use of physical punishment for boys, the authors suggested that boys' greater 'resistiveness' lead parents to use more coercive efforts to achieve the kinds of personal-social outcomes that are valued for both sexes. Though the number of relevant studies was quite small ($n = 3$), Maccoby and Jacklin also concluded that, in contrast to socialization of personal-social attributes, parents may exert more pressure for sex-typing within the area of children's interests and activities (e.g., toy choice), and that these pressures may be especially pronounced in the case of boys and their fathers.

Note that the paucity of consistent mean differences in parents' treatment of girls versus boys cannot be construed as evidence that parents are unimportant in the gender socialization process. First, results pertaining to questions about sex differences are orthogonal to results describing how individual differences in parents' sex-typed treatment of children are linked to individual differences among girls and among boys in their gender development. Second, early studies almost always used between-family comparisons of the experiences of girls and boys from different families to draw conclusions about parents' sex-typed treatment; our review suggests that within-family comparisons of the differential treatment of sisters versus brothers are a more powerful test of whether parents treat girls and boys differently. Finally, early work focused almost exclusively on parents' interactional styles with children; other dimensions of parenting highlighted in contemporary frameworks including parental beliefs (e.g., about what girls versus boys are like; about the causes of sex differences), the content of parents' values and attitudes (e.g., about gender roles), or the extent to which parents orchestrate their children's everyday activities and relationship experiences from afar (e.g., to promote different experiences for girls versus boys) are less well understood, but may influence gender development over the long term.

Relevant to parents' role in orchestrating children's activities, Maccoby and Jacklin's insight about parents' encouragement of sex-typed interests and activities as a domain where sex-typed treatment of children may be most evident anticipated the conclusion drawn by Lytton and Romney almost 20 years later. Based on their meta-analysis of 172 studies of parents' differential treatment of girls and boys published primarily in the 1970s and 1980s, Lytton and Romney concluded that, out of 19 socialization areas—many of which were similar to the those targeted by Maccoby and Jacklin—the only area in which fathers and mothers in North American samples showed sig-

nificant differences in their treatment of girls and boys was encouragement of sex-typed activities. Possibly demonstrating the influence of cultural norms, studies conducted in other Western countries also showed that boys were more often subject to physical punishment than girls. In contrast, in other socialization domains such as control of aggression and permissiveness of dependency, substantial variability in findings across studies was evident. Such results highlight the importance of examining the *contextual conditions* under which differential treatment of girls and boys is most likely to be displayed; factors ranging from situational demands (e.g., task demands specified in a laboratory study) to forces in the larger social ecology (e.g., more egalitarian attitudes among better educated parents) may make parents more or less tolerant of dependent or aggressive behaviors in their sons and daughters. Variability in parents' tendency to treat boys and girls in sex-typed ways also allows for an examination of whether and how individual differences among parents in their gender socialization efforts are linked to individual differences among girls and among boys in their gendered qualities and behaviors.

In the years prior to Lytton and Romney's review, a number of critiques of Maccoby and Jacklin's conclusions were published (e.g., Block, 1976, 1983). Key issues of concern included the investigators' lack of attention to the quality of studies that were the basis for the review, the early research literature's failure to provide information on fathers' behavior toward girls versus boys, and the field's heavy emphasis on young (preschool age) children. Lytton and Romney's review responded to these criticisms. First, the authors included an index of research quality as a moderator in their analyses and concluded that effect sizes reflecting sex-typed treatment of girls and boys increased with study quality. Second, Lytton and Romney's analysis targeted potential differences between mothers and fathers in the extent to which they displayed sex-typed treatment, but revealed only one domain in which mothers and fathers differed significantly in their interactions with girls and boys (i.e., fathers were more restrictive with sons than with daughters). Finally, with respect to the early literature's focus on young children, several writers suggested that sex differences in parents' treatment should be more apparent as children grow older (Block, 1976, 1979; Huston & Alvarez, 1990). According to the gender intensification hypothesis, sex-typed socialization should be most evident during or after puberty, when secondary sexual characteristics emerge and adult roles are imminent (Hill & Lynch, 1983). Such a perspective alerts us both to the role of child characteristics that elicit reactions from parents as well as the domain-specificity of parents' tolerance of non-stereotypical behavior (e.g., toy play in childhood versus heterosexual activities in adolescence). Although Lytton and Romney found that effect sizes reflecting differential socialization of girls and boys decreased with age of child, the overwhelming majority of studies in their meta-analysis focused on children aged 12 and under. As such, the research that formed the basis for Lytton and Romney's review did not allow for an adequate test of the potential moderating effects of children's developmental status.

Another limitation of extant work, highlighted by Lytton and Romney and others (e.g., Siegal, 1987), was the dearth of within-family comparisons of parents' treatment of their daughters versus their sons. On the one hand, Western norms regarding differential treatment of siblings hold that parents should treat their children similarly (Parsons, 1974/1942), and such norms may sensitize parents to limit their sex-typed treatment of their daughters and sons. On the other hand, if parents hold traditional values about male and female roles, they are in a better position to operationalize

those values when they have both a daughter and a son. And, as we argue later in our discussion of how dyadic family relationships are embedded in a larger family system, the social comparisons children can make when they observe sex-typed differential treatment of themselves and their siblings may be a particularly powerful influence on gender socialization (McHale, Crouter, & Tucker, 1999).

Although studies that include data on more than one child in a family are becoming more common, they have not tended to focus on gender socialization. Indeed, sometimes out of sample size considerations and sometimes for conceptual reasons, many studies that include siblings have focused only on same-sex sibling dyads (e.g., Hetherington, Reiss, & Plomin, 1994). The limited research available suggests that within-family comparisons of sisters versus brothers may provide a powerful test of the hypothesis that parents treat girls and boys differently. For example, in a series of studies, Crouter and McHale and their colleagues found that parents display more differential treatment toward mixed-sex than same-sex sibling dyads (Crouter, Helms-Erikson, Updegraff, & McHale, 1999; McHale *et al.*, 1999; McHale, Updegraff, Jackson-Newsom, Tucker, & Crouter, 2000) in domains including warmth, temporal involvement and parental knowledge about their children's daily activities. This evidence is suggestive of same-sex biases or preferences on the parts of parents and children and underscores the utility of taking into account both sex of parent and sex of child in studies of family gender socialization (Russell & Saebel, 1997). Importantly, however, these patterns vary across context. For example, when fathers hold more traditional gender role attitudes, greater differential treatment of sisters and brothers is evident, but when fathers' attitudes are less traditional, sisters' and brothers' experiences with parents are more similar (McHale *et al.*, 1999).

The latter findings alert us to the significance of a contextual perspective on gender development. Factors ranging from cultural norms, to family structure, to situational demands represent some of the contextual conditions that promote or constrain parents' sex-typed treatment of girls and boys. As one example of the significance of the social context, social psychological research on gender directs attention to the characteristics of the immediate social setting as a factor in gendered behavior (Deaux & Major, 1987). From this perspective, gender is constructed in the context of ongoing social exchanges; situational demands and individuals' reactions to one another in a given social situation may or may not elicit gendered behaviors and activities. A social psychological perspective can explain why parents' sex-typed treatment of children in the area of children's interests and activities may be more pronounced than their sex-typed treatment focused on children's personal-social behaviors: gendered schemas may be more strongly activated when, for example, boys play with dolls than when boys share their toys with friends.

Focusing on parents' and preschool children's personal-social behaviors in a toy play setting, Leaper (2000) found evidence for the importance of setting demands on parents' gender socialization: differences in parents' affiliative and assertive behaviors toward girls versus boys were more or less apparent depending on whether the play setting involved feminine-typed versus masculine-typed toys. This study was conducted in a laboratory context, with mothers and fathers directed to spend time playing with different sets of toys. To the extent that parents encourage sex-typed activities in children's everyday lives, the affordances for displays of sex-typed personal social behaviors (e.g., affiliative and nurturant behaviors) provided by sex-typed activities (e.g., play with toy dishes in Leapers's study) may have important implications for gender development over the long term.

Evidence of the significance of setting characteristics in parents' differential treatment of girls and boys also emerged in Leaper *et al.*'s (1998) meta-analysis of research on how parents talk to children. Leaper *et al.*'s analysis of parental talk was grounded in: (1) consistent findings of sex differences in the speech styles of adults suggesting that women have a more social-relational and men a more instrumental focus to their language use; and (2) critiques of both the Maccoby and Jacklin and the Lytton and Romney reviews—that a focus on broad socialization domains like total amounts of interaction, warmth, or restrictiveness may obscure sex differences that would be evident in more specific domains such as amount of talking or the extent of supportive versus directive speech (Block, 1979; Ruble & Martin, 1998). Findings from Leaper *et al.*'s meta-analysis revealed that mothers tended to use more speech overall and more supportive speech with girls than with boys (similar analyses could not be conducted on fathers' talk to girls and boys given the paucity of research on fathers). Importantly, this meta-analysis highlighted *contextual moderators* of sex differences. Factors including the nature of the directions mothers were given about their 'task' and the types of toys in the physical environment made a difference in the extent to which mothers talked more and in more supportive ways to girls than to boys. Additionally, when a wider variety of toys was available, mothers used more directive speech with boys than with girls.

Findings on the situational specificity of parents' sex-typed differential treatment provide a striking example of the importance of studying gender socialization in context: one reason why early reviews that analyzed mean level differences in girls' and boys' experiences found such limited evidence of parents' sex-typed treatment may be because there is considerable variability within parents (across settings) in their tendencies to treat girls and boys differently. In addition to further study of how immediate contextual demands explain *intra-individual differences* in parents' gender socialization efforts, an ecological perspective also directs attention to how forces in the larger social environment may have implications for *inter-individual differences* in parents' gender socialization efforts. Factors including ethnicity, religion, social class, and secular change have been linked to adults' gender role attitudes (e.g., Thornton, Alwin, & Camburn, 1983; Thornton & Young-DeMarco, 2001) and such factors may also have implications for specific dimensions of parents' gender socialization such as their child-rearing goals and expectations for their daughters versus their sons or the models of sex-typed behaviors and roles parents display. As yet, however, we know very little about how such contextual conditions are connected to parents' gender socialization behaviors and their children's gender development.

Parents' Roles as Instructors and Opportunity Providers. In our discussion thus far we have focused primarily on what Parke and colleagues describe as *parents' interactional role* with their offspring (Parke & Buriel, 1998; Parke *et al.*, 1994). Parke and colleagues, however, see parents' social interactions with their children as only one of three parental socialization roles; they argue that parents' roles as *direct instructors* and *providers of opportunities* have been relatively neglected in the socialization literature, and that study of these alternative parental roles may reveal especially powerful socialization influences.

With respect to gender socialization, we know little about parents' influences in their role as instructors, i.e., when they serve as 'coaches, teachers and supervisors' (Parke & Buriel, 1998, p. 469). Although researchers interested in gender development have examined parents as instructors, the focus has been on parents' interactional styles in

teaching tasks, with studies addressing such questions as whether mothers or fathers are more directive, supportive or oriented to problem-solving with girls versus boys. We know less about the substance of what parents convey about gendered roles and behaviors in their role as sources of advice and guidance for their offspring. Research showing links between parents' gender role attitudes and their children's development of gender schemas, gendered interests and gendered activities (e.g., Fagot & Leinbach, 1989; McHale *et al.*, 1999; Weinraub *et al.*, 1984) suggests, however, that parents may indeed provide information about gender roles and coach their children about 'appropriate' gender-typed behavior, but the mechanisms through which parents convey their attitudes require study.

Along these lines, a body of work by Eccles and colleagues focused on achievement motivation documents the prevalence of parents' beliefs about sex differences in children's 'natural talents,' and shows how such parental beliefs are linked to gendered patterns of achievement in offspring (e.g., Eccles, 1993, 1994; Eccles-Parsons, 1983). Importantly, Eccles's model holds that parents actualize their beliefs about what their daughters and sons should be like through strategies such as *explicit training* of personal values, *guiding* offspring toward particular academic and career choices, and *directing* children toward involvement in particular kinds of activities. A related line of study documents that parents hold distinct socialization goals for girls and boys (e.g., Block, 1983). As we have suggested, we know little about how parents develop their beliefs and child-rearing goals *vis-à-vis* their daughters and sons; the importance of larger contextual influences such as culture, religion and class as well as what children themselves contribute to their parents' schemas are directions for future study. How parents actualize their beliefs and goals in terms of their socialization efforts have, in accordance with the more general literature on parental socialization, focused on parents' interactional styles with their offspring. An additional direction for future research may be to study the substance of parents' socialization messages and how children perceive and interpret those messages.

Some investigators have suggested that parents spend more time with offspring of their same sex because they believe they are better able to offer guidance and advice to their same-sex children; i.e., that temporal involvement marks direct socialization efforts (Harris & Morgan, 1991; Huston, 1983; Jacklin, DiPietro, & Maccoby, 1984). Using time diary data, early research comparing adolescent girls' and boys' time spent with mothers versus fathers revealed findings consistent with this notion (Montemayor, 1982). This early research was based on between-family comparisons, and more recent within-family comparisons of parents' time spent with their daughters versus their sons assessed using time diary procedures provide dramatic evidence of such differential involvement: in families that include both sons and daughters, both mothers and fathers spend relatively more time with the child of their own sex (Harris & Morgan, 1991; McHale *et al.*, 1999, 2000). Additionally, research on parents' knowledge of their children's daily activities, a construct that is linked to parental supervision and monitoring, reveals similar cross-gender patterns: parents know relatively more about the everyday experiences of offspring of their own sex (Crouter *et al.*, 1999). Importantly, some of this work also suggests that such sex-typed patterns of parental involvement vary as a function of family characteristics. In sum, though research on parents' role as instructors is limited, available evidence suggests that this may be a fruitful focus of inquiry.

Turning to the third of Parke and colleagues' hypothesized parental roles (i.e., parents as providers of opportunities), there is again both direct and indirect evidence

that parents distinguish between girls and boys in how they organize, manage, and provide resources to support their children's development. From the way bedrooms are decorated (Rheingold & Cook, 1975), to the toys children are given (e.g., Fisher-Thompson, 1993), to the allocation of household chores (White & Brinkerhoff, 1981), studies based mainly on between-family comparisons show that parents treat girls and boys differently. Sex differences in parents' treatment are also evident in the domain of achievement. Eccles reports, for example, that parents are more likely to orchestrate boys' involvement in programs for gifted children, computer classes and sports teams than they are girls' involvement (Eccles & Harold, 1992). Further, when families' economic resources are limited, parents are more likely to invest in developmentally enhancing activities for sons than for daughters (Eccles & Hoffman, 1984; Romich, 2001; see also Ferree, 1990). As we noted earlier, Lytton and Romney's meta-analysis revealed that, in North American samples, parents' encouragement of sex-typed activities was the single domain in which significant effects for both mothers and fathers were observed. The majority of the studies targeted in the meta-analysis of this domain, however, examined parents' interactions with their children (e.g., during play sessions) or their perceptions of children's sex-typed qualities. We need to know much more about how parents allocate family resources, organize family life, and orchestrate children's everyday experiences to foster their children's gender development.

Again, an important issue for further study is the family contexts within which parents are more inclined to distinguish between their daughters and their sons in providing opportunities. Recall Eccles and Hoffman's (1984) finding that boys were treated more favorably than girls when families were stressed by financial difficulties. Early research on children's housework showed that sex-typed treatment was exacerbated when mothers were employed outside the home (Medrich, Roizen, Rubin, & Buckley, 1982; White & Brinkerhoff, 1981), and White and Brinkerhoff argued that a sex-typed pattern of chore allocations arises because mothers turn to their daughters for help when they are burdened by heavy work and family responsibilities. Crouter, Head, Bumpus, and McHale (2001) found evidence for this assertion, showing that girls' involvement in housework was most pronounced when mothers reported high work stress and when the family included both a daughter and a son. In the face of changing secular norms in Western societies that promote egalitarian treatment of girls and boys, sex-typed patterns of differential treatment may be more evident in demanding family circumstances. Clearly, however, the field needs more work on the family conditions that give rise to parents' sex-typed differential treatment of girls and boys.

Research should also be directed at assessing the linkages between the kinds of gendered opportunities parents provide and individual differences in children's gender development over time. Are girls who spend more time doing dishes, who are reared in pink bedrooms, or who are given dolls as birthday presents more likely to display feminine personal-social attributes in middle childhood? More likely to adopt traditional gender role attitudes as adolescents? To become nurses and teachers instead of physicians and physics professors in adulthood? Investigators have speculated that children's everyday gender-typed activities provide affordances for the acquisition of gendered cognitive skills and social behaviors (see Ruble & Martin, 1998). With the exception of a small set of studies focused on young children (e.g., Fagot & Leinbach, 1989; Eisenberg, Wolchik, Hernandez & Pasternak, 1985) and work on achievement motivation in adolescence (Eccles, 1993, 1994), we know little about whether

gendered patterns of everyday opportunities provided by parents have implications for individual differences in gender development over the long term. To the extent to which opportunities and personal choices are relatively constrained during childhood and adolescence, the implications of family gender socialization may be most apparent later, for instance, in the kinds of education and career decisions individuals make and in the family roles they assume in their adult lives.

Finally, an understanding of parents' differential socialization of girls and boys requires attention to child effects. Studies of the biological bases of gender development document genetic and hormonal differences between males and females, and recent research reveals that related processes can explain individual differences in gendered attributes and behaviors (Berenbaum, 1999; Udry, 2000). Further, as Maccoby and Jacklin (1974) suggested, children may evoke particular kinds of treatment from their parents and other family members by virtue of their personal characteristics; such dynamics, however, have not been a focus of gender socialization research. From another perspective, the schemas about gendered roles and attributes that children develop based on experiences with their parents serve as the foundation for children's active and constructive role in their own gender development (Lytton & Romney, 1991; Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974). And, as development unfolds, youth have increasing opportunities to select niches that best fit their interests and dispositions. Children's active role in their own development has been highlighted in recent writing on parental socialization (e.g., Bugental & Goodnow, 1998; Collins *et al.*, 2000) and should serve as a focus of study in research that examines parents' differential treatment of girls and boys.

Do Children Have Different Experiences with Mothers versus Fathers?

Parent-child relationships take place within a larger family context. Children's gender development may be influenced in the context of dyadic parent-child social exchanges, but children may also acquire important information about gender when they have different kinds of social interactions with their mothers and fathers. Indeed, the empirical literature reveals that, relative to findings about *parents' differential treatment of girls versus boys* described above, there is much more evidence that children have *different experiences with their mothers versus their fathers* (see Collins & Russell, 1991; Leaper *et al.*, 1998; Russell & Saebel, 1997; Siegal, 1987, for reviews of this work).

This body of literature documents that, in comparison to fathers, mothers tend to be more involved with their children (both girls and boys) from infancy through adolescence, that fathers' involvement tends to center around play and leisure as opposed to the more instrumental activities in which mothers spend their time (e.g., caregiving in infancy; teaching and learning activities later in development), that children feel closer to their mothers and converse with them about a range of topics while focusing their conversations with fathers on more instrumental issues and concerns, and that children tend to have more conflicts and disagreements with their mothers and treat their fathers with more deference (e.g., Collins & Russell, 1991; Maccoby, 1998). Mothers and fathers also talk to their children differently: based on a meta-analysis of almost 40 studies, Leaper *et al.* (1998) concluded that mothers talk more and use both more supportive and negative speech than fathers do, whereas fathers use more directive and informative speech and ask more questions than mothers do. Finally, fathers appear to be more focused on gender socialization than mothers, as suggested

by some evidence that fathers are more likely to treat their daughters and sons differently (Lytton & Romney, 1992; Maccoby, 1998; Siegel, 1987).

The significance of such complementarity in experiences with parents for children's and adolescents' gender development is consistent with a range of theoretical formulations, including psychoanalytic, social learning, and developmental perspectives (Collins & Russell, 1991). From a psychoanalytic perspective, for instance, Chodorow (1978) argued that mothers' and fathers' differing parental roles (i.e., intimate involvement with mothers coupled with more remote and distant relationships with fathers) promotes girls' and boys' differential orientations toward expressive and instrumental functioning. Social learning theories (e.g., Mischel, 1966) explained how children acquire the social relational behaviors and roles of their same-sex parent; to the extent that mothers and fathers' behaviors are distinct and complementary, the unique attributes and roles of females versus males may be especially salient and easy to learn. Finally, the idea that children observe and compare the roles and activities of their mothers and fathers and use these experiences to construct their own schemas about gender roles is consistent with cognitive theories of gender development (e.g., Martin & Halverson, 1987).

A family systems perspective also highlights the importance of studying a child's relationship with one parent in the context of her or his relationship with the other parent. From a systems perspective, to understand how families work in socializing children, it is essential to study how the component parts of the system are mutually influential, in this case, how children's experiences with their mothers are affected by those with their fathers and vice versa. Further, systems theorists view the family as an emergent phenomenon, not reduceable to its component parts. Properties of families such as parents' gender roles cannot be understood as the behaviors or activities of an individual member or even in terms of dyadic processes. Rather, gender roles in families are best understood in terms of the transactional patterns of the family as a whole (Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993). Research on mother–father differences in their sex-typed treatment of children has not tended to be cast in this kind of framework, one which requires within-family analyses of children's experiences with their mothers versus their fathers.

An important direction for research on mother–father differences is to study the contextual conditions underlying sex-typed patterns. Leaper *et al.*'s (1998) meta-analysis highlighted situational factors in the extent to which mothers and fathers used differing kinds of speech with their children (e.g., types of toys present, task instructions, the presence or absence of the other parent during the observational session, and whether the observation took place at home or in the lab). Other work suggests that the larger context in which families operate has implications for mothers' and fathers' activities as parents. Crouter *et al.* (1999), for example, found that mother–father differences in knowledge of their children's everyday activities were less pronounced when mothers spent more hours at work: although mothers' knowledge did not vary as a function of their work hours, men whose wives worked more hours knew more about their children's daily lives than did men whose wives worked fewer hours each week. In other words, mothers' longer hours at work appeared to pull fathers into daily family life and, in so doing, reduced stark sex differences. These findings are consistent with other work showing that women's involvement in the labor force has implications for parents' gender roles in the family (Crouter & McHale, 1993). Additional research is needed, however, to document how families' ties to the larger social world—extended family, neighborhood, religious institutions, and the

like—have implications for the patterning of mothers' and fathers' activities and behaviors within the family.

It will also be important to document that differences in children's experiences with their mothers versus their fathers do indeed have implications for individual differences in gender development. In addition to learning potentially different social scripts for relating to their mothers versus their fathers, the social comparisons children make about how women versus men behave in close relationships and about the kinds of family roles they themselves might seek as adults may be a powerful influence on children's gender development over the long term. In a study of gender-typed academic achievement across the transition to junior high school, for example, Updegraff, McHale and Crouter (1996) found that girls with more egalitarian parents (as indexed by how much time girls spent with their fathers *relative to* their mothers) maintained their school grades in the stereotypically masculine subjects of math and science. In contrast, girls who spent relatively more time with their mothers than with their fathers showed declines from the fifth to the seventh grade in their math and science grades. Such findings are consistent with the gender intensification hypothesis (Hill & Lynch, 1983) in suggesting that adolescence is a time of increased pressure for gender typing, and they highlight the importance of longitudinal analyses of gender development: this study showed differences at seventh grade but not at fifth grade in girls' patterns of academic achievement as a function of their parents' gender roles. These analyses also revealed that it was neither the parenting activities of mothers nor those of fathers, studied in isolation, that explained girls' gender-typed academic performance; rather, effects emerged when the mother–father–child system was the focus of study. We elaborate on this issue in the following discussion of the significance of parents' marital relationships for children's gender development.

Marriage Relationships and Children's Gender Development

A body of work documents the links between parents' marital relationships and children's adjustment (e.g., Cummings & Davies, 1994; Emery, 1988), and the burgeoning literature on co-parenting shows how mothers' and fathers' support for one another in the parenting role enhances children's well-being (e.g., Gable, Belsky, & Crnic, 1995). In short, what goes on between mothers and fathers seems to be very salient to children and has important implications for how children develop.

Marriage relationships differ from one another in ways other than how well parents get along. As some of the work outlined earlier implies, another important dimension of marriage is the extent to which wives and husbands assume gender-typed roles (Huston & Geis, 1993; Peplau, 1983; Thompson & Walker, 1989). In an extensive body of research, marriage and family scholars have documented the often distinctive roles of women and men in marriage; highlighted in this research is the way in which spouses divide paid and unpaid (i.e., domestic) work. In addition to describing the dimensions of women's and men's family roles, a relevant line of study examines the contextual conditions surrounding spouses' assumption of more or less gender-typed marital roles. Factors including parents' education and gender role attitudes have been implicated; also highlighted are the links between mothers' and fathers' involvement in paid work outside the home (including how much time they spend on the job and the kinds of resources such as income and prestige they can bring to their families from work) and how work is divided in the home.

How might parents' gender roles in marriage have implications for their children's gender development? First, as in studies of the links between marital conflict and children's adjustment problems, social learning mechanisms can be invoked to predict that children will model the marital roles they observe, including parents' roles in the labor force and their in-home roles in child care, housework, and family management (e.g., organizing family routines, kin keeping). Some early research on maternal employment produced results consistent with social learning concepts, documenting that children with employed mothers exhibit less stereotyped gender concepts, preferences, and attitudes (Cordua, McGraw & Drabman, 1979; Gold & Andres, 1978; Huston & Alvarez, 1990; Lerner, 1994; Levy, 1989; Weinraub *et al.*, 1984).

Similarly, studies of families with non-traditional structures including single parent and gay and lesbian parents suggest that children's observations of their mothers' and fathers' family roles may have an impact on gender socialization. For example, research on gender development has shown that boys from single parent, mother-headed households tend to be less sex-typed than boys from homes where fathers are present (Russell & Ellis, 1991; Stevenson & Black, 1988); other studies show that girls are similarly affected (Covell & Turnbull, 1982; Roberts, Green, Williams & Goodman, 1987). These effects tend to be small, however, with variability across age and social background. Similarly, findings from studies of children with lesbian mothers show that girls from such families are less traditionally feminine with respect to play, dress, and activity preferences as compared to girls with heterosexual parents (Green, Mandel, Hovedt, Gray & Smith, 1986). Again, however, group differences are small in magnitude, and children from non-traditional families typically fall within conventional ranges of gendered behavior (Patterson, 1997, 2000). These studies suggest that the structure of the family, in itself, tells only a small part of the story of parents' roles. The relatively small effects on gender development derived from studies comparing children from different family structures (as defined by the nature of their parents' relationship) may come about because what children perceive in the home, including the nature and division of housework, child care, and paid work, patterns of decision making, and the attitudes and values parents convey, is tied very loosely to family structure. Family structure affords and constrains opportunities for particular kinds of family dynamics, but the extent to which families enact sex-typed dynamics must be studied directly. An ecological perspective directs attention beyond the 'social addresses' defined by parents' marital status, sexual orientation and the like to examine family roles, relationships and daily activities; such processes give rise to individual differences in girls' and boys' gender development and should be the focus of analysis (Barber & Eccles, 1992; Stevenson, 1991).

Indeed, studies that have directly examined the links between parents' family roles and activities and children's gender development have found results consistent with social learning predictions that children will model the gender role orientations of their parents. Studying 2- and 3-year-olds, Weinraub *et al.* (1984) found that fathers (but not mothers) with more traditional family roles—as measured by daily diary accounts of fathers' activities—had young children with more 'advanced' knowledge of gender stereotypes and gender identity (i.e., they were more stereotyped). Similar results emerged in a study of preschool children in England and Hungary: when parents rated their roles in housework and child care as less traditional, their children displayed less gender-typed schemas (Turner & Gervai, 1995); in this study, fathers' non-traditionality was also linked to more feminine-typed play by both girls and boys

in a laboratory setting. Examining a sample of children aged 5–12 years, Serbin, Powlishta, and Gulko (1993) asked parents to rate the extent to which they or their spouse typically performed particular kinds of housework and child-oriented activities (e.g., playing catch with children; doing laundry). Their results showed that parents' roles were linked to children's gender schemas as well as their preferences regarding adult occupations and their preferences for same-sex peers.

Such patterns are also evident in adolescence. In a study we described earlier that relied on children's and parents' daily diary accounts of their shared activities, Updegraff *et al.* (1996) showed that the way in which parents divided their time with their offspring was linked to sex-typed patterns of academic achievement in young adolescent girls. Also using daily diary accounts of parents' activities, Crouter, Manke and McHale (1995) assessed parents' division of housework and its links to patterns of gender-typed activities across the transition to adolescence, finding that girls with more traditional parents became more involved over time in housework when they also had younger brothers, and that boys with more traditional parents spent more time on masculine-type chores (e.g., work on the car, home repairs) across the transition to adolescence.

Importantly, the marital roles that children observe include not only the specific activities parents carry out—like doing the dishes or going to a job—but notions about responsibility—such as who is in charge of ensuring that domestic work gets done and who is the primary breadwinner (Thompson & Walker, 1989). Consistent with the ecological tenet that factors emanating from the larger social context exert an impact on family dynamics, feminist family sociologists highlight that the family roles of women and men are not equivalent in value: what falls traditionally within the masculine domain is valued more highly than that within the woman's sphere. This idea is one basis for feminist sociologists' rejection of traditional conceptualizations that characterize families as 'a unitary whole . . . (with) a single class position, standard of living, and set of interests' (Ferree, 1990, p. 867). Instead, these researchers emphasize the systemic nature of the family, viewing families as a diverse set of individuals, stratified by gender and by age, who often display different, and even competing interests and needs. From a feminist perspective, issues of power and the allocation of family resources (e.g., parents' time spent with sons versus daughters; monetary and material resources allocated to brothers versus sisters or husbands versus wives) are a central focus of study, and a key question becomes, who wins and who loses when family members' interests and needs compete? Do the demands of the husband's/father's job take precedence over those of the wife/mother? When both parents are employed, is free time similarly accessible to fathers and mothers, or do mothers continue to assume the lioness's share of domestic work? And finally, under what circumstances do women and men break out of traditional patterns in the distribution of power and resources? From this perspective, the division of paid and unpaid work in families is of central importance because it reflects the family's power structure and because it is central to the construction of gender within the family (Berk, 1985; Coltrane, 1996; Hochschild, 1989).

The personal dispositions of parents, including their gender role attitudes, their personal preferences, and their skills have been shown to be important correlates of parents' family role activities (e.g., Baruch & Barnett, 1981). According to Ferree (1990), however, resources, in the form of income and job prestige are a necessary condition for individuals to be able to actualize their values and preferences in their daily patterns of activity such as the amounts of time they spend in paid work, unpaid

domestic work, and leisure. Studying married couples with school-age children, for example, McHale and Crouter (1992) found that women whose incomes were similar to those of their husbands were more likely to actualize their egalitarian values in the form of a more equal division of household labor; in turn, both wives and husbands reported higher levels of marital satisfaction when their values about gender roles matched their everyday division of housework. Importantly, this study showed how matches and mismatches between attitudes and role behaviors sometimes result in wives reporting significantly higher marital satisfaction than their own husbands—and vice versa. Couples do not always agree in day-to-day decisions about family life; who gets his or her way when differences arise reflects each spouse's power in their shared relationship.

Along these lines, in the Updegraff *et al.* study cited earlier, the investigators sought evidence of the conditions under which a more egalitarian division of labor—in this case the division of child-oriented activities between mothers and fathers—was evident. Analyses revealed that mothers and fathers who displayed more egalitarian roles also had less traditional gender role attitudes. In addition, in families of girls but not boys, egalitarianism in parental roles was linked to mothers' and fathers' *relative* job prestige: when mothers' job prestige was similar to fathers', fathers were relatively more involved with their daughters; in contrast, mothers' job prestige had no bearing on fathers' involvement with their sons.

More generally, some researchers have suggested that fathers may exert a stronger influence on their children's gender development than mothers, a pattern that has been attributed to fathers' greater concern about gender-appropriate behavior. A feminist perspective, in contrast, alerts us to the possibility that fathers generally have more influence than mothers do on factors ranging from the social class of the neighborhood in which the family resides to the work and family roles wives and husbands assume. To the extent that fathers' values and preferences better explain children's gender development than mothers' it may be because fathers' dispositions better reflect families' social position and inner dynamics. A feminist perspective highlights important concepts from ecological and systems perspectives and provides for some novel ideas about gender socialization in the family. More generally, research and theory suggest that the study of gender roles in marriage may be a fruitful line of inquiry in efforts to map the family's role in children's and adolescents' gender development.

Siblings' Role in Gender Development

Siblings are an important part of family life. In the face of declines in family size among all segments of U.S. society, most children grow up in households that include at least one sibling (Eggebeen, 1992; Hernandez, 1997). Indeed, daily diary reports of white, working- and middle-class children in the U.S. show that, during middle childhood, siblings are children's most common out-of-school companions (McHale & Crouter, 1996). Cross-cultural analyses likewise highlight the ubiquity of siblings in children's everyday lives as companions and caregivers, leading one observer to suggest that what varies across cultures is *who else besides siblings* will be an important part of children's social ecology (Weisner, 1989).

Despite their centrality in children's lives around the world, sibling relationships have not received the same level of attention in research on child and adolescent development as have parent-child or peer relationships. A body of work, however, documents the unique role that siblings play in one another's development (e.g., Dunn,

1998). Through their everyday interactions, siblings can influence one another by serving as models, advisors, social partners and combatants. Siblings also indirectly influence each other by virtue of their impact on the roles and relationship dynamics of the larger family system. Finally, as they pursue their own interests, siblings can provide their sisters and brothers with exposure to and opportunities for novel social experiences and activities. In the sex-segregated period of middle childhood, in particular, opportunities for contact with children of the other sex, outside the structured environment of school, are likely to be quite different for children from same- versus mixed-sex sibling dyads.

Some of the earliest studies of sibling influences focused on gender development (e.g., Brim, 1958; Koch, 1956; Sutton-Smith & Rosenberg, 1970). These early investigations generated a body of data addressing the question of whether the gender-typed qualities of children varied as a function of whether the sex of their siblings. Most studies tested a social learning prediction that children would imitate the qualities of their siblings, and thus that children with sisters would develop more feminine qualities and those with brothers more masculine ones. Further, given the tendency to imitate higher status models, younger siblings were expected to imitate their older siblings more so than older siblings would imitate younger ones. A number of studies found support for the social learning hypothesis (see Rust, Golombok, Hines, Johnston, Golding, *et al.* (2000) for a recent example focused on a large sample of preschoolers in Britain), but effects have been inconsistent due, at least in part, to the methodological limitations inherent in this work (see Huston, 1983; Ruble & Martin, 1998). One of most serious problems has been the assumption implicit in almost all of this work that children with brothers are exposed to more masculine role models and children with sisters to more feminine ones. The gendered qualities and behaviors of siblings, however, have almost never been measured directly. Moving beyond the status variable, 'sibling sex constellation' or 'sex of sibling,' to measure the links between siblings' gendered qualities and the social processes through which siblings influence one another represents an important direction for research on siblings' role in gender development.

In one short-term longitudinal study McHale, Updegraff, Helms-Erikson, and Crouter (2001) assessed the linkages between siblings' gendered qualities to test the social learning prediction that younger siblings would be more likely to model their older siblings' gendered qualities than the reverse. This study focused on sibling similarity in gender role attitudes, gendered personality qualities (expressivity and instrumentality) and gender-stereotypical leisure activities measured in both an older and a younger sibling. The findings revealed results consistent with social learning predictions: controlling for the gendered attributes of mothers and fathers (because sibling similarity could be the result of both siblings' imitation of parents) and secondborn children's own attributes at age 8, findings revealed that older (firstborn) siblings' gender role attitudes, gendered personality qualities, and gender-typed activities explained unique variance in second borns' scores on these same measures two years later. Also consistent with social learning predictions, there was more evidence of secondborns' modeling of firstborns than the reverse, and more evidence of firstborns' modeling parents than secondborns. Importantly, this study showed more consistent linkages between the gendered attitudes, personality qualities and leisure activities of siblings than between children's attributes and those of their mothers or their fathers.

Stoneman, Brody, and MacKinnon (1986) examined sibling influence processes in an observational investigation of sibling interaction. Studying school-age sibling dyads

in unstructured play settings, these investigators found that the sex of the older sibling had implications for the nature of the dyad's play: brother–brother pairs engaged in more stereotypically masculine play (e.g., play with balls, vehicles, or toy weapons) than any other group, and older brother–younger sister pairs engaged in more masculine play than did sister–sister pairs. In contrast, sister–sister and sister–brother pairs engaged in more stereotypically feminine play (e.g., art activities, doll play, play house) as compared to dyads that included an older brother. Importantly, and reminiscent of findings on mothers' versus fathers' parental roles, the social behaviors of siblings also varied across dyad constellation: brother–brother pairs interacted less than other dyads, and older sisters more often assumed the roles of teacher and manager in the course of social exchanges. The sex of the sibling also proved to have more general implications: children who had an older sibling of the other sex had less stereotyped gender role concepts. Further, using the unobtrusive measure of gender-typing designed by Rheingold and Cook (1975), these investigators reported an important qualification to earlier studies in their finding that the bedroom decor of *boys with older brothers* was more stereotyped than that of any other group of children.

The kinds of influence processes we have discussed thus far imply that siblings will have a 'positive' influence on gender development in the sense that they will promote their own gendered qualities in their siblings. Sibling influences are notoriously difficult to detect, however, because at the same time that social learning processes serve to make siblings similar to one another, a second process, sibling deidentification, may operate to make siblings different. Proposed in the early writings of Alfred Alder (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956; see also Sulloway, 1996), sibling deidentification refers to a dynamic whereby siblings actively work to develop different attributes and interests in an effort to establish their own niches in the family and reduce sibling rivalry. Some work on siblings' role in gender development suggests that sibling deidentification processes may become evident in adolescence as youth focus on developing their unique identities (Grotevant, 1978; McHale *et al.*, 2001). Learning more about the conditions under which siblings serve as models versus foils for one another's development represents an important direction for future research on sibling influences on gender development.

In addition to the direct effects siblings have on one another in the course of their everyday experiences, siblings also may have an impact on each other's gender development because they help to define the family structure and thereby afford opportunities for patterns of daily activities, roles, and relationships in the family. We have previously discussed data on children's and adolescents' relationships with mothers and fathers, noting that when parents have both a daughter and a son, they tend to show preferences for same-sex offspring. Although the gender constellation of the sibling dyad determines whether a particular set of parents has the opportunity to treat a daughter and son differently in sex-typed ways, factors ranging from situational demands, to child characteristics, to parents' personal dispositions help to determine whether they will, in fact, do so. Social norms supporting the equal treatment of children by their parents may make parents with non-traditional attitudes toward gender roles work particularly hard to treat their daughters and sons as similarly as possible.

The competition between two value systems—toward sex-typed treatment of sisters and brothers versus equal treatment of siblings—is also evident in research on the allocation of children's housework, another domain in which the presence of a sibling may have implications for children's gender roles in their families. Several writers

have suggested, for example, that the gender constellation of the sibling dyad might help to explain children's involvement in housework, such that the presence of both a girl and a boy in the same family would allow for more sex-typed chore allocations (Antill, 1987; Antill, Goodnow, Russell, & Cotton, 1996; White & Brinkerhoff, 1981). When this question is asked without regard to other information about the family context, however, sex of sibling effects on children's housework are small or inconsistent (Antill *et al.*, 1996; White & Brinkerhoff, 1982). In contrast, when factors such as parents' gender-role orientations are also considered along with the structure of the sibship, a clearer pattern emerges, and indicates that at least two conditions underlie children's gender-typed involvement in housework: first, parents must have a daughter and a son, close in age, to whom they can assign gender-stereotypical tasks, and second, parents' values regarding traditional gender roles must be sufficiently strong that these values take precedence over a cultural norm of equal treatment of siblings (McHale *et al.*, 1999).

The importance of norms regarding parents' equal treatment of siblings is documented in a body of work demonstrating the well-being consequences to children and adolescents of parental favoritism in the form of displays of greater warmth and less strict discipline directed at one sibling. In everyday family life, children carefully monitor their parents' treatment of themselves versus their siblings, and the social comparisons they make about their own versus their siblings' treatment appear to have important implications for their sense of self. Research on parents' differential treatment of siblings has focused almost exclusively on its consequences for children's well-being and the quality of the sibling relationship, but daily opportunities to make social comparisons between their own family roles and activities and those of their sisters or brothers may also have important implications for children's gender development. A family systems perspective highlights the interconnections between the experiences of different dyads in the family; subsystems in families are mutually influential in part through the 'self-reflexive' activities of family members, including the kinds of social comparisons children make with regard to their parents' treatment of siblings—as well as the social comparisons that parents make about their experiences with their different offspring (Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993). Research on parents' differential treatment of siblings illuminates the significance of interconnections among different elements of the family system for understanding the family's role in gender development.

Summary and Conclusions

Our review of research on the family contexts of gender development highlighted children's experiences in their dyadic relationships with parents and siblings. In addition, we emphasized the importance of studying the larger system of family relationships, including what children glean from their exposure to other dyadic relationships in their families such as their parents' marital relationship, and what they learn from making social comparisons between their own family roles, relationships and activities, and those of other members of their families. Finally, our review underscored the importance of studying the contextual conditions that are linked to family gender socialization dynamics: characteristics of the immediate setting give rise to within-individual variation in parents' gender socialization activities (e.g., Leaper *et al.*, 1998); family structure, as defined simply by the presence of parents and siblings of the same or opposite sex, affords different chances for gendered family roles and

activities; and influences from the larger social context ranging from cultural attitudes and values to economic opportunities for women versus men penetrate the family, imbuing family members' attributes and behaviors with meaning and influencing the course of family dynamics.

Our review suggests that the complexities of family socialization processes have not been fully captured in the extant literature on the family's role in children's and adolescents' gender development and highlights several directions for future research. First, variations in gender socialization across context mean that one potentially important line of work is to examine how family dynamics are linked, over time, to *individual differences* in gender development across childhood and adolescence. Whereas a body of work has been aimed at documenting sex differences in girls' versus boys' family interactions and sex differences in the parenting of mothers versus fathers, we know surprisingly little about how differences in family experiences among girls and among boys are linked to individual differences in gender development. Further, much of the extant work has focused on young children, and we know much less about how family gender socialization processes may influence development over the long term. During middle childhood and adolescence youth begin to make decisions about school, work, and social relationships—decisions that are often gendered—and these decisions may have important ramifications for their opportunities as adults. We need to know more about how earlier family experiences have implications for the niches youth pick and the choices they make when they have more freedom and greater autonomy to do so.

In studying gender socialization dynamics within the family, future investigators should also look beyond children's dyadic interactions with parents to study other kinds of family dynamics that may have implications for gender development. Using Parke *et al.*'s (1994) tripartite model of parenting, we provided some examples of how newer and more complex models of parent socialization may be applied in the study of gender socialization. In examining parents' role as instructors, for example, researchers need to learn more about the messages parents explicitly convey regarding what it means to be a wife versus a husband, a daughter versus a son, or a sister versus a brother. The limited work available on parents' roles as opportunity-providers and managers of their children's activities and social experiences suggests that this may be a particularly fruitful line of inquiry. Recent writings on parental socialization have also highlighted the cognitive and affective processes that moderate parental behaviors and their impacts on children (e.g., Bugental & Goodnow, 1998) and stressed the significance of child effects on the socialization process (e.g., Collins *et al.*, 2000). Such insights provide potentially fruitful directions for research into parents' role in their children's gender socialization.

In addition to expanding the scope of studies on parental socialization, investigators should also move beyond dyadic processes to document how children experience the multiple subsystems within the family. The complexity of family dynamics is evident in research that documents the sometimes different experiences of individuals—mothers versus fathers, sisters versus brothers—in the same family. Indeed, within-family analysis of similarities and differences in family members' experiences represents a most promising focus for future work.

Finally, our review underscored the significance of further analysis of contextual influences on family gender socialization dynamics. From the demands of the immediate social situation to the family's place in the larger social world, contextual factors are likely to influence the nature and developmental implications of family gender

socialization processes. First, contextual influences serve to modify family members' gendered activities and behaviors. At a micro level, characteristics of the immediate setting such as who else is present may determine whether parents' gender schemas are activated and motivate sex-typed treatment of children. At a more macro level, economic forces may support more or less gendered roles by parents, and in turn, parents' values and aspirations for child-rearing. Less well understood are the ways in which contextual factors affect the meanings attributed to family activities and roles. For instance, a daughter who takes over domestic responsibilities because both of her parents are employed for long hours may learn something quite different about gender roles from her household task involvement than will a daughter who carries out the same kinds of household tasks in the company of her homemaker mother. An ecological perspective alerts us to the possibility that the same kinds of activities and experiences may be differentially interpreted and may have quite different effects depending on the contexts in which they occur; this perspective points to contextual conditions as potentially important moderators of family socialization processes.

In sum, research to date provides some important insights about the significance of family influences on gender development. Because the scope of this work has been limited, however, extant findings may actually underestimate the impact of family experiences. The complexity of family gender socialization processes means that future researchers will need to adopt increasingly complex conceptual models, research designs, and analytic approaches if we are to more fully understand the ways in which families influence the course of gender development.

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