AN ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION OF

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Title: Connections Between Women's Unpaid Family Work and Their Family Relationships: A Feminist Analysis.

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Alexis J. Walker

Women have long been responsible for the unpaid and under-recognized work of maintaining homes and family relationships (Walker, 1999). In this dissertation, I use feminist theories to address the connections between women's unpaid family work and their family relationships. I explore family ties between (a) aging mothers and their caregiving daughters, (b) fishing wives and their husbands and children, and (c) able-bodied sisters and their siblings with disabilities. I also expand the notion of family work to include participating in a research project on behalf of one's family and community.

Feminists critique women's unpaid family work as oppressive (Thorne, 1992) whereas other researchers argue that women have power within families (Kranichfeld, 1988). I focus on the tensions between the constraints women

experience living in a patriarchal society and the ways they pursue purposeful and fulfilling lives. In other words, women are both oppressed and powerful.

I pursue these and other issues surrounding women's lives through three separate studies. In my first study, I used a multimethod approach to show that aging mothers and their caregiving daughters were purposeful in attending to one another's lives, preserving mother's autonomy, and managing tension. Variability across pairs provided evidence for three styles of relationships: (a) intimate, (b) connected, and (c) constrained.

In the second study, I addressed the ethics of doing research with women who volunteer to participate in research on behalf of their families. Using qualitative telephone interview methods, I demonstrate that fishing wives made sense of their participation in the research project by emphasizing: (a) themselves as active shapers of family life, (b) their solidarity with the fishing community, and (c) the legitimacy of science to help fishing families.

In the final study, I conducted in-depth interviews with able-bodied sisters of siblings with disabilities, discovering that they describe themselves as good sisters by normalizing their sibling's disability, minimizing personal sacrifices, accepting the gendered nature of family care, and emphasizing opportunities for moral enhancement.

Collectively, these studies demonstrate that women actively shape their lives and relationships within the confines of a patriarchal system. From these findings, suggestions are made for improving women's lives.

Connections Between Women's Unpaid Family Work and Their Family Relationships: A Feminist Analysis

by

Lori A. McGraw

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Dean of Graduate School

I understand that my dissertation will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my dissertation to any reader upon request.

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Lori A. McGraw, Author

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CONTRIBUTION OF AUTHORS

Anisa M. Zvonkovic provided funding for the second study. She also influenced the study design and assisted with manuscript preparation. Leslie N. Richards influenced the third study's design. She also assisted with manuscript preparation.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my mother, Janice K. McGraw, to my grandmothers, Mafra Lykins Marini and Lorraine McGraw, to my great-aunt, Ruth P. Flanagan, and to my great-grandmothers, Hattie Pickleseimer and Wanda Tudor.

Connections Between Women's Unpaid Family Work and Their Family Relationships: A Feminist Analysis

INTRODUCTION

Women have long been responsible for the unpaid and under-recognized work of maintaining homes and family relationships (Walker, 1999). Family work, initially conceptualized as housework and childcare, has come to describe many unpaid activities in which people—mostly women—engage on behalf of their families. Examples of family work include housework (Oakley, 1974), childcare (Arendell, 1997), kinkeeping (Rosenthal, 1985), emotion work (Erickson, 1993), volunteering (Daniels, 1987) and caregiving (Coward, Horne, & Dwyer, 1992). Feminist researchers exploring unpaid family work tend to focus on housework and childcare as well as on relationships between husbands and wives (Walker, 1999). Less attention has been given, however, to other types of family work (e.g., volunteering) and relationships (e.g., siblings).

In this dissertation, I address the connections between women's unpaid family work and their family relationships within the lesser-explored adult relationships between mothers and daughters and between siblings. I also expand the notion of family work to include participating in a research project on behalf of one's family and community. Social scientists have recognized women's collective power to organize and change unjust laws on behalf of their families (Harley, 1994; Jones, 1995; Pardo, 1990). Participation in a research project can serve a similar purpose.

Feminists critique women's unpaid family work as oppressive (Thorne, 1992) whereas other researchers argue that women have power within families (Kranichfeld, 1988). I focus on the tensions between the constraints women experience living in a patriarchal society and the ways they pursue purposeful and fulfilling lives. Women are both oppressed and powerful. For example, daughters rather than sons are more likely to be responsible for providing care for their aging mothers, partly because they are less tied to the paid labor force. This tenuous connection to paid labor results from a lifetime of low earnings and attention to the needs of family members (Hooyman & Gonyea, 1995). Their lesser connection, relative to sons, also is a result of cultural norms that require women to be self-less (Baber & Allen, 1992). Within this framework, however, mothers and daughters maintain the closest relationships relative to any other intergenerational-tie combination (Rossi & Rossi, 1990). Their relationships develop through a lifetime of shared experiences within a patriarchal society (Phillips, 1996). These relationships can provide an avenue for mothers and daughters to be powerful through their support of and care for one another.

A DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDIES

In my first study, conducted with Alexis J. Walker, I used a qualitative approach to conduct a secondary analysis of mother-daughter videotaped interactions. I utilized quantitative survey measures to support the qualitative analysis. Feminist, social constructionist perspectives guided my work and

illuminated how women in the study constructed meaningful lives within a patriarchal context. I also took a dyadic, or close relationships approach, focusing on how women's lives are interdependent (Huston & Robins, 1982). I illustrate (a) how mothers and daughters negotiate issues of connection and autonomy within caregiving relationships, and (b) how their negotiations influence and reflect the quality of their relationships.

In my second study, done in collaboration with Anisa M. Zvonkovic, and Alexis J. Walker, I addressed the ethics of doing research with women who volunteer to participate in research on behalf of themselves, their families, and their larger communities. Using qualitative telephone interview methods, I show how participation in a research study (a) impacts women's lives and relationships, (b) influences their community involvement, and (c) shapes their ideas about research participation. This study was guided by critical insights from feminist researchers.

In my final study, authored with Alexis J. Walker and Leslie N. Richards, I conducted in-depth interviews with White able-bodied sisters to discover: (a) how able-bodied women make sense of their relationships with disabled siblings given that cultural prescriptions of sibling relationships rarely include disability, (b) how the experience of being in a sibling relationship with someone who has a disability shapes the women's identities as sisters, and (c) how sisters make sense of their own and their family's care for a sibling with a disability. Again, a feminist social constructionist perspective shapes this study.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Whereas feminist researchers document *how* women continue to have responsibility for the lesser-valued labor of family work, feminist theorists work to develop an encompassing framework to explain *why* they are responsible. Feminists also grapple with the inconsistencies in power distribution among different groups of women. Because of the interlocking social hierarchies of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, disability, and others, some women experience more oppression than do others (Andersen & Collins, 1995). These differing experiences in the social hierarchy impact women's family lives, resulting in varied family structures (Acock & Demo, 1994) and relationship patterns (Thorne, 1992).

The studies in this dissertation are connected by a concern with why women are undervalued. Feminism and the gender perspective guide all three of my studies. To capture the diversity of feminist perspectives, both within the literature as well as within each of the studies, I provide a general overview of the theoretical roots of feminism in the United States. Then, I describe how the theoretical roots of feminism relate to the gender perspective and family theory. Finally, I illustrate how the gender perspective relates to the studies.

An Overview of Feminism in the United States

Liberal feminist theory is a set of ideas that evolved from the predominant liberal political ideology in the United States. Essentially, liberal theorists conceptualize the individual as having a core essence separate from the

environment, particularly from the natural world. Rational thought and autonomy are preferred values within this thought system. Historically, liberals argued that upper-class White men were the most evolved because they were the most rational and autonomous people (Tong, 1989).

Liberal feminists argue that women have the same potential for autonomy and rationality as men do. Liberal feminists contend that what keeps women from being fully rational and autonomous are unfair laws that constrain them in the areas of politics, commerce, and education. Given an opportunity to participate fully in all areas of social life, women have the same capabilities that men have. In the 18th and 19th centuries, early feminists such as Mary Wollstonecraft (1967) and John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill (1970) fought for women's access to male privilege in the areas of education and paid work. Interestingly, none of these advocates argued for men's responsibility for unpaid family work. Similarly, a more recent liberal author, Betty Friedan (1963) shed light on how the life of the middle-class suburban housewife is constrained and monotonous. Friedan put forth the idea that women should enter the paid workforce, though she made no comment on who should be responsible for family work.

Marxist feminist theory developed from Marxist theory and focuses on class relationships between people who control the means of production and people who are controlled (Tong, 1989). Marxists argue that privileging the individual over society is an inaccurate explanation of human life. Individuals and society are inextricably interdependent; both evolve in a dialectic relationship over time. A key

concept in Marxism is alienation. Particularly in industrialized work settings, people are alienated from themselves, from others, from nature, and from the products of their work when the ruling class exploits them. Marxists state that in industrialized Western society, a ruling class of people gained control over the means of production in a process that took place over a lengthy period of time. Once the ruling class gained this power, they forced those with lesser power to work for wages of lower value than their work merited. Through the use of ideology, the ruling class convinces the working class that they should be happy with their situation and accept their lot in life as fair. False consciousness occurs when a worker believes the ideology of the ruling class.

Marxist Feminist theorists have co-opted Marxist theory for their own purposes, arguing that women make up a class—though this class is complicated by women's relationships with men in the various work classes—and are alienated from both their reproductive (unpaid family work) and productive (paid) work. As a solution to this alienation, however, Marxist feminists tend to emphasize the need for women to gain more access to productive work and ignore the problem of who will do reproductive or family work.

Radical feminist theory is the only feminist theory that developed apart from predominant male-oriented theory. Radical feminists explain the root cause of women's oppression by emphasizing men's control over women's bodies (Tong, 1989). Particular emphasis is placed on men's control of women's sexuality and reproductive capacities. Some radical feminists have embraced and celebrated

women's sexuality and childbearing capacities (Rich, 1986) whereas others have advocated a revolutionary change in both areas (Firestone, 1970). All radical feminists, however, believe that male domination of female bodies is a core cause of women's oppression.

Psychodynamic feminist theorists attempt to explain both the individual's internal conceptions of the self as male or female, as well as the relationships among family members that help create these self-conceptions (Tong, 1989). Though psychodynamic theory, originally developed by Freud (Westen, 1990), is a complex system of thought, the basic tenet is that psychological development occurs within a dynamic interaction among biological forces, parent-child relationships, and societal values. The most controversial aspect of Freud's theory for feminists is his claim that a female, via defective biology (the lack of a penis), will not develop to her psychological potential. He also argues that relative to boys, girls are psychologically immature because they remain close to their mothers. The only way girls can redeem themselves is by sexualizing their fathers in hopes of obtaining a symbolic penis via reproduction of a baby in adulthood. Few feminists today agree with Freud on these issues.

Though psychodynamic feminist theorists are aware of Freud's theoretical flaws, they also are interested in Freud's understanding of the internal self and its relation to society. Karen Horney (1973), for example, faulted Freud for not recognizing that what girls envy is boys' power, not their penises. She acknowledged, however, the psychological dynamic of envy that girls contend with

in their inner lives. Chodorow (1978) and Dinnerstein (1976), both psychodynamic theorists, attended to the question of who should do family work. They argued for active parenting by both women and men. They contended that a restructuring of family roles would result in a more fair distribution of work between women and men, and, ultimately, a restructuring of psychological conceptions of femininity and masculinity. Though psychodynamic theorists acknowledge the need for shared family work, they are less articulate about family arrangements outside of a two-parent, middle-class structure.

Socialist feminist theory has theoretical roots in Marxist feminist theory. The theory is an attempt by feminists to develop an encompassing explanation of women's oppression by integrating ideas from Marxist, radical, and sometimes psychodynamic theories of women's oppression (Tong, 1989). In essence, the theory attempts to explain women's historical oppression by accounting for economic, physical, and psychological forces that support it, rather than viewing men and women as fundamentally distinct because of biological differences.

Feminist theorists of color (e.g. Chow, 1987; hooks, 1984; Lorde, 1984; Moraga & Anzaldua, 1983) have pointed out that socialist feminist theorists initially ignored race issues. They argued that the experiences of racial and ethnic minority women and their families are different from those of the majority of White women living in America (Dill, 1988). For example, the history of slavery and the continued institution of racism in U.S. society have resulted in hardships for African American women that White women have not experienced (Jones, 1995).

During the 1980's, feminists worked to integrate the diversity of women's voices into feminist thinking. Though this process continues, a greater understanding of the complexity of social hierarchies has developed as a result of these criticisms.

Feminism and Family Theory

The gender perspective, a predominant theory used by feminist family scholars, mixes ingredients from socialist feminism, the life course perspective, symbolic interactionism, and phenomenology to create an encompassing explanation for gender relations. The life course perspective provides a way to understand change and stability in relationships over time. In general, the perspective emphasizes the importance of time, context, process, and meaning for human development and family life (Bengtson & Allen, 1993). The gender perspective attends to these issues as well. Socialist feminism, like the gender perspective, highlights how unequal relationships between men and women are embedded in social processes related to power dynamics at all levels of social interaction. The gender perspective "simultaneously emphasizes the symbolic and the structural, the ideological and the material, the interactional and the institutional levels of analysis" (Ferree, 1991, p. 105). Feminists using a gender perspective embrace the idea that within every culture, gender is related to disadvantage, stratification, and hierarchy (Ferree, 1991; Thompson, 1993). This view is particularly relevant for understanding families as they are the primary sites in which gender is taught, learned, and transformed (Allen & Walker, 2000, Osmond

& Thorne, 1993). Finally, the gender perspective highlights how family members actively negotiate meanings of gender in their daily interactions with one another (Thompson & Walker, 1991; West & Zimmerman, 1991), an idea related to symbolic interactionism and phenomenology.

Implicit in a gender perspective is an acknowledgement of how race and class, in addition to gender, influence relationships *between* families and *within* families. Drawing insights from feminist theorists of color, feminist family researchers acknowledge the diversity among women and families and work to incorporate race into the mainstream of their thinking rather than marginalizing minority families as special cultural cases (Dilworth-Anderson, Burton, & Johnson, 1993; Zinn, 1991). This insight is applicable to families of lower socioeconomic classes as well. Family researchers tend to identify ideal family structure and processes within a middle-class context and compare lower-class families to these ideals. Feminist family scholars attempt to avoid these comparisons and acknowledge class as a fundamental social structure that permeates all aspects of family life and results in different organizational and interactional patterns among families in different socioeconomic contexts (Rubin, 1994; Stacey, 1990).

Fishing families provide an example of how paid work, an indicator of class, influences the structure of family life. Fishing stocks are declining, resulting in lower incomes for fishing-dependent families. In response, wives of fishermen are increasingly working for pay to support their families and to obtain needed health care benefits. Fishing wives with children no longer can expect to devote

their entire time to homemaking and mothering. When fishermen are away fishing for long periods of time, the question of how to support mothers in their efforts to raise their children becomes paramount.

Feminist family scholarship provides insights into social tensions within families too. Thorne (1992) argued that the best way to analyze the social processes among family members is to examine the family's embedded structures of race, class, gender, generation, and sexuality. Disability is another social structure that feminist family scholars have begun to address (Hillyer, 1993; Tronto, 1993).

The term *sibling*, for example, is illustrative of how a gender-neutral term obscures the important reality that family experiences are often different for sisters and brothers. For example, sisters are more likely than brothers to do housework (Benin & Edwards, 1990) and to provide care to dependent family members (Horowitz, 1985), including care for siblings with disabilities (Stoneman, Brody, Davis, & Crapps, 1988). Rather than obscure the differing social contexts of brothers and sisters, feminist family scholars seek to illuminate processes that produce privilege and disadvantage among family members. A fundamental way to do so is by analyzing the gendered nature of unpaid family work.

Any discussion about families and family work must include a definition of *family*. Traditionally, families have been conceived of as persons related by blood, marriage or adoption living in the same household (Barrett & McIntosh, 1982). In the 1950's, this definition was exaggerated into an idealized image known as the nuclear or modern family. This type of family, consisting of a breadwinner father, a

homemaker mother, and children all living within a middle-class lifestyle, no longer has hegemonic hold over our collective view of the ideal family (Coontz, 1992). Feminists and other progressive family researchers conceptualize families broadly, focusing on the interdependence among family members rather than on a specific structural ideal (Scanzoni, Polonko, Teachman, & Thompson, 1989; Walker, Manoogian-O'Dell, McGraw, & White, 2001). This conceptualization reflects the reality of family life today and in the past. In this dissertation, *family* means those persons who are bound by ties of marriage, blood, adoption, or commitment, legal or otherwise, who consider themselves a family. I do not restrict my definition of family to those members who live in the same household, recognizing, instead, the complexity of household connections due to divorce and remarriage and due to intergenerational relationships in adulthood (Himes, 1992).

The Gender Perspective Applied

My first study is rooted in a feminist, social constructionist perspective and addresses ways that frail mothers and their caregiving daughters create relationships with one another and sustain each other's sense of self through everyday interaction. I illuminate how these women construct meaningful lives (Berger & Kellner, 1970; Gergen & Gergen, 1991) within a patriarchal context. I highlight how daughters and mothers transcend patriarchal constraints associated with caregiving to form respectful, cooperative relationships.

In the second study, I apply the feminist principles of promoting social change and improving the lives of women (Acker, Barry, & Esseveld, 1983; Walker, Martin, & Thompson, 1988) to the research process. Through dialogue and reflexivity, I aim to create knowledge that is emergent from people in relationship with one another. I analyze the relations among research practices, participants, and researchers to understand and reduce the ethical tensions encountered in a multimethod research project designed to investigate work and family processes.

In the third study, I focus on the theoretical and practical implications that both the feminist and the disability rights movements offer for understanding families with members who are physically, mentally, or emotionally disabled. I use social constructionist and feminist theories to guide the research on the stories able-bodied sisters tell about themselves and their relationships with siblings with disabilities. I highlight how social meaning is shaped by the cultural and social contexts surrounding the individual (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). A feminist perspective illuminates how gender and disability are social constructs used to create and perpetuate systems of inequality and social stratification.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Each of the studies in this dissertation focuses on unpaid family work and how participation in this work influences women's family relationships. In this section, I provide a general overview of family work and of the connections

between family work and relationships. Then, I provide a review of literature more specific to my studies.

Family Work

Both men and women participate in unpaid family work but women do so to a greater extent and with more consistency than do men, regardless of age, race, ethnicity, or marital status (Walker, 1999). In fact, the average woman does two times more family work than the average man (Coltrane, 2000), despite the popular belief that men and women are sharing unpaid work. Even when couples are committed to egalitarian divisions of family work, women do more (Blaisure & Allen 1995; Schwartz, 1994). Not only do women do more tasks than men do, but they also are more responsible for the management of family work (Mederer, 1993). The focus of this dissertation, however, is not on the relative participation of men and women in family work. Instead, I focus on how women's resistance to and participation in family work shapes their identities and their family relationships. The fact that women do a majority of family work—work that is unpaid and undervalued—serves to highlight the patriarchal work structure within which women struggle for meaning and happiness (Daniels, 1987).

Though I focus on women's participation in family work, I do not suggest that this work is *essentially* "women's work." The variability of women's participation in family work illustrates that this work is not in the nature of women,

but, instead, is shaped by the social and historical circumstances within which girls and women live.

For example, White women in upper-income families are likely to purchase the services of other women—usually women of color and working-class women—to assist them with family work (Cohen, 1998; Glenn, 1992; Oropesa, 1993). These middle- and upper-class women coordinate and manage the work of other women (Leslie, Anderson, & Branson, 1991). In comparison, working-class women, particularly those women who are not White, carry a heavy burden of labor for both their employers and their families (Ferree, 1987; Jones, 1995). Relative to women with greater financial resources, working-class women do greater amounts of routinized and undervalued work, in both paid and unpaid settings (Ferree, 1987; Perry-Jenkins & Folk, 1994). Family work has less to do with the essential nature of women and more to do with the resources women draw from to serve their interests.

In addition to understanding how women in various social groups experience family work, researchers have attempted to dissect the various types of family work in which women participate and the qualities that characterize this work. Housework is the most frequently researched form of family work and includes tasks such as house cleaning, washing dishes, doing laundry, shopping, preparing meals, driving, gardening, and balancing household budgets (Walker, 1999). Ferree (1991) argued, however, that the definition of housework is amorphous because it "comes from imposing culturally shared gender categories on

a historically shifting domain" (p. 111). In other words, what counts as housework changes depending on the time frame and culture being investigated.

Present-day researchers, however, continue to refine their operationalization of housework. One way researchers have done so is by delineating between routine and discretionary tasks. Housework defined as "women's work" is more likely to be routine and that defined as "men's work" is more likely to be discretionary, giving men more freedom and control over their housework (Blair & Lichter, 1991; Coltrane, 2000; Hochschild, 1989; Starrels, 1994; Thompson & Walker, 1991). Twiggs, McQuillan, and Ferree (1999) showed that housework is segregated by sex similar to the way occupations are segregated. They suggested that a hierarchy of household tasks exists, with dishwashing as the task men are most likely to do and preparing meals as the task they are least likely to do. They also argued that there is more than one "gendered threshold" husbands must cross to become high participators in housework (p. 722). For example, husbands who prepare meals must have both normative support and practical circumstances that push them toward this household chore. Men who prepare meals are more likely to have wives who work more hours and contribute a higher proportion of family income than wives of husbands who do not prepare meals. For husbands who wash dishes, only normative support is necessary for their participation.

The management of emotional aspects of family relationships characterizes another type of family work. For example, women not only do the work of shopping for and preparing food for meals, but they often do this work with the

intention of creating a sense of cohesion among their family members. While promoting cohesion, they prepare meals in ways that serve family members' particular food preferences (DeVault, 1991). With this example in mind, we can examine researchers' definitions for the processes of emotional management in families. Emotion work is defined by Erickson (1993) as "the management of one's feelings to create an observable facial and bodily display." She stated that this work tends to involve the enhancement of others' emotional well-being and the provision of emotional support. Thompson (1993) used the idea of marital care to describe a similar process. Care, she suggested, is the activity of protecting and promoting another person's welfare. Other researchers have used comparable definitions of emotion management (Hochschild, 1983), highlighting its undervalued and invisible nature (Daniels, 1987).

Related to conceptions of care and emotion management is caregiving. Caregiving is a type of family work that takes place across the life span and includes care given to children, dependent older people, and those who have short-term and long-term illnesses or disabilities. In the literature, a distinction often is made between caregiving and childcare. I use a definition of caregiving, however, that encompasses childcare. Similar to Ruddick's (1989) understanding of a mother's attentive love, caregiving is a practice that includes the cognitive and emotional capacities to protect, nurture, and develop or support another person. Of course, not all of these components are a part of every caregiving circumstance (Allen & Walker, 1992). For example, distinct social obligations are expected of

mothers providing care for their children and women caring for an aging parent. Caregiving, however, is a fundamental human process that continues across the life span.

As in other types of family work, women and girls are predominantly responsible for caregiving (Cook, 1988; Dressel & Clark, 1990; Hooyman & Gonyea, 1995: Stoller, 1993; Thompson & Walker, 1989). For example, Zajdow (1995) showed that wives of alcoholic men are on the extreme end of a continuum of women providing care and nurturing for family members. Caregiving has both emotional and behavioral components that add up to challenging and, at times, frustrating work. Traustadottir (1991) provided another example of how care has both emotional and behavioral components. She distinguishes between two types of meanings of care that families with children with disabilities shared in her research: caring for and caring about. Caring for referred to caregiving work (the behavioral component) and "caring about" referred to loving the child with a disability (the emotional component). Though different meanings for caregiving exist, Dressel and Clark (1990) found that family members do not always live up to their idealized beliefs of family care. They also showed that expressions of care are linked to women's family status and power. Like the surrounding culture, women tend to undervalue and men tend to overvalue their own caregiving acts.

Finally, another type of unpaid family work is women's volunteer efforts on behalf of their children and other family members in organizations such as schools, churches, and political groups. Similar to other types of unpaid family work,

women's participation in these activities is unrecognized and undervalued (Daniels, 1987; Margolis, 1979).

Sometimes women extend their family work by participating in volunteer work because of a particular family challenge. For example, Traustadottir (1991) found that women who have children with disabilities extend their caring work to advocate for their own and other children in the larger community. Mothers with children who have mental retardation were the first to fight for the right to community care for their children. Through their efforts, and in cooperation with the administrator of a state residential facility in Pennsylvania, a suit was filed against this state institution. This case resulted in a Supreme Court decision declaring the existence of the institution unconstitutional (Ferleger & Boyd, 1979). Since this ruling, efforts have been made to provide care to persons with disabilities in more humane community settings. The unpaid work of family advocacy is one way that women have been influential in changing the political climate of their local communities and the larger society (Pardo, 1990). Another example is the work of African American women who fought for civil rights for themselves and their families in the 1950s and 1960s (Harley, 1994; Jones, 1995).

Connections Between Family Work and Family Relationships

In addition to understanding the wide variety of unpaid family work in which women participate, researchers have attempted to discern the relation between women's family work and their family relationships. A majority of the

literature in this area focuses on relationships between husbands and wives and this review reflects that bias.

An important topic of concern for researchers has been the discrepancy between wives' higher levels of unpaid family work relative to husbands' and couples' assessment that this arrangement is fair. Thompson (1991) argued that women might do more family work, in part, because they value the relationship outcomes that result from such work. Mothers may do extensive childcare activities not because they enjoy doing these tasks but because they believe that relationships with their children are important to nurture. Research supports the idea that caregiving and relationship quality are connected. For example, across the entire life course, fathers, who engage in relatively less childcare than mothers, have less close relationships with their children than mothers do (Aquilino, 1994; Rossi & Rossi, 1990; Silverstein & Bengtson, 1997; Walker & McGraw, 2000). More broadly, when a woman is involved in any type of family relationship, the relationship is more likely to be described as close by both partners (Rossi & Rossi, 1990). This association coincides with the fact that women continue to feel responsible for family members' well-being and are more likely than men to adjust their schedules to accommodate others (Hochschild, 1989; Sanchez & Thompson, 1997; Shelton, 1992; Spain & Bianchi, 1996). Part of promoting connection, then, seems linked to the process of caring *for* and *about* others.

Hochschild (1989) showed how couples' negotiations about family work were fundamentally negotiations about care. When one partner, usually the

husband, refused to do a fair share of family work, the other partner, usually the wife, felt less loved and valued. Within our patriarchal society, these couples were not negotiating for husbands' equal participation in family work. Wives, instead, generally wanted husbands to increase their participation in unpaid family work to lessen wives' burdens of full-time paid employment and care for very young children. Most wives were willing to do more family work than their husbands.

Husbands can make up for their lack of participation in housework and childcare by being emotionally supportive to their wives. Erickson (1993) showed that husbands' performance of emotion work was more important to their wives' marital well-being than was husbands' performance of housework and childcare.

Though both men and women are capable of providing care (Risman, 1987), cultural ideology supports the belief that women are more responsible than men for emotion work (Cancian, 1987). Research studies show that wives are living up to this cultural imperative by providing more emotional care to their spouses than they receive (Acitelli & Antonucci, 1994; Gottman, 1994). This process may be one reason why women are less satisfied in their marriages than men (McCrae & Brody, 1989), particularly in later life (Levenson, Carstensten, & Gottman, 1993).

Though husbands' emotion work generally is more important to wives' marital well-being than performance of housework and childcare, the unequal division of paid and unpaid work can have a malevolent influence on relationship quality (Schwartz, 1994), particularly if couples disagree on appropriate gender

behavior (Hochschild, 1989). For example, Zvonkovic, Greaves, Schmiege, and Hall (1996) showed that couples' decisions about participation in paid and unpaid work activities are shaped by their beliefs about gender. Couples in this study made decisions within a cultural context that encouraged men to be providers and women to be homemakers and mothers. Interpersonal processes influenced whether marital partners embraced or discouraged work patterns that challenged their views of appropriate gender behavior, though outcomes generally were decided by enacting traditional gender roles that favored husbands. Positive relationship processes were associated with decisions that benefited wives' viewpoints on a minority of occasions. Negative relationship processes were associated with wives' awareness of having less power in their relationships than their husbands. Ambivalent relationship processes were related to decisions benefiting husbands and wives' desire for more support from their husbands. In these ambivalent relationships, an apparent consensual decision-making process was undermined by husbands' passive contention.

Zvonkovic et al. (1996) indicated that their findings were congruent with Komter's (1989) conceptualization of hidden power. Komter explored three types of power dynamics in marital relationships: manifest, latent, and invisible. Manifest power usually consisted of husbands' negative responses to changes suggested by wives. Latent power was the process whereby wives anticipated the needs of husbands and acted in a way to minimize conflict. Finally, invisible power reflected the patriarchal social structure surrounding couples that resulted in a power

inequity between husbands and wives. Invisible power served to justify and confirm the patriarchal status quo.

All of the examples in this section help to illustrate that participation in unpaid family work—in behavioral, cognitive, and emotional forms—shapes family relationships. Stephen Marks (1986) explained that marriage is a process that involves the melding of each partner's values related to identity, relationships, and work. Clearly, unpaid work is an important part of this equation. Doing or not doing unpaid family work helps to define the quality of all family relationships, not just marital ones, and is at the core of values such as love and respect.

Family Work in Three Distinct Studies

The studies in this dissertation explore the dialectic connection between participation in family work and family connections in adulthood. The following is a brief summary of the primary focus of each study.

The first study addresses how aging mothers and their middle-aged daughters negotiate relationships within the context of caregiving. As in other forms of unpaid family work, women are more likely than men to provide care to their aging parents, particularly to mothers with high needs (Stoller & Pugliese, 1989). Sons tend to serve as secondary caregivers except when daughters are unavailable (Horowitz, 1985; Mathews & Rosner, 1988; Stone et al., 1987). Daughters more than sons, however, have very close relationships with their mothers (Silverstein & Bengtson, 1997). These later life caregiving relationships,

then, take place at the end of a long history of intergenerational care between mothers and daughters.

The second study highlights how fishing wives (how women in this study identified themselves) advocated for their own and for other fishing families through the unpaid work of research participation. Within this research context, I illuminate the relationships fishing wives have with their families, with the larger fishing community, and with researchers. I pay particular attention to the researcher-participant relationship. Through dialogue and reflexivity, I explore the ethical dilemmas that permeate the research process and impinge on the creation of knowledge.

My third study focuses on family work from the viewpoint of able-bodied sisters with siblings who have disabilities. Women—mothers, daughters, sisters, wives, and grandmothers—provide the majority of family care for adults with chronic disabilities (Finley, 1989). Although some men provide care for family members, they more often provide indirect assistance with intermittent tasks, such as financial management or home repair. Family care is mainly about women in families providing care for dependent family members (Hooyman & Gonyea, 1995). Similarly, mothers provide the majority of care for their sons and daughters with disabilities (Hillyer, 1993; Marcenko & Meyers, 1991; Traustadottir, 1991)

For able-bodied siblings, the experience of having a relationship with a sibling with a disability is gendered as well. Able-bodied sisters and brothers are held to different cultural expectations in order to be considered "good." The limited

empirical evidence in this area suggests that sisters are more likely than brothers to provide daily physical and emotional care for siblings with disabilities (Stoneman, Brody, Davis, & Crapps, 1988); brothers are not expected to provide care for their siblings with disabilities to the extent that sisters are (Cicirelli, 1994).

METHOD

A feminist perspective shaped the methodological approach to the three studies in this dissertation, though different techniques were used in each. First, an overview of feminist research philosophy and practice is provided. Then, a description of the qualitative approaches used in the studies is outlined. Finally, a brief review of each of the studies is given.

Feminist Perspectives

Feminist research methodologies weave political, ethical, methodological, and theoretical issues into a research practice that is emancipatory for women and other underprivileged groups. Thompson (1992) outlined three aspects of feminist methodology: agenda, epistemology, and ethics. A feminist agenda includes research on, for, and with women. A majority of family researchers attempt to do research *on* women and aim to document and correct for bias. Research *for* women is a purposeful act of the researcher to emancipate women and enhance their lives. All of the studies in this dissertation can be described as research conducted on behalf of women. Thompson suggested that research for women should:

> (a) help women connect their personal experience in families to the larger social context, (b) capture how women struggle against and adapt to family relations that nurture and oppress them, (c) provide a vision of nonoppressive family relations, (d) embrace the diversity among women and families by race, class, age, and sexual preference, and (e) challenge prevailing concepts and assumptions in the discipline, including how we think about gender. (p. 4)

Research *with* women shares many of the assumptions of research for women but is participatory in nature. Research with women attempts to balance the researcher's knowledge with the knowledge of girls and women participating in social research (Maguire, 1987; Reinharz, 1992). I incorporate elements of participatory research into the study of fishing wives.

Epistemology refers to the study of knowledge, the study of what and how we know what we know (Harding, 1987). Feminists believe that science is a social activity embedded in a sociohistorical context and shaped by personal concerns and commitments (Nielsen, 1990; Thompson, 1992). A primary assumption of traditional or positivist social science is that truth can be found through the separation of the researcher from the researched. Feminists argue that there is no such thing as a disinterested stance to knowledge construction. The studies in this dissertation are congruent with this feminist position and are characterized by varying combinations of postpositivist, critical, and constructivist orientations to research.

Westkott (1979) summarized how feminist researchers critique the invisibility and distortion of women's experiences due to conventional ways of

establishing knowledge, focusing on three areas of knowledge construction: content, method, and purpose. Feminists have criticized the content of traditional science because of its distortion of women's lives and its false assumption that the human being and "his" social environment are mutually compatible. Feminist criticisms of methods spring from these criticisms of content. Patriarchal bias in the ways in which questions about women are posed leads to either an absence or a distortion of concepts that tap women's experience. Finally, feminists are concerned with the purpose of knowledge about women. Traditional methods reinforce the exploitation of women as "data-generating objects of research" (p. 63). Instead of dutiful cataloging the facts of patriarchy, feminists oppose the very facts that are discovered.

Feminist researchers are critical of traditional scientific methods on ethical grounds as well. The Nebraska Feminist Collective (1983) defined ethical research as a process that (a) recognizes women's continued oppression, (b) identifies oppression as a major contradiction in research, (c) identifies the patriarchal politics of social science that defines and keeps women as objects, and (d) understands that research can be an act of empowerment by and for women and minorities. Though the second study on fishing wives' experiences in social research focuses on the ethics of conducting research, all three of the studies adhere to feminist principles for ethical research.

As a feminist researcher, for example, I recognize that power imbalances are inherent in the research process (Acker, Barry, & Essevelt, 1983; Ribbens,

1989; Stacey, 1990). I seek, however, to promote more egalitarian relationships and minimize oppression in the relationships between my participants and myself (Fonow & Cook, 1991). Through dialogue and reflexivity, I aim to create a broader knowledge base (Baber & Allen, 1992; Nielsen, 1990), a base that is emergent from people in relationship with one another (Lather, 1988, 1991). Reflexivity is a process whereby researchers place themselves and their practices under scrutiny, acknowledging the ethical dilemmas that permeate the research process and impinge on the creation of knowledge.

Reflexivity helped me discern how my life experiences and social location, in terms of race, class, gender, culture, sexual orientation, and ability, influenced the research process. My experiences as a White, heterosexual woman, raised in a working-class family have shaped my research interests, the relationships I have formed with my participants, and my analysis of the data. For example, when I was growing up, my mother was responsible for unpaid family work and I was responsible for helping her. This responsibility was complicated by the fact that my brother is physically disabled and his disability generated more family work than otherwise would have been necessary. These life experiences enabled me to be sensitive to an area of research I might not have considered. In doing my research, however, I sought not to tell my own story but to discover the patterns in the stories told by able-bodied sisters.

Overview of Qualitative Strategy

Within the feminist framework defined above, data in all three of the qualitative studies were systematically gathered, analyzed to develop preliminary conclusions, and, then, elaborated or modified when additional data were gathered or when ideas were refined (Huberman & Miles, 1994). This system is compatible with grounded theory (e.g., Berg, 1995; Lofland & Lofland, 1995; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) but is complemented by feminist theory and a phenomenological strategy of qualitative design.

The studies are phenomenological in design because they focus on women participating in everyday activities and conversations. Phenomenology is premised on the idea that people function in their lives using knowledge composed of common sense constructs and categories that are social in origin. Individuals make their lives meaningful by applying the images, theories, ideas, values, and attitudes within this framework to their own lives (Schutz, 1970). Individuals not only use knowledge created within this system, but also are active constructors of their lives via their meaning-making efforts. They, therefore, influence cultural systems of meaning (Holstein & Gubrium, 1994). Finally, phenomenology asserts that we cannot understand action or behavior apart from the meaning assigned to it (Gubrium & Holstein, 1993).

Practical Research Frameworks

Participants in the first study were part of a larger longitudinal study focusing on women's intergenerational relationships. The technique of videotaping to obtain in-depth observations of aging mothers and their caregiving daughters in conversation with one another was used. Researchers requested that the mother-daughter pairs focus on a caregiving activity and a concern or issue during two videotaped sessions, however, the pairs had a great deal of control over what they said and how they behaved during these tapings.

Though researchers traditionally have used quantitative methods to analyze observational data collected via videotaping (Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Moos & Moos, 1981; Olson, Portner, & Lavee, 1985), a qualitative approach was used, here, during a secondary data analysis. Both verbal and nonverbal behaviors were attended to and the topics of conversation were analyzed for themes. Each pair's interactions were analyzed in relation to these themes and different styles of mother-daughter relationships were identified. In addition, participants completed surveys, providing demographic information and perceptions of their relationships. These survey data were analyzed to support the qualitative analysis.

In the next study, narratives were collected through telephone interviews with fishing wives who participated in a larger multimethod project designed to investigate work and family processes. In this larger study, fishing wives were asked to report on their participation in family work and on their relationships with family members. Our focus was on how participation in the study impacted the

women's lives and relationships. For example, we asked how participation in the study changed the way they thought or felt about their husbands and children. We also focused on how the women experienced their community involvement and the research process. Through these interviews, we analyzed the relations among our research practices, our participants, and ourselves to understand and reduce the ethical tensions we encountered in the larger research project.

Finally, a phenomenological approach to qualitative interviewing was used to address how able-bodied women construct the meanings of their relationships with siblings with disabilities and of themselves as good sisters. A conversational partner (Rubin & Rubin, 1995) approach to qualitative interviewing was used to engage in dialogue with able-bodied women and to provide an opportunity for them to relate their experiences unencumbered by rigidly designed categories. This approach emphasizes the connection between interviewing and conversation, as well as the active role interviewees can play in a qualitative interview. The retrospective narratives provided by the women in this study illuminate how sisters interpret and make sense of their past experiences in the context of the present (Allen & Pickett, 1987). Essentially, these sisters shared what it means to be a sister of a sibling with a disability.

MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS IN LATER LIFE: PATTERNS OF CONNECTION AND AUTONOMY

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ABSTRACT

We conducted a qualitative secondary analysis of videotaped interactions of 31 mother-daughter pairs and used quantitative survey measures to support our findings. From a feminist social constructionist perspective, we illuminate how aging mothers and their caregiving daughters negotiate issues of connection and autonomy and how their negotiations influence and reflect the quality of their relationships within the context of mothers' declining health. Results indicate that the women were purposeful in attending to one another's lives, preserving mother's autonomy, and managing tension. Variability across pairs provided evidence for three styles of relationships: (a) intimate, (b) connected, and (c) constrained. Results also suggest that mother-daughter relationships are resilient when mothers experience moderate levels of decline in physical health.

Patriarchy creates and maintains a system of constraints whereby women perform most of the devalued work of family care (Hooyman & Gonyea, 1995). This family work is minimized to such an extent that women's economic contributions vis-à-vis family care are often denied (Daniels, 1987; Meyer & Bellas, 1996). The devaluation of women's family labor combined with unrealistically high cultural expectations for performing this work can strain women's relationships. Ties between mothers and daughters can be particularly vulnerable to this strain, especially when women arduously comply with patriarchal standards (Lee & Sasser-Coen, 1996; Phillips, 1996).

Women's responsibility for and participation in the undervalued labor of family care, however, is associated not only with powerlessness in the larger economic system but also with generally close connections among female family members. For example, daughters rather than sons are more likely to be responsible for providing care to their aging mothers, particularly to mothers with high needs (Stoller & Pugliese, 1989). This pattern is partly due to daughters' lesser connection to the paid labor force. Their tenuous connection to paid labor results from a lifetime of low earnings and attention to the needs of family members (Hooyman & Gonyea, 1995). Daughters' lesser connection relative to sons' also is a result of cultural norms that require women to be self-less (Baber & Allen, 1992). Within this patriarchal framework, however, mothers and daughters maintain the closest connections of any intergenerational combination (Rossi & Rossi, 1990). Their relationships develop through a lifetime of shared experiences within a

patriarchal milieu (Phillips, 1996). Their ties also provide opportunities for women to empower one another (Debold, Wilson, & Malave, 1993).

In this paper, we focus on patriarchal constraints related to caregiving for an aging parent and on the ways caregiving daughters and their aging mothers transcend these constraints to form respectful, cooperative relationships. Through this study, we gain insights into the processes related to the quality of relationships between aging mothers and their midlife daughters, and we offer examples of how women can empower one another.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This study is rooted in a feminist, social constructionist perspective and focuses on ways that frail mothers and their caregiving daughters create relationships with one another and sustain each other's sense of self through everyday interaction. We also illuminate how individuals in relationships construct meaningful lives (Berger & Kellner, 1970; Gergen & Gergen, 1991). We focus on this meaning-making process by observing conversations between mothers and daughters as they discuss problems and work together on everyday tasks. Social constructionists attempt to understand the world of lived experience from the points of view of those who live it (Schwandt, 1994). In this study, we seek to understand the lives of aging mothers and their caregiving daughters through their conversations and interactions with one another.

Congruent with social constructionism and feminism, we attend to how relationships are shaped by the cultural and social contexts surrounding them (Doherty, 1999; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Within U.S. culture, women are responsible for most of the unpaid work that takes place in families (Coltrane, 2000; Walker, 1999). This pattern of responsibility exists in parent-adult child caregiving relationships as well. As noted, adult daughters are more likely than sons to provide care for their aging parents. Though sons feel obligated to provide care for their parents (Finley, Roberts, & Banahan, 1988), they are likely to be secondary care providers (Horowitz, 1985; Mathews & Rosner, 1988; Stone, Cafferata, & Sangl, 1987). When sons are primary caregivers, however, their wives often provide substantial care for their in-laws in lieu of their husbands' care obligations (Birkel & Jones, 1989). These caregiving patterns are shaped by the fact that men, but not women, have cultural support to focus primarily on breadwinning and can more easily opt out of unpaid caring work (Bernard, 1981; Goode, 1982; Walker, 1999). Though caregiving is integral to the well-being of individuals, families, and communities, it is not considered "productive" work. Caregiving is also not considered "men's work" (Ferree, 1991; Tronto, 1993). This demarcation of caring work as unproductive, unpaid, women's work results in women's vulnerability to financial hardship, particularly in later life (Meyer & Bellas, 1996).

Recognizing this patriarchal sociocultural milieu, our feminist perspective sensitizes us to the importance of women's experiences in caregiving relationships.

Mother-daughter ties are central to the lives of women (Abel, 1994; Fischer, 1986; Rossi & Rossi, 1990), and, yet, these relationships have been given limited attention in the research literature (Boyd, 1989). Although women experience constraints in the larger patriarchal society (Ferree, 1991; Osmond & Thorne, 1993) and within their own families (Thorne, 1992), they also experience a sense of purposefulness and connection in their interactions with family members (Thompson & Walker, 1991). In fact, women often play pivotal roles in promoting family relationships, particularly with each other (Silverstein & Bengtson, 1997). This dynamic is true for aging mothers and their caregiving daughters.

MOTHER-DAUGHTER TIES IN MIDDLE AND LATER LIFE

Mothers and daughters in middle and later life can be characterized as having not only the closest intergenerational ties but also the most supportive ones (Fischer, 1986; Walker & Allen, 1991). Not all mother-daughter relationships are supportive or cooperative (Fingerman, 1996), but most seem to be (Rossi & Rossi, 1990). Mother-daughter relationships are also the most emotionally connected of all intergenerational pairings (Silverstein & Bengtson, 1997). This pattern of close ties has been common in North American life at least since the 19th century, contrary to popular portrayals of mother-daughter ties as strifeful (Rosenzweig, 1993).

Still, patriarchal values can have a malevolent influence on mother-daughter ties (Phillips, 1996). The truism that families are sites of both struggle and support

(Baber & Allen, 1992; Hartmann, 1981; Thorne, 1992) applies to mother-daughter relationships as well (Blieszner, Usita, & Mancini, 1997; Fingerman, 2001). For example, mothers sometimes place higher value on their sons compared to their daughters, and their patriarchal values, in turn, influence the extent to which they protect their daughters from hardship (e.g., Hill & Zimmermann, 1995). Mothers also tend to require more household labor from their teenage daughters than from their teenage sons (Benin & Edwards, 1990; Demo & Acock, 1993; Gager, Cooney, & Call, 1999), and they can become distressed when daughters live in ways that push against gender norms (Laird, 1998). Finally, mothers can create problems with their adult daughters when they intrude upon or are critical of their daughters' lives (Fingerman, 1996). In comparison, daughters contribute to contentious ties with their mothers by believing the cultural ideology that denigrates mothers and by viewing their mothers as the cause of all their problems (Debold, Wilson, & Malave, 1993; Phillips, 1996). Daughters also may have difficulty being responsive to their mothers' relational and instrumental needs because of adherence to patriarchal values regulating filial obligations that favor husbands and children (Rossi & Rossi, 1990; Walker, Pratt, & Wood, 1993).

Even with these and other constraints, mothers and their adult daughters manage to build positive relations with one another, a pattern that prevails across the life course (Fingerman, 2001). In fact, evidence suggests that mother-daughter ties become more positive with time (Carstensen, 1992; Field & Minkler, 1988). Close mother-daughter ties continue into the caregiving context as well (Sheehan &

Donorfio, 1999; Walker & Pratt, 1991). An important component of these relationships is the balance between connection and autonomy that aging mothers and their caregiving daughters achieve.

AUTONOMY AND CONNECTION IN MOTHER-DAUGHTER CAREGIVING TIES

Fundamental to our understandings of caregiving relationships are our beliefs about autonomy and connection (Peterson, 1995). The culture of the United States values economic and political individualism and these belief systems are usually unresponsive to the relational and caregiving needs of families (Hooyman & Gonyea, 1995). Concepts such as autonomy and connection reflect this larger cultural pattern in that being autonomous is more valued than being relational (Markus & Kitayama, 1994; Phillips, 1991). These concepts carry gendered meanings as well (Cancian, 1987; Cross & Madson, 1997). The ideal man is ambitious, independent, and self-made; he is autonomous. The ideal woman is compassionate, caring, and self-sacrificing; she values relationships. In reality, women can be autonomous and men can be relational, depending on the social context (Thompson, 1993).

Within this general cultural milieu, mothers and daughters may expect extensive self-sacrifice from one another without the balancing expectation that women—both mothers and daughters—have ambitions and independent needs of their own. Primarily using a psychodynamic theoretical perspective, social

scientists have tended to problematize close connections between mothers and daughters. Chodorow (1978), for example, argued that mother-daughter relationships fail to foster separation and individuation, leading to a daughter's lack of autonomy in early adulthood. Boyd (1985) also concluded that mothers and daughters experience conflict over separation and individuation. In contrast, other studies showed girls and women developing a sense of individuality within relational contexts, including mother-daughter ties (Gilligan, 1982; Gilligan, Lyons, & Hanmer, 1990; Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver, & Surrey, 1991; Josselson, 1996). These studies tend to value the connections between mothers and daughters. Finally, Mathews and Rosner (1988) showed that adult daughters, using the principle of least involvement, give no more care to their mothers than is needed to maintain their own and their mothers' independence. Their study highlights the importance of autonomy within mother-daughter relationships.

Similarly, researchers have characterized multigenerational caregiving families by their relative emphasis on connection and autonomy (Pyke, 1999; Pyke & Bengtson, 1996). Families that are more likely to stress independence, separation, autonomy, and self-sufficiency are labeled individualist. Families that are more interdependent and attached, and that encourage obligation to one another, are defined as collectivist. Pyke (1999) found that elders in individualist families maintain more power than elders in collectivist families. Specifically, individualist elders were less likely than their collectivist counterparts to be deferential to their children. Collectivist elders, however, were more able to "back down from conflict

with children, to carefully consider their children's wishes and interests when making decisions, and, in the process, to make concessions, often unsolicited by their children" (Pyke, 1999, p. 665). Within both individualist and collectivist organizational patterns, parents who received caregiving assistance but who were not deferential to their children experienced troubled relationships with them. In this research, men were more likely to be individualist and women were more likely to be collectivist. Gender, however, was not the focus of the study, nor was the focus on dyadic processes.

Our study continues the exploration of autonomy and connection within the context of caregiving given by adult daughters to their aging mothers. We take a dyadic, or close relationships approach, focusing on how women's lives are interdependent (Huston & Robins, 1982). Research consistently illustrates that, similar to marital relationships, mother-daughter ties share dyadic properties (Fingerman, 1996; Walker & Allen, 1991). We are concerned with (a) how mothers and daughters negotiate issues of connection and autonomy within caregiving relationships, and (b) how their negotiations influence and reflect the quality of their relationships.

METHOD

In this multimethod study, we use a qualitative approach to conduct a secondary analysis of videotapes of 31 mother-daughter pairs interacting with one

another. In addition, we use quantitative survey measures of relationship quality to complement our qualitative analysis.

Description of Participants

This sample consists of 31 of the 222 pairs of mothers and daughters who volunteered to participate in a larger longitudinal study of family caregiving. The women in the larger study were mainly White elderly mother-adult daughter pairs living in rural and urban areas of western Oregon. Participants were recruited primarily through articles in local newspapers that described the researcher's interest in women's intergenerational caregiving. To participate in the larger study, daughters had to provide at least one of the following services for their mothers: housekeeping, transportation, meal preparation, laundry, personal care, or financial management. Mothers had to live within 45 miles of their daughters, be age 65 or older, and be unmarried.

All of the mothers in the videotape sample were White and all daughters but one, whose father was American Indian, were also White. The mean age of mothers was 79 (range from 68 to 91) and that of daughters' was 49 (range 35 to 63). Mothers' health varied, but most had chronic conditions limiting instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs). Mothers' mean education level was 12 years (range 4 to 17) and daughters' was 14 years (range 7 to 20). Of the mothers, 27 were widowed and 4 were divorced. Of the daughters, 4 were never married, 3

were widowed, 5 were divorced, 13 were in first marriages, and 5 were in second marriages. Daughters had an average of 2.3 children (range 0 to 8).

Procedures

The pairs in the larger study were interviewed yearly, beginning in 1986 and ending in 1991. Face-to-face interviews were conducted annually in the participants' homes. In addition, telephone interviews were conducted annually with daughters and in years 2 through 4 with mothers. During the interviews, both quantitative and qualitative questions were asked of the women. To encourage long-term participation and to facilitate communication, each woman received a handwritten note from a member of the research staff on her birthday. The women were highly motivated and participated because they wanted to help other women and their families.

Videotaped Interactions

From this larger study, pairs of mothers and daughters were asked to participate in the videotape portion of the study. We asked for participation until we had agreement from 30 pairs. Because more than one staff member was recruiting, we obtained agreement from 31 pairs. Many of the women who refused to participate did so because of their reluctance to be videotaped.

In 1990, during year 4 of data collection in the larger study, research assistants traveled to either the mothers' or the daughters' homes and recorded

three different types of interactions. The first taping consisted of a 5-minute warm-up interaction to help the women feel comfortable. This tape was given to the pairs as a token of appreciation for their participation. Then, two additional 10-minute tapings took place, involving (a) participation in a caregiving activity and (b) discussion of an issue or conflict. Suggestions for discussion topics and caregiving activities drawn from data in the larger study were provided to each pair.

Each mother-daughter pair was given leeway on how to interpret the guidelines for participation in the tapings, resulting in rich, contextual data. Examples of caregiving activities include, but were not limited to: (a) housekeeping projects such as dusting, sewing, cooking, and organizing the kitchen; (b) discussion of finances such as making up a will; (c) hobbies such as jewelry collecting, quilting, and making crafts; (d) organizing family photo albums; and (e) leisure activities such as playing pool. Discussions of an issue or conflict varied widely as well. Generally, however, topics centered on mothers' health, needs for assistance, and concerns that daughters do too much for them, as well as on other family members, family history, and everyday happenings. In addition to the videotapes, each woman received $10 in appreciation of her participation.

Survey Measures

As part of the larger study, participants completed survey measures of relationship quality pertaining to attachment and intimacy. We drew data from face-to-face interviews that took place closest to the times of videotaping. For all

items, response choices ranged from *not true* (1) to *always true* (5). Items within each relationship quality measure were summed and averaged to create individual scores. Both scales have been demonstrated to be reliable and valid in previous intergenerational research (e.g., Thompson & Walker, 1984; Walker & Thompson, 1983). The 9-item attachment scale (Thompson & Walker, 1984) portrays a general emotional dependence on the other. Reliabilities (Cronbach's alpha) for the attachment scale have ranged from .86 and .91 across relationship reports. The 17-item intimacy scale (Walker & Thompson, 1983) reflects a generalized affection for the other. Scale reliabilities (Cronbach's alpha) have ranged from .91 to .97 across assessments of different types of relationships.

Data Analysis

Typically, observational researchers have applied pre-existing coding schemes to narrowly defined behaviors (e.g., gaze aversion) coded at specified frequencies to analyze their data (Gottman, 1979). They also have used a more general approach, having discovered that global assessments were valid as well (Grotevant & Carlson, 1989; Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Moos & Moos, 1981; Olson, Portner, & Lavee, 1985). We go beyond either of these quantitative approaches by analyzing our observational data for themes and patterns, consistent with qualitative analyses.

First, we viewed both sets of videotapes (a set consisting of pairs discussing an issue or conflict and a set consisting of the pairs participating in a caregiving

activity) to identify mother-daughter behaviors and conversational patterns that were relevant to our interest in close relationship processes (i.e., autonomy, connection, attentiveness, conflict, cooperation). We reviewed the videotapes a second time, searching carefully for illustrations and issues related to relationship processes that emerged as important in the first viewing (i.e., attentiveness, facilitation of autonomy, conflict resolution strategies, and the emotional climate or connectedness of each relationship). Next, we identified dominant relationship themes. Finally, we examined each pair's interaction in relation to the themes and we identified styles of relationships that emerged from this process.

As a means of triangulation (Berg, 1995), we associated the styles of relating that emerged in the qualitative analysis with both mothers' and daughters' scores on relationship quality measures. Two-way ANOVAs with planned contrasts were performed with the two relationship quality measures as dependent variables and relationship style as the independent variable.

RESULTS

Our qualitative analysis revealed that within a context of gendered family labor, mothers and daughters were purposeful in attending to one another's lives and circumstances, preserving mother's autonomy, and managing open conflict and tension. They showed respect for themselves and each other through the ways they attended, preserved, and managed their relationships.

Attending to One Another's Circumstances

Similar to studies of other types of relationships (e.g., Gottman & Silver, 1999), positive ties between aging mothers and their caregiving daughters rest on each making room for the other in their lives, both in thoughts and in deeds. Mothers and daughters in our sample demonstrated awareness of and responsiveness to each other's lives in a variety of ways. Their attention to each other illustrates Ruddick's (1989) concept of attentive love. Attentive love is the capacity for attention combined with the virtue of love that springs from the process of providing care for another person. The mother-daughter ties in this study confirm prior evidence that caregiving daughters practice attentive love for their aging mothers (Allen & Walker, 1992).

Daughters, for example, monitored their mothers' health and well-being and made suggestions about how their mothers could improve upon both. Daughters encouraged their mothers to exercise more frequently, offering to walk with them when they could. Daughters often recommended that their mothers seek the advice of physicians or adhere to advice already given by health professionals. To persuade their mothers to attend medical appointments, daughters offered to arrange, provide transportation to, and pay for the appointments. Daughters with particularly frail mothers demonstrated personal care, such as brushing their mothers' hair or clipping their nails. The daughters performed these activities in gentle and careful ways. Mothers stated that this personal care was soothing. These

findings support other empirical work that highlights women's responsibility for the provision of informal health care (Abel, 1990; Stoller, 1993).

Daughters looked for other ways to improve upon the well-being of their mothers. For example, one daughter offered to buy a television set to enhance her mother's leisure time. Other examples of daughters attending to their mothers' needs included shopping for clothing, giving food coupons, and making desserts for mothers' social occasions. Daughters exhibited an awareness of the daily rhythms of their mothers' lives by knowing what they liked to eat and wear, when they liked to do certain chores, and how they preferred chores to be done. One daughter stated, "I don't dust the upper shelves at my house. I am doing this for you."

Daughters worked hard to develop strategies to respond to their mothers' needs in ways that were acceptable to their mothers. For example, one daughter helped her frail mother come to a decision to discontinue mowing her lawn, an activity the daughter believed was unsafe for her mother to perform. The daughter encouraged her mother to continue paying someone to mow her lawn, even though the mother was not completely satisfied with the quality of service she was receiving. For each idea the mother had of how she might mow her lawn, the daughter suggested a problem her mother had not considered. The daughter made suggestions on how to improve the situation, rather than demands, because she understood that her mother desired a certain quality of lawn care and enjoyed being outdoors. She suggested that her mother take walks and weed dandelions from the lawn rather than use the mower. In this way, the mother could both be outside and

perform an activity that was meaningful. The mother was happy with this suggestion and agreed to stop mowing her lawn. Ultimately, the decision was the mother's to make.

Daughters also expressed concern about mothers' financial well-being, devising ways to minimize the need for their mothers to pay for caregiving services. For example, when mothers offered their daughters money, daughters reminded their mothers that they contribute to their daughters' lives in numerous ways and that an exchange of money was unnecessary. One daughter stated, "You sew for the girls. Anyway, I might need to borrow money some day, so, hold on to it." Other daughters offered to pay for services and items their mothers needed such as a pair of glasses.

Daughters showed interest in their mothers' lives by listening to them reminisce and by admiring their mothers' accomplishments. A daughter stated to her mother that she appreciated how her mother raised her with little money. She said, "You didn't have much money, but you sewed. [You made sure] I always had such beautiful hair." These discussions often took place within a context of reviewing family photo albums.

Our study also showed that aging mothers continue to show attentive love to their caregiving daughters, though less frequently than daughters do. The majority of the mothers acknowledged their daughters' other obligations to paid work, husbands, or children. For example, during a conversation about the scheduling of her ophthalmologist appointment, one mother acknowledged, "You

have three kids to take care of, I don't even have a man." She further suggested that they arrange the appointment to meet her daughter's needs. This mother was quite attentive to her daughter's life, asking her how she felt about her teenage son being able to drive and about a recent fundraiser in which the daughter participated. A few mothers spoke admiringly of their daughter's accomplishments and thanked them for their caregiving efforts. One mother complimented her daughter while talking on camera, "She's so good to me. I appreciate her a lot more than she thinks I do. She made a cobbler for my church picnic. Everyone liked it."

A few pairs were not attentive to each other's needs. Instead, each woman was concerned about her own needs without expressing interest in her partner's circumstances. One daughter ignored her mother's statements that she enjoyed doing the laundry. This daughter insisted that she would continue to do her mother's laundry for her. Another daughter, who was frustrated with her mother's behavior, talked over her mother even when the mother was answering a question the daughter had asked. These less attentive pairs illustrate that attentive love does not automatically occur in women's relationships.

Preserving Mother's Autonomy

Similar to other studies (Allen & Walker, 1992; Mathews & Rossner, 1988), daughters followed a principle of least involvement by giving no more care to their mothers than was needed to maintain their own and their mothers' independence. Daughters promoted their mothers' autonomy by encouraging them

to make their own decisions and by structuring their lives to optimize mothers' independence and self-sufficiency. This study also highlights how mothers work to preserve their own autonomy within a context of physical decline.

Mothers preserved their own autonomy by asserting themselves and making their preferences known. For example, when one daughter mentioned that she had not seen her mother wear a certain pair of earrings, the mother responded, "You don't see me every day!" The daughter agreed that her mother had her own life. When pairs discussed how mothers could improve their health, mothers indicated that they would make their own decisions and do what they preferred. As one mother said about an appointment to the gynecologist, "I will go when I want to." Her daughter acknowledged that this was true.

Many mothers also indicated that they wanted to pay their daughters for caregiving services because they did not, as one mother stated emphatically, "want to sponge off anybody." Mothers and daughters maintained a careful balance between mothers' needs to maintain their autonomy through paying for services rendered and daughters' needs to help their mothers without payment and to emphasize the long-term, reciprocal nature of their relationships.

Daughters tried to support their mothers' wishes in other ways. One daughter helped her very frail mother purchase clothing for a special event by obtaining her mother's permission to scout out potential blouse options in advance. Then, she drove her mother to the store and waited for her to choose from the limited selection. In this way, her mother could maintain a degree of independence

without being taxed physically. Another daughter helped her visually impaired mother by reading from a catalog and waiting for her mother to decide what books she wanted to buy.

Daughters went to great lengths to preserve their mothers' autonomy but, occasionally, their efforts came into conflict with other responsibilities. Though daughters' autonomy was asserted far less frequently than mothers,' daughters sometimes stated their need to balance their obligation to provide care for their mothers with competing responsibilities. The same daughter who helped her mother select a blouse also explained that they might need to hire someone to provide bathing services in the future. She stated that her job and family made it difficult for her always to be available to her mother, especially during family vacations.

Daughters' autonomy was paramount in a few discussions, particularly if the daughter was in need of assistance from her mother. For example, one daughter needed to borrow money from her mother but resisted doing so. She explained, "I don't want to use up your savings." The mother understood her daughter's reluctance and asked another daughter to encourage her to accept the loan. A promissory note was eventually signed with the understanding that the daughter would "work weekends to pay the loan back quickly."

Sometimes daughters asserted their desire to cut back on other responsibilities and mothers supported these decisions. For example, one daughter

stated, "I am not canning this year. It's too much stress and I am not going to feel guilty about it." Her mother agreed that her daughter had made a good decision.

Occasionally, mothers and daughters were less supportive of their intergenerational partners' autonomy, focusing, instead, on their own wishes. One daughter stated, "Whatever you want to and can do by yourself, I'm happy to have you do." She also said, however, that she would like to have things her own way and was not pleased when her mother pruned the roses on her own accord. The daughter seemed to adhere to a belief that her mother should be independent but became distressed when her mother implemented an independent decision. Both daughter and mother wanted to do things their own way and they argued about daily chores.

The aging mothers and caregiving daughters in this study support other work (Cooper, Grotevant, & Condon, 1983) that suggests autonomy or individuation is not an absolute psychological characteristic but applies to specific relational contexts. The women in our study, particularly mothers, could not have lived as autonomously as they did without support from their intergenerational partners.

Managing Conflict and Tension

Though some pairs exhibited tension-filled interaction, a spirit of generosity was characteristic of the mother-daughter relationships in our study. Similar to marital relationships (Gottman & Silver, 1999), enduring, happy mother-daughter

relationships seem to consist of women who allow their partners to influence them during times of decision making. One pair that seemed particularly close exhibited no tension when planning a large family dinner. They anticipated each other's needs and finished each other's sentences. They cooperated so well they shared a pen to make notes for their party preparation. Their high level of attentiveness seemed to minimize the potential for conflict.

Mostly, the mother-daughter pairs portrayed low levels of negativity toward one another, even during discussions about difficult problems they faced. They stated their disagreements openly, minimized their differences, and emphasized areas of agreement. For example, one mother expressed a desire for her daughter to visit more often. The daughter explained that she could not visit more frequently because of her inability to drive at night. The mother said, "This is what I'd like, if it's not too much trouble. But, if you can't come every week, I understand. I'd be glad to see you whenever you come." Like the intergenerational families in Pyke's (1999) study, mothers in this study helped to smooth over tension by considering their daughters' wishes when making decisions and by making concessions when necessary.

These pairs often used humor, compliments, and other supportive statements to diffuse tensions. One pair was particularly good at using humor to downplay their differences. Both admitted that the mother was stubborn and would not listen to reason; yet, they laughed merrily when discussing their issues. The daughter obviously adored her mother. She encouraged her mother to "tell what

you do for fun." She wanted her mother to share her life with the researchers. Both were accepting of each other's differences and laughed about the challenges these differences brought to their relationship.

Daughters played a key role in managing conflicts. We were struck by the physical distinctions between mothers and daughters. Relative to their daughters, mothers were small, weak, and sometimes frail. Daughters could have overwhelmed their mothers physically, but none did. Instead, they tended to adjust their posture, voice, and pace to match those of their mothers.

The few pairs in our study that had trouble resolving conflict consisted of women who were focused on their own concerns rather than on finding a mutually acceptable solution to their problems. These women were reluctant to yield to each other's wishes. Sometimes daughters (2 pairs) and sometimes both mothers and daughters (3 pairs) were less accommodating. These pairs had difficulty cooperating on chores, preferring, instead, to work independently. One mother stated on videotape, "This is the first we've done a job together that I know of." When forced to work together, tension arose. For example, the pair had difficulty agreeing on how to prepare tomatoes for canning. Each woman insisted that her way of peeling tomatoes was the best way, refusing to acknowledge that the others' way could be good too.

Styles of Relating

The connections between aging mothers and their caregiving daughters are intimately tied to the ways in which they attended to each other's circumstances, preserved mothers' autonomy, and managed conflict and tension. We stress that all of the pairs in our sample demonstrated more positive interactions with one another than negative ones. All of the women indicated that they were satisfied with their relationships. We saw evidence, however, for three different styles of relationships within these generally well-functioning pairs: (a) intimate, (b) connected, and (c) constrained.

Intimate

Thirteen (42%) pairs were intimate. We observed that these pairs were very affectionate with one another. They were more comfortable being near each other, both physically and emotionally, than were other pairs. These emotionally connected pairs had fun together and laughed often. They participated in leisure activities (e.g., attending quilt shows and concerts, playing games, and going out to eat) and they understood each other's likes and dislikes. They seemed to trust one another. When we reviewed the videotapes for a second time, we discovered that these intimate pairs exhibited high levels of attentiveness, encouraged mother's autonomy, and handled conflict in positive ways.

As an illustration, one intimate pair shared an interest in jewelry and chose to price the mother's collection for the caregiving activity. When they looked at the

jewelry, they talked and joked enthusiastically. They knew one another well—well enough to finish each other's sentences. The daughter mentioned that she was going to make an apple-raisin pie for her mother and that she did not want to go to a Halloween party without her mother. She stated, "The only reason I was going was because of you." The mother showed support and concern for her daughter by saying, "You have enough on your hands, especially with your hypoglycemia. You get so tired with work and that little baby. You like [your] job but they expect too much of you." The mother also showed trust in her daughter by saying "I have faith in you." The pair discussed several issues, none of which seemed problematic for them. For example, the mother wanted her granddaughter to attend church. The daughter did not want to attend church but agreed to take the granddaughter to Bible study classes when she was three years old.

Connected

A plurality (45%, $\underline{n} = 14$) of the pairs was identified as connected. Similar to intimate pairs, daughters in connected pairs went out of their way to preserve their mothers' autonomy. Mothers and daughters in these pairs also managed conflict effectively and positively. The distinction between these pairs and intimate pairs rests in a pattern of nonreciprocal attentiveness. Daughters were more attentive to mothers than the reverse. Mothers did not ignore daughters' explicitly stated needs, however, interactions were more subtly focused on mothers' needs.

On rare occasions, mothers attended more to their daughters needs than vice versa. This was the case when one mother loaned her daughter money, and when another daughter had severe health problems. The latter pair's conversation focused on the daughter's upcoming surgery. More attentiveness to daughters occurred when mothers were younger and healthier and daughters were experiencing health or financial problems.

Attentiveness in connected pairs, then, seemed dependent on each intergenerational partner's needs and on the ability to meet one's own and one's partner's needs. Generally, mothers had more needs than daughters. Many of the mothers struggled with mobility and coped with limited perceptual abilities. Daughters, who were younger and healthier, were more able to meet mothers' needs. Asymmetrical attentiveness may be one reason why adult children, especially daughters, report that their relationships with their parents deteriorate with a decline in parental health (Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 1998). Perhaps the change in relationship quality is partially related to a decline in parents' ability to be attentive to their children's lives.

Constrained

Thirteen percent ($n = 4$) of the pairs were constrained. This small group was characterized by symmetrical *inattentiveness*. We noticed a discrepancy between what daughters and mothers said and what their nonverbal behaviors revealed (e.g., a mother used a term of endearment for her daughter, but her tone of voice was

tension-filled and her arms were folded tightly across her chest). Relative to intimate and connected pairs, these pairs were less attentive to each other and were less likely to promote mothers' autonomy. They tended to disagree more and had relatively more difficulty resolving their conflicts in mutually acceptable ways. More tension and less humor were evident in their interactions. Mothers and daughters in constrained pairs showed little evidence of compromise.

As an example, a constrained pair decided to organize the mother's travel brochures during the caregiving portion of the videotaping. Instead of holding the brochures so that both could see them, the daughter held them so that only she could see them. The daughter kept physical distance between them. She commented, "Sometimes you are belligerent." This same daughter ignored her mother's wish to help with household chores while she lived in her daughter's home. The daughter indicated that her mother could not be helpful because her help was burdensome to the daughter. She stated, "That's just the way it is." The daughter stated that she worried about her mother's health; yet, she was unable to convey this concern in an attentive and respectful way.

Most (3) of the pairs in this constrained group shared a household—a situation that created more opportunities for conflict to arise. We note, however, that pairs in other categories shared households as well.

Quantitative Measures of Relationship Quality

As a way of supporting our classification of pairs into relationship styles, we explored whether mothers and daughters exhibiting different styles on videotape would vary on their perceptions of relationship quality. To begin our analysis, we correlated mothers' responses on relationship quality measures with daughters' responses. Mothers' and daughters' perceptions of relationship quality were not correlated. This finding makes sense in light of what Fingerman (1996) described as a "developmental schism." Because mothers and daughters occupy different roles in their relationships and because they are confronting different developmental changes, they experience their relationships in different ways.

Next, we examined whether the styles of relating that emerged in the qualitative analysis were distinguished by mothers' and daughters' scores on relationship quality measures. Two-way analyses of variances (ANOVAs) for unbalanced designs were performed with relationship quality measures as dependent variables and relationship style as the independent variable.

The results of the ANOVAs for mothers' relationship quality responses were significant for intimacy ($F = 3.41$, $p < .05$). Planned contrasts indicated significant differences between intimate and constrained pairs ($t = 2.399$, $p < .02$) and between connected and constrained pairs ($t = 2.50$, $p < .02$), but not between intimate and connected pairs. Mothers in intimate and connected pairs reported higher levels of intimacy with their daughters than did mothers in constrained pairs.

The results of the ANOVAs for daughters' relationship quality responses were significant for both attachment ($F = 4.15$, $p < .03$) and intimacy ($F = 3.47$, $p <$

.04). Again, planned contrasts indicated significant differences in attachment between intimate and constrained pairs ($t = 2.32$, $p < .03$) and between connected and constrained pairs ($t = 2.88$, $p < .008$) but not between intimate and connected pairs. For intimacy, significant differences existed between intimate and constrained pairs ($t = 2.50$, $p < .02$) and between connected and constrained pairs ($t = 2.45$, $p < .02$) but not between intimate and connected pairs. Daughters in intimate and connected pairs reported higher levels of attachment and intimacy with their mothers than did daughters in constrained pairs.

CONCLUSIONS

Our research fits within a growing literature that suggests that mother-daughter relationships are characterized by warmth and support (Rossi & Rossi, 1990; Silverstein & Bengtson, 1997), a pattern that continues in caregiving relationships (Allen & Walker, 1992; Walker & Allen, 1991). Of course, our study included only 31 pairs of women who volunteered to participate. Perhaps more troubled pairs would not have agreed to interact on videotape. Most of the mothers and daughters indicated that tension existed in their relationships, however, and we captured negative interactions on videotape.

We were struck by the way daughters managed tension with their mothers. Daughters were more physically robust than their mothers and could have intimidated them. None of the daughters, however, threatened their mothers with their physical advantage. Instead, they lowered their voices and slowed their

conversations to match their mothers' volume and pace. Mothers promoted positive ties with their daughters by being appreciative of their daughters' efforts. The women in our study created positive relationships with one another despite the many tensions they negotiated. The majority of the women empowered one another. Their responsibility for and participation in the undervalued labor of family care, paradoxically, promoted each intergenerational partner's autonomy, particularly that of the woman with greater need.

The results also suggest that aging mothers' inattentiveness to their daughters' lives does not have a significantly deleterious effect on daughters' perceptions of relationship quality, at least in a sample in which mothers evidenced low to moderate levels of physical decline. Even though we observed differences in the quality of interactions between intimate and connected pairs, daughters in connected pairs reported similar levels of attachment and intimacy compared to daughters in intimate pairs. It appears that daughters in connected pairs seemed to consider their mothers' ability to reciprocate when evaluating the quality of their relationships.

The women in this study illuminate how aging mothers and their caregiving daughters work within a patriarchal context to create positive relationships with one another. They do so by attending carefully to each other's lives, supporting each other's autonomy, and cooperating to resolve tensions.

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STUDYING POSTMODERN FAMILIES: A FEMINIST ANALYSIS OF ETHICAL TENSIONS IN WORK AND FAMILY RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT

Through dialogue and reflexivity, feminist researchers aim to create knowledge that is emergent from people in relationship with one another. Reflexivity is a process whereby researchers place themselves and their practices under scrutiny, acknowledging the ethical dilemmas that permeate the research process and impinge on the creation of knowledge. Guided by these tenets, we analyzed the relations among our research practices, our participants, and ourselves to understand and reduce the ethical tensions we encountered in a multimethod research project designed to investigate work and family processes. Our reflective efforts underscore both the active nature of research participants and the importance of the sociopolitical contexts within and around the research process. We make suggestions for more ethical research.

The complexity of ethical concerns inherent in family research is often minimized within conventional, positivist approaches that emphasize objectivity and value-free inquiry. Consistent with positivism, family researchers tend to downplay or ignore the relationship between themselves and participants and to decontextualize their research findings from the surrounding social environments (Leslie & Sollie, 1994). A primary assumption of conventional social science is that truth can be found through the separation of the researcher and the researched. Feminists believe, however, that science is a social activity embedded in a sociocultural context and shaped by personal concerns and commitments (Nielsen, 1990; Thompson, 1992). Feminists argue that there is no such thing as a disinterested stance to knowledge construction. Through dialogue and reflexivity, researchers aim to create a broader knowledge base (Baber & Allen, 1992; Neilsen, 1990), a base that is emergent from people in relationship with one another (Lather, 1988; 1991). Reflexivity is a process whereby researchers place themselves and their practices under scrutiny, acknowledging the ethical dilemmas that permeate the research process and impinge on the creation of knowledge.

Our concern is with the ethical tensions we encountered in a multimethod research project investigating the work and family processes of Northwest fishing families. We were drawn to these concerns for reasons both practical (recruitment and retention problems) and political (differing agendas between us and our participants). Although our study was carefully designed to meet fundamental criteria for good (positivist) empirical research, combined with a feminist goal of

giving wives in our study an opportunity to tell their own stories, we met considerable resistance from both potential and committed participants. We came to recognize that our goal of understanding family processes within a particular work and family context was not shared by some of our participants, who seemed to focus instead on changing policies to increase fishermen's "rights" to fish.

In response, we engaged in a reflexive process among ourselves and with our research participants to expand our understandings of the tensions we encountered. We designed and carried out a qualitative study to learn our participants' views on the research process and to glean insights on how to conduct more ethical research. Below, we set the stage for our qualitative study by describing fishing families and our initial project. Then, we offer a rationale by reviewing the literature on ethical issues in research.

INITIAL PHASES: TREADING TURBULENT WATERS

The work and family contexts of commercial fishing families provide an opportunity to explore the diverse ways that couples with children adapt to the comings and goings of the husbands. Fishermen tend to be gone from home for long periods of time, depending on such factors as where they fish and the type of fish they catch. Consequently, wives of commercial fishermen tend both to run their households and to maintain heavy involvement in the business aspects of their husbands' occupations. Many fishing wives—the way the women in our study identified themselves—also engage in wage-paying work. A primary aspect of our

study was to understand the ebb and flow of fishing family life, a life characterized by separations and reunions.

Although we had support from Oregon's Sea Grant Program and Fishing Family Coordinators (fishing wives hired by Oregon's Sea Grant Cooperative Extension Program to lead fishing wives' organizations), commitment to participate in our project was low. Only 22 couples agreed to complete telephone interviews. Furthermore, despite several strategies to enhance and maintain couples' participation, only 7 of these 22 couples completed the project. We also used the survey method to obtain a larger sample of fishing couples. We mailed 2,000 surveys about work and family life to holders of commercial fishing licenses and their spouses living in major ports along Oregon's coast. Only 24 men (2.4%) and 19 women (1.9%) completed the surveys. We were stunned by the abysmally low response rate. We conducted follow-up telephone calls inquiring about reasons for refusal and encouraging respondents to complete and return surveys (Dillman, 1983). Several fishermen replied angrily that the project was a waste of taxpayers' money and that the salaries we were receiving should be given to fishermen.

Through these experiences, coupled with feedback from fishing wives, we began to understand that some couples were motivated to participate in our research to preserve a way of life for themselves and for the larger fishing community. Northwest fishing families live within a political context of declining fish stocks, increasing government regulations, and decreasing economic prosperity (Conway et al., 1995). Wives told us of ways their fishing lifestyle was threatened, and they

expressed frustration at the erosion of their livelihoods. Although participants were informed of our goal to understand family dynamics within the commercial fishing context, some participants continued to believe that our project could bring about policy changes to enhance fishermen's rights to fish. In response, we developed a flyer outlining the potential policy implications the research project might in reality have (e.g. adjusting school and community calendars to fishing schedules) and the publications we intended to write for fishing families. In creating the flyer, we took a first step toward resolving the discrepancies between our agenda and what we thought was the agenda of some of our participants. We wanted to secure ourselves more firmly, however, to our feminist principle of conducting research collaboratively with fishing wives.

BUOYING OUR RESEARCH WITH CRITICAL INSIGHTS

We sought direction from the literature to guide our continued work with fishing wives. We wanted both to explore how our research design might have contributed to our problems and to seek information on how better to conduct research under politically charged circumstances. Feminists often criticize traditional scientific methods on ethical grounds. We identify oppression as a major contradiction in research (The Nebraska Feminist Collective, 1983), arguing that traditional positivist methodologies lack an imaginative capacity to transcend present social arrangements (Westkott, 1979). Feminist scholarship is for women, not just about women (Fine, 1994; Walker, Martin, & Thompson, 1988). According

to Thompson (1992), feminists believe that social justice should characterize the process of doing research. Justice includes the concepts of equality and freedom, concepts incompatible with the potential for exploitation and objectification in traditional research. Although feminists recognize that power imbalances are inherent in the research process (Acker, Barry, & Essevelt, 1983: Ribbens, 1989; Stacey, 1990), we seek to promote more egalitarian relationships and minimize oppression in the relationship between ourselves and our participants (Fonow & Cook, 1991).

Feminists emphasize an ethic of compassion and care when conducting research (Noddings, 1984). Marks (1994) used an ethic of care and "unconditional positive regard" (Rogers, 1961) for participants in analyzing data. Allen and Baber (1992) stressed the need to respect participants' reluctance to self-disclose as paramount to the trust required in conducting research. Allen (1994) acknowledged, however, that researchers need to be proactive in asking questions that might be difficult for respondents to discuss.

Both feminist and family researchers, regardless of their political positions, argue that participation in social research influences participants (Gilgun, Daly, & Handel, 1992), but researchers cannot always prepare for these influences (LaRossa, Bennett, & Gelles, 1981). Studies on how participation unintentionally influences the close relationships of participants indicate that the research process has little or mildly positive influences on interpersonal ties. Participation in research, however, can enhance participants' awareness of pre-existing relationship

processes (Hughes & Surra, 1994; Rubin & Mitchell, 1976; Veroff, Hatchett, & Douvan, 1992).

Many feminist researchers seek to intentionally design methods that can improve the lives of their participants, emphasizing collaboration between researchers and participants (Oleson, 1994; Reinharz, 1992; Small, 1995). Feminist collaborative methods challenge the positivist dichotomy between researcher as subject and participant as object. Collaborative researchers instead seek to create an intersubjective process whereby both researchers and participants are valued as knowledge-makers (Lather, 1991).

Feminist researchers with emancipatory aspirations use research as a way to enable people to change by encouraging self-reflection and a deeper understanding of their specific situations (Lather, 1991). This deeper understanding comes from the recognition that much of what occurs in our personal lives is socially constructed and is connected to larger sociopolitical contexts (Ferree, 1991). Moving away from individualistic problem-solving approaches, feminists emphasize the importance of collective political action to bring about social change (Walker et al., 1988).

Blending our feminist values with our renewed interest in how research participation affects close relationships, we designed a qualitative study to explore several of our concerns. We wanted to evaluate our positivist research methods to discern whether fishing wives felt alienated by participating in a project that required them to fill out surveys or report by telephone on behaviors, a process over

which they had little control. We also wanted to discover their agendas for involvement and the ways in which their participation might influence their sense of community and political activism. Finally, we wanted to explore how the research process influenced fishing wives' understandings of themselves and their relationships with their children and their husbands. Through conversations with fishing wives, we hoped to understand better the problems we encountered with recruitment and retention and to enhance our ability to design more collaborative efforts in the future.

METHODS

We used a phenomenological approach to qualitative research to collect women's experiences about their participation in our project (Holstein & Gubrium, 1994). We spoke with fishing wives both because of their larger role in the study and because husbands were more likely to be at sea.

Recruitment into the Larger Study

The sample for this study is a subsample drawn from a larger multimethod project that included focus groups, behavioral self-reports via telephone interviews, and surveys. Fishing Family Coordinators helped us develop promotional materials, and they disseminated these materials to community businesses, social service agencies, philanthropic groups, and fishing families along the Oregon coast. We recruited a total of 16 fishing wives for focus groups. The purpose of the focus

groups was to identify issues and concerns—in addition to the issues we were interested in measuring—for the telephone interviews and the surveys. Next, we recruited 22 couples for behavioral self-report interviews and surveys. The behavioral self-report method, described by Atkinson and Huston (1984), asks participants to report to a telephone interviewer their activities during a 24-hour period. This method was employed to measure how families adapt to the comings and goings of fishing husbands. Finally, surveys were mailed to commercial fisherman and their wives to obtain work and family information.

A Description of The Fishing Wives

For this study, we mailed letters and complimentary t-shirts to fishing couples with a wife who had completed at least half of her telephone interviews. In the letter, we explained that we wanted to understand wives' thoughts and feelings about their participation in the project. We then telephoned the women, restating our purpose and requesting their participation in the study. All of the fishing wives (14) agreed to talk with us. Of the 14 women, 2 had participated in all phases of the broader research process, and 12 had participated only in the behavioral self-report and survey portions of the study.

The fishing wives were White women whose husbands were either boat owners or captains, not crew members. Their reported annual gross family incomes exceeded $80,000. The wives had been married for an average of 12 years (range 7-

25 years) and had at least one child living at home. The average age of the children in the sample was 8, with a range from newborn to 17 years old.

Four women were homemakers and 10 worked for pay (four fill-time and six part-time) in addition to carrying out their family and fishing business responsibilities. Fishing husbands in our sample were away at sea for an average of 9 months a year and 22 days a month, and fishing wives were responsible for their homes and families during these times. A majority (11) of the women believed that the fishing business was a family business, and all held sole responsibility for some aspect of the business's paperwork (e.g., bookkeeping, balancing bank statements, or attending to correspondence for the fishing business). The wives also assisted with preparing payroll and payroll taxes, preparing income taxes, and reporting on issues pertaining to employees.

Design of Qualitative Telephone Interviews

In addition to their extremely variable schedules, the participants in our study lived hundreds of miles away from us and from each other. Therefore, we chose telephone interviewing as a means to learn about fishing wives' participation. The interviews were conducted by the first author and a research assistant, using an interview protocol that was loosely structured. Our focus was on how participation in the study impacted the women's lives and relationships. For example, we asked how their participation changed the way they thought or felt about their husbands and children. We also focused on how the women experienced their community

involvement (e.g., "We wondered if you have become more involved in community organizations as a result of our project?") and the research process (e.g. "It's very important to us that you get a chance to tell us what participating has been like for you.") The fishing wives were encouraged to share both positive and negative experiences as well as any suggestions they had for improving the study.

We followed a "conversational partner" interview strategy advocated by Rubin and Rubin (1995). As conversational partners, the fishing wives shared responsibility for the conversation with the interviewers. Fishing wives not only answered questions that were posed by interviewers, but also discussed issues that were important to them. We positioned ourselves not as neutral actors but as participants in relationship with the women about whom we sought to learn.

Data Analysis Procedures

We followed an analytic method suggested by Huberman and Miles (1994), who stated that data analysis contains three linked subprocesses: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. These subprocesses occur before, during, and after data collection. Our analysis began prior to the interviews, with our choices of conceptual framework, research questions, and sample selection. The process was both tight (deductively approached) and loose (inductively approached), both of which were congruent with our research questions.

Interviews were transcribed verbatim. Interviewers wrote notes on their impressions of the important interview issues, and these notes were incorporated into the analysis process. We read and reread transcripts for overall impressions. Next, we marked and analyzed passages of particular relevance to our research questions. We made comparisons and contrast within each question category to identify similarities and differences among the fishing wives' responses. Finally, we molded concepts into larger thematic schemes.

RESULTS

Fishing wives made sense of their participation in our research project by emphasizing: (a) themselves as active shapers of family life; (b) their solidarity with the fishing community; and (c) the legitimacy of science to help fishing families. The women created positive meaning out of a constraining research process by relating how they reorganized their daily routines, altered the management of their emotions, renegotiated family relationships, and participated in community organizations. Within the dominant themes, however, tension from and ambivalence about participation existed. For a few wives, the increased attentiveness to their roles and relationships brought about by the study led to feelings of guilt for not meeting an appropriate cultural standard of being a good wife and mother. Other participants described ambivalence about their role in the research process. They emphasized the tedious and time-consuming tasks involved in the behavioral self-report portion of the study while simultaneously discussing

their belief that the research would benefit them and the fishing community. Finally, fishing wives' concerns about how the research results would be used highlighted their vulnerability throughout the process.

Fishing Wives as Active Shapers of Family Life

At first, the fishing wives stated that their participation in the project had no influence on their lives. They talked instead of how their increased awareness, via participation in the study, prompted them either to think differently about or to make changes in their personal pursuits and family relationships. The women framed their narratives in ways that emphasized their active role in shaping their lives and minimized the role the research process played. Additionally, fishing wives tended to focus on their relationships with husbands and children, downplaying a focus on themselves.

Two wives mentioned that they were more aware of harboring angry feelings against their husbands for not being home. Their heightened awareness allowed them to redefine their relationship with their husbands. One wife explained, "As far as his time [away from me] goes, I didn't realize that I had the animosity towards him." Her awareness of her anger prompted her to communicate her feelings to her husband in a way that she said improved their relationship, "It was really nice for him, and for me, to hear, 'Well honey, I really think about you a lot.' Finally we got down to our relationship instead of just business." (Betty, married 25 years, mother of two).

Three women described how their participation made them more aware of the positive aspects of their marriage. One participant (Debbie, married 11 years, mother of one) recalled, "I felt pretty good about having a good marriage." Other wives discussed a greater empathy for their husbands' position. As one fishing wife (Kathy, married 11 years, mother of three) put it:

> He always tells me he doesn't like to be away from home, but sometimes I don't believe him because he's gone all the time. So, I think the study put it into perspective for me and helped me realize that that's his job.

The study provided two women with an opportunity to improve communication with their husbands. One woman (Julie, married 9 years, mother of five) described how the process legitimized her feelings:

> Participation in the study brings an awareness that brings about a dialogue. I think one of the most interesting questions was the use of a little visual aid asking, "how close do you feel to your husband?" or "how equal, or more powerful (are you relative to your husband)?" It was a good way to describe to my husband how I felt sometimes.

Our results are congruent with past work suggesting that researchers can unintentionally create the potential for participants to affirm their lives and personal relationships or discover discontent within them (Rubin & Mitchell, 1976).

Fishing wives acknowledged that they should spend more time with their children, a beneficial consequence of participation in the study. Seven fishing wives focused on relationships with their children, describing a new awareness about their parenting. One fishing wife (Lisa, married 9 years, mother of two) said, "I noticed I needed to spend more time with my children. It seems like my

everyday activity around the house takes up more time than I should allow. I try to spend more time doing things with them now." One woman (Theresa, married 8 years, mother of two) remarked on her increased appreciation for her children, "I cherish them more because I realize I'm the only one here and they're only little once. I've been spending more quality time with them, even though we're together all day."

Although many fishing wives narratives emphasized positive feelings surrounding their increased awareness of relationships with husbands and children, their narratives are shaped within a larger cultural context that holds women, but not men, responsible for successful family ties (Thompson & Walker, 1991). Our method encouraged self-reflection, but it did not provide fishing wives with a deeper understanding of the circumstances of their lives. Participation served to increase two of the wives' guilt for not meeting an appropriate cultural standard. One fishing wife (Julie, married 9 years, mother of five) explained her feelings this way,

> I guess there were times when the study made me feel like I wasn't doing as much as I could be doing with the kids. Gosh, confession time. I don't know if I've made great strides in that area. I don't think it is a negative, although it did make me feel guilty.

Although most wives emphasized changes in their family relationships and minimized changes in themselves, the two women who commented on individual change exemplify ways that women positively shape their lives. Having discovered

that they used their time inefficiently, they reorganized their routines. One wife (Theresa, married 8 years, mother of two) commented:

> I've enjoyed the fact that I identified and validated the things that I do all day that don't get recognition. So, at the end of the day, when the kids are in bed, I do things for myself as well.

She felt reaffirmed within a cultural story that does not value women's domestic work (Ferree, 1991). Although she continued to accept responsibility for housework and relegated her personal time to the end of the day she began to think of herself as someone worthy of personal pursuits.

Solidarity With the Fishing Community

Through their research participation, fishing wives felt more connected to one another and less socially isolated. They talked about feeling responsible to help one another and hoped that their participation would help other fishing families. Although the initial research study was not designed to facilitate a greater sense of cohesiveness among fishing wives, the wives made sense of their participation in ways that emphasized their connections with other fishing families, particularly other wives and their children.

Five women described how their participation gave them a sense of normalcy and a feeling of solidarity with other fishing wives. As one wife (Julie, married 9 years, mother of 5) put it, "It makes all the difference knowing that what you're going through is normal." Another fishing wife (Joanne, married 7 years, mother of three) felt that "networking with other people" helped her to realize "that

a lot more people like myself are looking for ways to make this lifestyle work." Through her participation, she felt more connected to other fishing wives and less socially isolated.

Eight of the wives explained that they hoped their participation in the research process would be helpful to other fishing wives and their families. Some of the wives hoped the study would enhance the fishing community through the distribution of supportive information, while others sought the creation of support groups specifically designed for children in fishing families. One experienced fishing wife (Debbie, married 11 years, mother of one) worried about younger fishing wives.

> This is an industry that has a lot of divorce in it. Hopefully others who are a little older can share what they've been through and the younger people will realize that we've been there if they need somebody to talk to.

Many women (e.g., Mary, married 13 years, mother of two) echoed her sentiments: "I hope it helps other women, or men, going through the separation, knowing that there are others out there so people don't feel so alone."

Four women remarked that they had increased or wished to increase their community involvement as a result the study. Considering whether participation had influenced her activity in community organizations, one woman (Betty, married 25 years, mother of two) proclaimed, "Yes ma'am! I have become very involved." She further explained, "I was aware of the fishermen's wives' organizations, but did not feel that I had any kind of interest in them. Because of

seeing what you folks are doing through them, I decided to become more involved." Other fishing wives (e.g., Theresa, married 8 years, mother of two) spoke of a new interest in community activity, even though they had not yet become more involved: "I did consider increased involvement in community organizations as a result of the study. I noticed how good I felt being with other people that were like me."

The fishing wives told of how they hoped their research participation would serve as a catalyst to help women, children, and men struggling to create and maintain a fishing family lifestyle. They described ways they wished to strengthen fishing families through traditional fishing community relationships.

The Legitimacy of Science to Help Fishing Families

Fishing wives not only spoke of their wish to work within their fishing communities to enhance their lives, but also of their desire to influence the larger social and political environments on behalf of fishing families. Like other groups of women involved in grassroots community action (Jones, 1995; Pardo, 1990), fishing wives in our sample were motivated to use their traditional community networks to gain larger political influence. The women participated in the research project as one way to broaden their influence. Their aspirations were dampened, however, by their worries of how the research results would be used.

All of the participating fishing wives accepted the legitimacy of scientific research in their lives while adhering to the rigorous requirements of the research

process. As one woman (Joanne, married 7 years, mother of three) explained, "Quite truthfully, I had no preconceived idea of what the research project was gonna be like. So, I just accepted it I guess." She further stated, "I don't know any other way to do it. That's your area—the research."

Eight women, however, made suggestions on how to improve the study. Some suggestions were: "checking in with people maybe a couple times a month over a period of a year because there's so many peaks and valleys;" "reaching more families from different walks of life not just boat owners;" "keeping a journal or using a form every day or something like that instead of the phone calls;" and "one way would be to live with a family." These women were sophisticated in their understandings of how someone could learn about their lives, suggesting methods and sampling strategies that could provide different information than the method we used.

Five of the wives identified bothersome aspects of the research process but also explained how it was a worthy pursuit. As one (Joanne, married 7 years, mother of three) put it, "We are so busy, and it requires an enormous chunk of time and almost never was it convenient! In fact, I got so I hated the phone calls (laugh)." She stated, however, that she realized the study procedures "were for a good purpose. I'm really anxious to see what the results are. Another woman (Terri, married 11 years, mother of four) stated, "It was very time consuming, but I was happy to help out. She explained that she believed in the value of social science so she minimized the inconveniences she experienced.

All the women described their commitment to the fishing lifestyle as their reason for participation. As one fishing wife (Jenny, married 12 years, mother of two) explained, "It's definitely a way of life. It's a culture. It's not like going from working the counter at McDonalds to Wal-Mart." Many wives hoped that participation in the project would bring about positive changes for fishing families through education of the community on fishing issues (7 wives) or through legislative changes (2 wives). One politically active wife (Jenny, married 12 years, mother of two) stated that she hoped the research would be "shared broadly with families, the popular press, management, and legislators so they know that the fishing industry is composed of families who contribute to the community, It's not just a guy trying to catch the last fish!" Although she understood that the research results may not be congruent with her impressions of the fishing industry, she explained, "I want material presented with a research base."

A few fishing wives simultaneously expressed their support for the project and their concern about the outcomes of the study. They emphasized their feelings of vulnerability as a result of participating in the project. One woman (Janet, married 24 years, mother of three) worried that fishing families would be portrayed as having children who are "at risk." She explained, "A concern I have is that kids in fishing families will be targeted as being kids who need help. That is a real danger. I heard it from quite a few people as reasons why they wouldn't participate."

Another wife (Mary, married 13 years, mother of two) who quit the study after completing half of her behavioral self-report telephone calls, was dissatisfied with our methods and mistrustful of our project:

> I was very frustrated. I just thought there would be more questions about what it's like to be in a fishing family. The questions weren't pertinent somehow. It was like they were set up for some other kind of family and just used for this study. Most people who are thinking people don't like to answer questions if they can't figure out why.

Her comments match those of other participants resistant to reporting on their daily activities, wanting instead to discuss the meaning of their behavior (Fassinger, 1993). She worried whether the "information would be understood correctly." Her unhappiness with the methods, combined with her disbelief that the research process would benefit her family or the fishing community, led her to withdraw from the project. Her fears, along with those of wives who remained in the project, echo feminist concerns that research results may not benefit participants and that agreement between researchers and participants may not occur (Acker et al., 1983; Stacey, 1988).

CROSS-CURRENTS IN THE RESEARCH PROCESS

Research designed to study work and family patterns within a politically and economically unstable context creates complex and sometimes contradictory experiences for both participants and researchers. In our minds, we were examining work and family life in a unique context by studying married couples who make

their living primarily through commercial fishing. Although none of us had experience as a fishing family member, we expected to be accepted by participants. We had support from the Sea Grant College Program and Fishing Family Coordinators. We saw our agenda as being compatible with valid science yet also meeting what we perceived to be the needs of fishing family members. In addition to contributing to the understanding of the work-and-family-life nexus, we planned to develop applied materials designed to make the lives of fishing families easier, particularly those of fishing wives who anchor their families both when husbands are at sea and when they are at home. We were ill-prepared for what we experienced: a staggering disinterest in participation and an agenda on the part of some participants that could not have been more different from our own.

Fishing families on the Oregon coast, and elsewhere, perceive their way of life to be in jeopardy. Most fishing families did not believe that participation in our project would alleviate their problems, as evidenced by our low participation rate and feedback from fishing wives. A very small number of individuals in our population agreed to participate in the project. These unique people seemed to believe that letting others know about their lives—what we saw as participating in our research—would get the word out that fishing families were suffering and that policies would change as a result. Fishing wives in our follow-up interviews struggled to reconcile their ideas about our research project with our procedures and measures. In the best-case scenario, as active collaborators, they used their participation to better their personal lives, to improve their close relationships, and

to strengthen their connections to the fishing community. In the worst-case scenario, they were frustrated with both the process and the purpose, and they withdrew. Between these extremes were the women who remained with the project but were ambivalent about whether their participation would benefit them or the larger fishing community.

Though fishing family life is unique, it is similar to that of other groups of families experiencing economic and political challenges. We live in complex times, and family life always is intertwined with the larger social context (Thorne, 1992). Certain categories of occupations that people have relied on to support their families are less available than they once were. For example, with the help of government policy on trade, manufacturing and skilled jobs have been moved to countries with cheaper labor, negatively affecting the lives of U.S. families (Rubin, 1994; Wilson, 1997). Other occupational categories, such as fishing and logging, have come up against declining supplies and competing interests. Researchers may come to family members in such groups informed about their potential family-life concerns but unaware of their desire to influence policy and practice through research participation.

What ethical tensions might be created in such instances and how might they be addressed? Increasingly, researchers will need to attend to the context of research (De Vault, 1995; Sankar & Gubrium, 1994), interfacing systematically with the community and its gatekeepers (Mitteness & Barker, 1994). Additionally, researchers should attend to the participants' frames of reference (Sankar &

Gubrium, 1994). Each of us, researcher and participant, is differentially positioned with reference to the world, and that difference has implications for the meaning of the research process (Jaffe & Miller, 1994). As researchers who navigate between very different social worlds, it is our responsibility to attend to this positionality, our own and that of our participants (Lyman, 1994).

Feminists consistently attend to the political nature of research and strive to obtain and use knowledge to empower oppressed or vulnerable groups (Small, 1995; Thompson, 1992). The changing social contexts for families and their members renders such practice imperative. Indeed, complex social changes create greater numbers of vulnerable populations with unique concerns. Vulnerable populations include those whose way of life is threatened, and being threatened creates a unique context for research participation (Fischer, 1994). Researchers who study vulnerable populations must anticipate the varying agendas prior to designing our projects, determining ahead of time whether we are willing or able to take on participants' agendas (Mitteness & Barker, 1994). Also, we should articulate our limitations clearly to participants (Daly, 1992).

Once agendas have been clarified, research methods can be identified that aim to serve the agendas of both researchers and participants. At minimum, when participants have no agenda or have an agenda similar to the researchers', we should design projects that are respectful of the lives of participants and predicated on a deep regard for their intellectual capacities (Lather, 1991). When appropriate, particularly when participants are motivated to use research for their own purposes,

we should consider creating opportunities for collaboration. Collaboration increases the likelihood that research questions will have relevance and utility for participants, it promotes local ownership of the research process and findings, and it acknowledges the various sources and forms of knowledge that have legitimacy (Small, 1995).

Finally, family researchers have an obligation to their colleagues to write the truth about our experiences and the tensions we encounter in order to avoid misleading each other about how research actually proceeds (Sollie & Leslie, 1994). Family research is not a neutral process; it is inherently political in content and in method (Nielsen, 1990). In the interests of creating authentic science and serving families well, we should be clear about our own political and professional agendas, and we should acknowledge the social nature of research. Failure to do so imperils our connections with participants and our knowledge of families.

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MEANINGS OF SISTERHOOD AND DISABILITY: NARRATIVES FROM WHITE ABLE-BODIED SISTERS

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ABSTRACT

Using social constructionist and feminist theories, we analyzed 10 in-depth qualitative interviews to explore how White, able-bodied sisters make sense of their relationships with siblings with disabilities within a larger cultural milieu that devalues women and persons with disabilities. The women described themselves as good sisters by normalizing their sibling's disability, minimizing personal sacrifices, and accepting the gendered nature of their family care. In addition, the sisters described their relationships with their siblings as an opportunity to transcend negative cultural attitudes toward persons with disabilities by learning to have compassion for those who are stigmatized.

Our concern is the theoretical and practical implications that both the feminist and the disability rights movements can have for understanding families with members who are physically, mentally, or emotionally disabled. Much of the research on families with members who are disabled downplays the gendered nature of family life (Cook, 1988; Traustadottir, 1991) whereas feminist family scholars often ignore disability (Asch & Fine, 1988; Lloyd, 2001). The purpose of this paper is to weave together thought from feminist, disability, and family literatures, through the stories able-bodied sisters tell about themselves, their families, and their relationships with their siblings with disabilities.

Feminist family researchers acknowledge the diversity among women and families and attend to the struggles of individuals adapting to contradictions in family life (Osmond & Thorne, 1993; Thompson, 1992). Feminists embrace the idea that within every culture, gender is embedded in ideology and is related to disadvantage, stratification, and hierarchy (Ferree, 1991; Thompson, 1993). Gender is a socially constructed and historically changing category that intertwines with race, class, age, sexual orientation, and ability (Andersen & Collins, 1995; Fine & Asch, 1988), creating complex social experiences for girls and boys, women and men. Thorne (1992) argued that the best way to analyze families is to examine the underlying structures of race, class, gender, generation, and sexuality. An area of diversity largely missing from feminist family scholarship, however, is that of disability (Hillyer, 1993).

Like gender, disability is a historically changing social construct (Rubin & Roessler, 1983; West, 1993) also embedded in ideology and related to disadvantage, stratification, and hierarchy (Baker-Shenk, 1986; Taylor, 2000; Wright, 1983). Disability activists and scholars have insisted on a clarification between disability (a biological condition) and handicap (a social condition) similar to the distinction made between sex and gender by feminists. Disability activists have shown that obstacles to education, community and political participation, independent living, employment, and personal relationships are due not to the incapacities of individuals with disabilities but to the social and cultural environment. For example, people in wheelchairs are not to blame for their inability to walk stairs; rather, the existence of the stairs is problematic (Asch & Fine, 1988). Though disability rights activists have made significant strides in legislating access to education, employment, government services, and community involvement for those with disabilities (Gostin & Beyer, 1993), issues pertaining to caregiving and family relationships remain contentious and problematic for both disability activists and feminists (Cook, 1988; Hillyer, 1993).

Studying families with members who have disabilities provides an opportunity to explore issues of gender and disability within a context of care. Feminists have shown, for example, that the responsibility for the unpaid (or underpaid) and devalued tasks of caring for others generally falls to women, girls, people in lower classes, and people of color (Tronto, 1993). Women—mothers, daughters, sisters, wives, and grandmothers—provide the majority of family care

for adults with chronic disabilities (Finley, 1989). Although some men provide care for family members, they more often provide indirect assistance with intermittent tasks, such as financial management or home repair. Family care is mainly about women in families providing care for dependent family members (Hooyman & Gonyea, 1995). Similarly, mothers provide the majority of care for their sons and daughters with disabilities (Hillyer, 1993; Marcenko & Meyers, 1991; Traustadottir, 1991)

For able-bodied siblings, the experience of having a relationship with a sibling with a disability is gendered as well. Able-bodied sisters and brothers are held to different cultural expectations for providing care in order to be considered *good*. The limited empirical evidence in this area suggests that sisters are more likely than brothers to provide daily physical and emotional care for siblings with disabilities (Stoneman, Brody, Davis, & Crapps, 1988); brothers are not expected to provide care for their siblings with disabilities to the extent that sisters are (Cicirelli, 1994). The literature pertaining to sisters and brothers with siblings who are disabled, however, often presumes that the experience is gender neutral (e.g., Bigby, 1997; Griffiths & Unger, 1994; Horowitz, 1993; Pruchno, Hicks, & Burant, 1996).

Able-bodied sisters and their relationships with siblings with disabilities are shaped not only by gender but also by disability. Researchers have generally conceptualized disability as both detrimental to and enhancing for able-bodied siblings of people with disabilities but never as a neutral social process. Much of

the research on the sibling relationship when one sibling has a chronic illness or disability focuses on the psychological adjustment or maladjustment of able-bodied siblings (Auletta & DeRosa, 1991; McHale & Pawletko, 1992; Seltzer, Greenberg, Krauss, Gordon, & Judge, 1997), ignoring or de-emphasizing the larger sociocultural contexts within which the relationship takes place.

Disability is a fundamental social construct that influences every aspect of social life for the individual with a disability. This process shapes the experiences able-bodied sisters have with their disabled siblings as well. Though psychological adjustment may be helpful for coping with a devalued family member, this focus limits our understanding of the complex social milieu that able-bodied sisters and their siblings with disabilities encounter. Instead of highlighting adjustment, we seek to understand how able-bodied sisters draw from and resist predominant cultural ideologies in order to construct an identity for themselves and an understanding of their relationships with their siblings.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

We use social constructionist and feminist theories to guide our research. A social constructionist perspective is concerned with accounting for the processes by which individuals come to explain themselves and the world in which they live (Gergen, 1985). Social constructionists "share the goal of understanding the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it" (Schwandt, 1994, p. 118). This process is shaped not only by the individual's active

engagement in creating a sense of self but also by the cultural and social contexts surrounding the individual (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Using this perspective, we explore the contentious process through which able-bodied sisters come to understand gender and disability, a process that involves simultaneous belief in and rejection of prevailing cultural values.

A feminist perspective illuminates how gender and disability are social constructs used to create and perpetuate systems of inequality and social stratification. Women (Osmond & Thorne, 1993) and people with disabilities (Fine & Asch, 1988; Hillyer, 1993) are devalued and subordinated at all levels of social life. They are not passive victims, however, but active players in creating their own identities and relationships and in influencing social structures and history.

Feminist scholarship is committed to social change and values social research aimed at improving the lives of women (Acker, Barry, & Esseveld, 1983; McGraw, Zvonkovic, & Walker, 2000; Walker, Martin, & Thompson, 1988). Through our research we seek to provide insights for future family research and programming by improving our understanding of gender and disability in the lives of sisters who have a sibling with a disability.

METHOD

We use a phenomenological approach to qualitative interviewing to address how able-bodied women construct the meanings of their relationships with siblings with disabilities and of themselves as good sisters. Our approach reflects our

assumption that women actively construct their worlds and themselves through the creation of symbolic and representational stories (Bruner, 1986; White, 1992; White & Epston, 1990).

Three questions are of primary interest to us: (a) How do able-bodied women make sense of their relationships with disabled siblings given that cultural prescriptions of sibling relationships rarely include disability, (b) How has the experience of being in a sibling relationship with someone who has a disability shaped the women's identity as a sister, and (c) How do women make sense of their own and their family's care for the sibling with a disability?

Description of Participants

Theoretical sampling strategies (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) were used in this study. Theoretical sampling encourages the collection of data that are "significant because they are repeatedly present or notably absent when comparing incident after incident, and are of sufficient importance to be given the status of categories" (p. 176). Three types of theoretical sampling strategies can occur: open, relational and variational, and discriminate. Two of these types, open and discriminate, were used in this study.

In the open sampling phase, when openness rather than specificity guides the sampling choices, we asked five able-bodied women with siblings who have a disability to participate in the study. The primary criterion for participation was that siblings have a substantial disability at birth. These women were either

acquaintances of the researchers or of others known to the researchers. All five of the women agreed to participate and hoped that their stories would be helpful to others.

In the next phase of discriminate sampling, participants were chosen to maximize opportunities for verifying findings. We contacted women, 35 years of age and older, with siblings who have severe developmental disabilities via a Developmental Disabilities agency in Oregon. The program manager sent an introductory letter from himself along with a letter from the researchers to sisters of the clients served in the program. To maintain confidentiality, the researchers were not informed of who received letters. Each letter described the study and invited the sisters to contact the researchers directly if they were interested in participation. Five women contacted us and agreed to participate.

The able-bodied women ranged in age from 21 to 82. Five of the women were married, one was widowed, one was divorced, two were never married, and one was in a long-term lesbian relationship. The women had, on average, 1.8 children (ranging from 0 to 5). The participants were fairly well educated with four having graduate degrees, two having undergraduate degrees, and four having some college. Half of the women worked full-time, two worked part-time, one was retired from full-time employment, one was a homemaker, and one was a student. The women represented different geographic locations across the United States. Though most of the women lived in the Northwest during the time of interviewing, they had previously lived in other parts of the United States. A few of the women

had lived in the Northwest their entire lives. One woman grew up in the Northwest but moved to the Midwest. The women also were diverse in their religious backgrounds but were similar in that they were White and mainly middle-class. One woman, however, was working-class.

The siblings with disabilities were between the ages of 23 and 66, and none was married or had children. Three of the siblings, however, had been involved in romantic relationships. Seven of the siblings were women, and three were men. They had the following disabilities: blindness, cerebral palsy, deafness, depression, Down syndrome, limb deformity, mental retardation, seizures, and visual impairments. The siblings represented diverse circumstances of education, abilities, and levels of independence. Two of the siblings lived independently with no assistance. The remainder required varying levels of assistance. They lived in their parents' homes, in community assisted living arrangements, in state institutions, or in a combination of arrangements over time. Most of the siblings were employed with varying levels of assistance as well. For example, many of the siblings worked in sheltered workshops. Two, however, were never employed, and one was attending community college.

Design of Qualitative Interviews

We used a conversational partner (Rubin & Rubin, 1995) approach to qualitative interviews to engage in dialogue with able-bodied women to provide an opportunity for them to relate their experiences. This approach emphasizes the

connection between interviewing and conversation, as well as the active role interviewees can play in a qualitative interview. The women chose when and where they wanted the interviews to take place, generally choosing to talk in their own homes and workplaces or in the first author's home. One interview took place over the telephone because the participant lived over a thousand miles away from the interviewer. The participants also exercised considerable control over the content of the discussion. For example, the interviewer emphasized that she was interested in hearing about stories the women thought were important. Participants were encouraged to include stories that traversed over the course of their life times. We also asked demographic information and six sensitizing questions to help guide the conversations. The sensitizing questions appear in Appendix A. Interviews lasted between one and three hours each. These in-depth interviews were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis. All names and identifying details have been changed to protect the confidentiality of participants.

Data Analysis Procedures

We used constructionist and feminist lenses to focus on how able-bodied women are constituted as sisters of disabled siblings. Our analysis process followed the pattern described by Huberman and Miles (1994), and includes the phases of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. During the data reduction phase, our theoretical orientations shaped the questions we asked and the emphasis we placed on allowing the women to share insights that were important to

them. During the data display phase, we read and reread each transcript several times, looking for themes and patterns in the narratives. We compared and contrasted each woman's story with the other stories to note similarities and differences among the women. During the conclusion-drawing phase, we integrated our theoretical perspectives with the women's stories to develop broader conceptual themes.

THEMES

The able-bodied women in this study portrayed themselves as good sisters by normalizing their sibling's disability, minimizing personal sacrifices, and accepting the gendered nature of their family care. In addition, the sisters talked about their relationships with their siblings as an opportunity to transcend negative cultural attitudes towards persons with disabilities by learning to have compassion for those who are stigmatized.

Normalizing Their Sibling's Disability: "She's Just a Regular Sister"

Able-bodied women told stories about their siblings with disabilities through the lens of a cultural discourse that devalues people with disabilities (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990). They described their siblings in ways that emphasized the siblings' normality and exceptionality, while struggling with the knowledge that disability is a stigmatized social position.

All of the women in this study were aware of the societal stigma attached to their siblings' disabilities, though their reactions to it varied. Three of the women expressed anger towards those with negative responses. Joan recalled the public attention she and her family received because of her brother's mental retardation. She stated, "He wasn't weird. We used to get really angry when we would take him out and people would look at him. I remember feeling embarrassed. They seemed so insensitive." Shirley, prefaced her comment with an apology and then stated, "I told people they could kiss my ass if they had a problem with my brother."

Another woman emphasized the sadness surrounding her sibling's stigmatized position. Linda described how her love for her brother made it difficult to understand a neighbor's reaction to him.

> I remember my mom telling me that a neighbor [approached her] to coo over the baby and, when they saw him, said, 'How can you take *that* out on the street?' To me, he didn't look any different. I just *loved* him so much. I was depressed for years about it.

Allison did not mention feelings of sadness. Instead, she recalled using humor to defy public attention toward her sister's limb deformities: "Well, we made it a game. We used to hang her legs out the car window. Or, when we were at the beach, we used to stand her prosthesis upside down in the sand!" Allison described interactions her mother had: "People used to come up and give my mom money. Obviously, she didn't need the money, right?"

Half of the women in this study minimized the stigmatizing behaviors of the people in their communities. Instead, they privileged positive experiences.

Claire emphasized that her sister was "loved by everybody" and that "she is by far the most popular member" of her family. She further explained, "People tend to be either generally nice or extremely politically correct when it comes to [Karen]." She also relayed a story of how friends unknowingly insulted her when they made fun of "the retards working at Burger King." She said, "It was funny. They were just joking."

Elizabeth described public outings as an opportunity to receive social support from the larger community. Although she minimized the negative experiences she encountered in public settings, she told stories about unwanted attention from community members. Elizabeth described the environment in which she and her sister were raised as "an extraordinarily caring community." She claimed her sister was "raised as queen of the community because so many people did care about her." When questioned further about public interactions, Elizabeth relayed a story of "a delegation coming from [her] church to encourage [her] parents to take Margaret to be healed by a child evangelist." Through this story, Elizabeth relayed the idea that some community members viewed her sister as someone in need of healing, not as a queen.

Though the women were aware of the societal stigma surrounding disability, they gave prominence to their siblings' strengths and normalcy. Their stories portrayed tension between their experiences and able-bodied definitions of normalcy. Joan described her brother as "very easy to get along with. He has a good attitude." Later, she acknowledged, "He started to have mood swings and get

real upset. He's gotten violent. He is throwing anything that is in his way." As a child, she remembered thinking, "I wish he was normal and [could] have a normal life."

Elizabeth also emphasized her sister's virtues, illustrating her sister's accomplishments by stating: "She reads at a seventh or eighth grade level. She is highly verbal and very socially oriented. She has an excellent memory." Elizabeth's efforts to accept Margaret's limited math skills and grasp of money concepts were tension filled. She placed a high value on education and academic accomplishment, and stated that her sister's limitations are not "from a lack of effort to teach her."

Claire described numerous examples of her sister's normalcy and exceptionality. She explained, "She was, for the most part, treated very much like a normal kid, with the expectations of a normal kid. She makes it easy on us because she is so high functioning." She stressed her sister's social integration and described ways that she is talented, "She can memorize the lines [of a play] in like 20 minutes!" She told of how Karen has the physical capabilities to play on *normal* athletic teams: "She was always on my softball teams. She was always on soccer teams and basketball teams. Not like a special league, but just with the rest of us. She's *way* stronger than me." She concluded, "To me, she is just a regular person, a regular sister. I don't think of her as having a disability." Claire strived to highlight Karen's normal status, but also talked of how Karen is different. She told of how Karen had a difficult time holding a job because of inappropriate behavior. She says that she does not "like to think of Karen having any kind of adult romantic

sexual life." She elaborated, "It is a very disturbing thought for me. I don't want to think about it. Obviously, Karen couldn't raise a child on her own."

Lisa explained how Stacey was treated similarly to her twin sister:

> It wasn't so much Stacey, but Stacey and Kathy as a pair. They were treated more as a pair rather than this one is handicapped and this one is not. We played with both of them. We'd go on vacations and both went. She participated in Sunday school and earned the rewards the same as the other girls did.

Only one woman questioned the definition of disability, asking, "How able-bodied am I? Which sibling in our family has the disability?" She later talked about learning to think of her sibling as an equal adult. She said, "I think [we have] a growing relationship. We have traditions and things that we know we like to do together. If anything really bad ever happened to me, he would be there for me." Despite her sibling's severe disability, she did not have the same tension surrounding her descriptions of him. She seemed to accept her brother on his own terms. She explained that she did not always have this enlightened view. She acquired it, rather, with age and with the help of a counselor.

These able-bodied women described their siblings with disabilities as either normal or exceptional within a predominant cultural discourse that says disability is neither normal nor exceptional. Many of the women de-emphasized their siblings' problematic behavior, while simultaneously discussing ways that their siblings did not meet standards of normality. One woman discussed how definitions of normality were not appropriate for her family. In this way, she transcended dichotomous definitions of normality.

Though most of the women did not transcend cultural definitions of normality, their narratives were mainly counter-cultural. Tighe (2001) showed that women with physical impairments also strive to understand themselves in relation to dominant cultural themes. Though the women in this study were not disabled, they showed great insight into the workings of stigma and positioned themselves *with* their siblings.

Minimizing Personal Consequences: "I Was Never Jealous"

Most of the able-bodied sisters discussed difficult personal adjustments they made because of their siblings' disabilities yet minimized negative consequences they experienced. They framed their stories, instead, with an understanding of circumstances and with a compassion for the impact these circumstances had on their familial relationships. Similar to findings in other studies (Dressel & Clark, 1990), the women in this study accepted the sacrifices that were made to care for their siblings with disabilities and they positioned the care as a taken for granted activity. The women primarily spoke of their personal hardships against a backdrop of benefits, highlighting the complex nature of these relationships.

All of the women minimized feelings of jealousy towards their siblings with disabilities, even though their siblings required extra resources and attention. They explained that their personal needs had been met.

Shirley stated, "I always remember that it was no big deal. First of all, my grandfather lived with us. When David needed my mother, I had my grandfather."

Joan reflected on her mother's active involvement in raising her brother, participating in his school organizations, and attending parent support groups: "I never felt jealous about it. I really didn't care about having her around. She was always there when I needed her." Allison stated, "I honestly do not believe that there has ever been any jealousy at all. Because I don't ever think [Mom] did it intentionally. I never felt like she loved her more. Sibling rivalry was never there," but, she further explained that "Sue's been given the opportunity to do things that we were never given the opportunity to do."

Although the women were not jealous of their siblings with disabilities, they described ways that they were jealous of other siblings. Elizabeth said: "I *have* been jealous of my [nondisabled] brother." Lisa explained that she did not have feelings of jealousy toward her sister with a disability because, she said, "I was so much older. I'd gone through that with the three brothers, feeling jealous because I was the only girl. Dad babied them." Claire stated that, "I was mostly jealous of, not Karen, but pretty much every other sibling I have."

Women in this sample downplayed feelings of resentment because of their siblings with disabilities, but told of personal hardships. Lisa described how at 18 years of age she took responsibility for caring for her twin sisters, especially the one without a disability. She explained, "I took the main responsibility for the other twin. I became [her] mom." Later she explained, "I guess I didn't think about it much then. It was just one of those things that needed to be done." Esther explained how she has enjoyed caring for her sister, Ruth, over a period of 33 years, " She has

meant so much to me at a time in my life that I needed her. It is such a joy to have her around."

In hindsight, Allison stated that her adolescent development was influenced by the fact that her "mom was never around." She explained: "At the time, it didn't bother me. It was normal. [But], I think I did most of my drinking to excess in high school because no one was watching me. I'm not saying that no one cared." Debbie recalled the difficult time shortly after her sister's birth and the accompanying illnesses that followed, "I don't remember Mom sitting down and coloring with me like I did with my kids. I remember feeling so alone. She probably didn't have time. She had things to work through." Joan echoed these feelings, stating:

> My mother and I never had the kind of relationship that I would want with a mother. I was very much expected to act a certain way, be a certain way, and get good grades. We didn't have fun. I never remember her reading me a book her entire life.

Joan's father died when she was very young, leaving her mother to manage a ranch and raise her children on her own.

Two women did not minimize personal consequences, and expressed more feelings of hardship than the other women in this sample. When asked how her relationship with Margaret had shaped her life, she replied:

> Significantly. It has dramatically shaped the way I use my money, the way I use my time, relationships with other people, where I have lived, where I have chosen to work, perhaps even partially in my choice of career.

A sensitive issue for Elizabeth was that a long-time relationship had been jeopardized because of her commitment to care for her sister, "I'm torn between the

two of them." This woman felt frustrated by the level of support she was receiving from her community. She had a demanding career and, as she explained, "was getting older." She felt she could no longer take care of her sister; however, her sister was not a high priority for placement in her county's assisted living program.

Linda, who spent many years in therapy to overcome feelings of depression and guilt explained,

> When I was younger, I felt I was a bad person to admit I was embarrassed by any family member, particularly one that was disabled. There is a sympathy factor there, especially if you feel guilty about the disability. Now, I think being a good sister is acknowledging all of the feelings you have.

She also explained that she has learned to allow her brother to express his negative feelings. She states, "We were robbing him of his emotions. Now I allow him to be sad. We argue too." She described her family as having problems that were exacerbated by her sibling's disability. For example, she believes her parents' marriage was strained because of the stress brought on by a family member with a disability. As an adult, she worked hard to have a positive relationship with her brother, while accepting the impact his disability had on her parents and, in turn, on her.

Hillyer (1993) describes several myths that are detrimental to caregiving relationships and, we argue, to sibling relationships when one sibling is disabled. The myths are: "It's not okay to talk about problems. It's not okay to express feelings openly. Always be strong. Always be good. Don't be selfish" (p. 207). These ideas form the cultural foundation for how women and those who are

disabled should behave. Hillyer emphasizes that it is important to overcome these beliefs in order to form healthy relationships. Linda's story is an example of a woman who is trying to do just that.

Accepting Gendered Family Care: "I'm Like a Mom"

Each of the women in this sample made sense of her sibling relationship within a cultural milieu that requires women to care for people with disabilities (Hooyman & Gonyea, 1995; Traustadottir, 1991). The women described different care responsibilities for mothers and fathers and for sisters and brothers, emphasizing that women were more responsible than men. Some of the women reprimanded their mothers or themselves for not meeting appropriate cultural standards of care. Within a patriarchal sociocultural context, they struggled to reconcile their own and their mother's care with the ideology of exceptional family care.

All of the women were aware of their mother's primary responsibilities for caring for their disabled siblings. Allison stated:

> Mom would get up at 5:00 in the morning, go to the hospital, and come home at 11:30 at night. That's what she [did] every day. When it comes to being at home, doing laundry, and grocery shopping, my mom still does all of that for Sue.

Claire acknowledged her mother's caregiving responsibilities: "My mom cared for Karen the most. She's definitely the one who takes the most active interest in her life." Linda said, "Dad was the outside-world-person. Mom was the family-and-

school-person. And, they really imposed a lot of responsibility on my older sister." Shirley said, "When Dad worked, Mom did everything. Then, when he retired, he helped as well. He did the lifting and gave him showers." Esther described her mothers' efforts to care for her sister with Down syndrome on a remote Kentucky farm, during the 1930s, "I can remember how ill she was and how Mom would be up night after night with her. There was no special training for children like Ruth when she was young, and little medical help. Mom provided her with exceptional care."

Many of the women described their sibling relationships as being similar to a mother-child relationship. Although Allison did not provide direct care for her sister, she thought of her relationship with her sister as "a parent-child relationship. We used to joke around that my little sister had four moms!" Janet explained, "I was really there for my mom. I was the oldest and the mother figure for Carol and my brother. I was the babysitter too." Debbie stated, "I assumed a lot of responsibility for her. I was kind-of a mother. I was real protective of her." Lisa said of her relationship with Stacey: "It is not a sibling thing. If something happens and my mom is not available, I take over mom's role."

Lisa echoed the ambivalence several of the women shared when discussing their responsibilities for their siblings. As the eldest daughter, only she and her mother were responsible for the complex procedures required to feed Stacey. She said, "I did have difficulty with that sometimes." She said of her life as a teenager, "You have the fine line between knowing she [mother] needs help, knowing you're

the only one who can do it, and wanting to be a kid and have your freedom. There is that internal battle that goes on." Her comment illustrates that her care activities were not come by easily; instead, she carried on an intellectual struggle between the obligation to care and the desire to be free from responsibility.

Though the women emphasized their own and their mothers' responsibility, they also de-emphasized their brothers' and fathers' responsibility for providing care. Their stories revealed a pattern of less involvement in care for the siblings with disabilities by the boys and men in their lives. Rarely did this arrangement anger or upset the women.

Janet explained, "My dad was a salesman at the time. He would take off Monday morning and didn't come home until Friday night. He was a typical male, I guess, especially of that generation. They only helped if the woman got upset." Allison stated, "Sue had four moms and half a dad. He was just never around." When questioned about her father's involvement with her sisters' care, Claire said: "My dad is extremely busy. For a long time, he wasn't spending time with Karen. He just kind of forgot." Lisa explained:

> Yes, only my mom and I fed Stacey. Nobody else would. Well, all the rest were boys. They wouldn't bother. My dad didn't handle it very well. He didn't want to deal with it. I never really expected the boys to handle it because my dad didn't.

Elizabeth pointed out that she did not shirk her responsibilities for her sister in the way that her brother had: "It wasn't easy. It is hell some days. In my view, I had no choice. I could never have walked away from her like my brother did. It is

not in me." Debbie recalled that her teenage brothers did not help with her sister's care in any way. She stated, "I don't remember them being around at all." Joan recalled, "There is no question that I am closest to Bob. My brother was very embarrassed by him most of his life." When asked why Joan thought her brother was embarrassed, she said, "Partly because he is a boy. He just didn't know how to deal with it." Though Joan and her brother were in the same circumstances, she excused him for not knowing how to cope "because he is a boy."

Many of the women struggled to reconcile their own and their mother's actual caregiving behaviors with their high standards of care. Joan and Lisa, for example, were faced with the possibility in the near future of having to care full-time for their siblings with disabilities. They both had high standards for providing care, but neither felt that they could meet these standards. Joan was ambivalent about her brother's institutionalization and her reluctance to care for him. She recounted bringing him back to his institution after a home visit: "[I would] just cry. I never wanted to take him." Joan was conservator of her mother's will and worried about how she would care for her brother: "He could live with us and have day care. I can't do that." She reprimanded herself for not meeting her brother's needs: "I don't check in with him enough, or send him pictures."

Lisa discussed her future role as caregiver for her sister, but explained that she cannot be like her mother: "My mother would never have done anything to send Stacey away. She didn't talk about it--she just dealt with it. That's the way my mom is, she doesn't complain." She further explained: "I am supposed to take

responsibility for her, but I have told my parents that I may need to put her somewhere. I have five kids!" She berated herself, however, because she "didn't spend as much time as [she] should have [with Stacey]."

Debbie reconciled her struggle between wanting to care for her sister herself and wanting to have freedom from the burden by emphasizing the positive qualities of living in a group home. "I came around to thinking that she has the right to an independent life." Of course, her sister does not live independently—but she herself does.

A few women complained about their mothers' efforts. For example, Janet found fault with her mother's desire to "do it all" and to "make all the decisions" related to Carol. She said, "My mom has been such a martyr. Then, she becomes exhausted and is angry with everyone for not helping her." She was irritated with her mother for not being able to give up more control of her sister as she aged. When discussing her mother's attempts to involve her with the care of her brother, Linda explained, "My mom was damned if she did and damned if she didn't! At first I felt like I was separated [from his care] and then I didn't want to be responsible for him." As a young girl, Linda was not satisfied with any care arrangement her mother devised.

Emphasizing Opportunities for Moral Enhancement: "We Learned to Have Compassion"

Disability can carry with it a stigma that deeply discredits a person's moral character (Bogdan & Taylor, 1994). Through their relationships with siblings with disabilities, however, the women in this study discussed opportunities for moral enhancement. Their narratives indicate that they achieved higher moral standing by transcending negative cultural attitudes towards persons with disabilities in order to have compassion for them. They argued that their siblings' disabilities enhanced their own and their families' moral character.

Like mothers who provide care for children with disabilities (Traustadottir, 1991), most of the women in this study emphasized that their relationships with their siblings provided them with an opportunity for personal growth. Joan said: "I learned from [Bob] to have compassion for disabled people." Lisa explained, "She has helped me grow and to have patience." Janet positioned herself in opposition to her mother's concern for public attention to her sister who was both mentally retarded and blind by saying, "For me, I felt like I was helping her and I was being a good person." Elizabeth explained that, because of her experiences with her sister, she has an "abiding commitment that everybody counts." Debbie discussed ways that she became a disability activist through her relationship with her sister.

> I tended to support the underdogs. I started an association at the junior high. We did fundraisers for the association. We got involved with Special Olympics. I was very shy. When I look back, I can't believe I did that. I had to get up and talk. I had very, very strong feelings about it.

Other women talked about their involvement with Special Olympics as well. For example, Linda explained how working for Special Olympics broadened her

horizons. "It gave me an interesting insight into Paul. I discovered that he had a life. I was missing out. That was the beginning of my reacquainting myself with my brother. He is a pretty interesting man."

Though most women discussed opportunities for moral enhancement, one woman was not entirely comfortable with her elevated moral standing. Claire had a sense that she gained public recognition because of her sister, though she felt embarrassed by this fact. She explained, "I just think, in a selfish way, it puts [me] in a positive light. People say, 'Claire has this sister who is disabled and it's so noble.'" She enjoyed the positive attention she received for being a good sister, but she also felt uneasy about it.

Finally, one woman did not experience moral growth as a result of her relationship with her sibling. Instead, she indicated that her moral development was hindered by the lack of attention she received from her mother as a teenager. This woman's sibling was the least disabled of all the siblings with disabilities. Her sister was physically attractive and cognitively bright. Perhaps issues of moral enhancement are not significant for women whose siblings' are less pervasively disabled.

The women also described ways their families benefited from involvement with a member with a disability. Janet said, "It was great for my kids. I think it makes you more aware of other people and more appreciative of what you have." Shirley indicated that her brother has helped her family "have compassion for people." Lisa believed that her sister's disability brought her family "closer

together. It gave us a much better perspective of what we have and what we can be thankful for." Esther described her sister as "God's special blessing to our family." She further stated that it is her hope that "our attitude towards Ruth will be an example for others who face the same situation." She explained, "There was never one time that the family was sorry to have her. I believe she gave us a love that made us a better family. I know I am a better person because of her."

Claire describes a time when her mother believes that God spoke to her in order to help her decide whether to keep or institutionalize her child:

> It was suggested to my parents that she be institutionalized. My mother said, 'We are not going to throw our child away.' She went to church to pray about it. She remembers thinking in the back of her mind that she wished that Karen would just die. Then, they could mourn her and get it over with. As soon as she had that thought, she had another one, 'She'll only die when you wish she wouldn't.' She didn't know where that thought came from. That was a big moment for my mom. A big spiritual thing for her."

Though the larger culture devalues persons with disabilities, the women in this sample did not. They positioned themselves as morally superior to predominant values.

CONCLUSIONS

The able-bodied women in this study simultaneously adjusted to and rebelled against cultural beliefs that devalue women and those who are disabled, and, in so doing, described themselves as good sisters. They accomplished the standing of goodness by normalizing their sibling's disability, minimizing personal

sacrifices, accepting the gendered nature of family care, and emphasizing opportunities for moral enhancement. Though the conclusions we can draw from a small number of White, mostly heterosexual, primarily middle-class, and well educated participants is limited, we suggest that our findings provide an initial understanding of how stigma and patriarchy shape sibling relationships when one sibling is disabled.

Goffman (1963), in his pivotal work on stigma, describes persons who are *wise* as those who are willing to adopt the stigmatized person's standpoint and share the belief that "he [or she] is human and 'essentially' normal in spite of appearances" (p. 20). The women in this study were wise, though their paths toward wisdom were filled with tension and struggle. Not only were they wise but also they suggest that others can become wise through respectful relationships with people with disabilities. Further exploration of how women in close relationships with those with disabilities become wise could serve to help both women and people with disabilities. Rather than blaming women for not meeting the needs of those who are disabled (Cook, 1988), focus could be placed on ways women fight against malevolent beliefs to enable family members with disabilities to thrive. Research focused on how women transcend negative cultural beliefs about disability could enhance efforts to destigmatize disability at all levels of social interaction.

Further, the narratives of able-bodied sisters illustrate how disability is a fundamental organizing social construct, not only for those with disabilities but

also for those in close relationships with them. Issues of psychological adjustment were occasionally important in the lives of these women. Issues of social stigma, however, were prevalent and problematic.

Finally, this study highlights the persistence of women's responsibility for providing care to dependent family members. The women made distinctions between the relationships girls and women have with family members who are disabled and the relationships boys and men have with them. The lives of these able-bodied sisters illustrate the gendered nature of sibling relationships, particularly when one sibling is disabled. Though this study is small, other sources provide validation to our finding that the family relationships of individuals with disabilities are gendered (Allen, Blieszner, & Roberto, 2001; Rossi & Rossi, 1990). Researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and family members would be wise to remember that the lives of women and of those who are disabled are intricately intertwined.

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APPENDIX

1. What are your most vivid memories of childhood, teenage years, and adulthood, and how does having a sibling with a disability influence these memories?
2. What are the significant turning points in your life, and how did the presence of your sibling influence those times?
3. How do you think your relationships with family members were positively or negatively influenced by your sibling's disability?
4. Who provided care for your sibling?
5. What are you most proud about your relationship with your sibling?
6. What regrets do you have about your relationship with your sibling?

CONCLUSIONS

Feminists critique women's unpaid family work as oppressive (Thorne, 1992) whereas other researchers argue that women have power within families (Kranichfeld, 1988). Collectively, the studies within this dissertation demonstrate that women pursue purposeful and meaningful lives within the context of patriarchal constraints. I show that women are both oppressed and powerful.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In my first study, conducted with Alexis J. Walker, I illustrate how aging mothers and their caregiving daughters work within a patriarchal context to create positive relationships with one another. They do so by attending to one another's lives, preserving mother's autonomy, and managing open conflict and tension. We were particularly struck by the way daughters managed tension with their mothers. Daughters were more physically robust than their mothers and could have intimidated them. None of the daughters, however, threatened their mothers with their physical advantage. Instead, they lowered their voices and slowed their conversations to match their mothers' volume and pace. Mothers promoted positive ties with their daughters by being appreciative of their daughters' efforts.

In my second study, done in collaboration with Anisa M. Zvonkovic and Alexis J. Walker, I address the ethics of doing research with women who volunteer to participate in research on behalf of themselves, their families, and their larger

communities. Fishing wives made sense of their participation in our research project by emphasizing: (a) themselves as active shapers of family life, (b) their solidarity with the fishing community, and (c) the legitimacy of science to help fishing families. The women created positive meaning out of a constraining research process by relating how they reorganized their daily routines, altered the management of their emotions, renegotiated family relationships, and participated in community organizations. Within the dominant themes, however, tension from and ambivalence about participation existed.

In my final study, authored with Alexis J. Walker and Leslie N. Richards, I conducted in-depth interviews with able-bodied sisters to discover how they make sense of their relationships with disabled siblings given that cultural prescriptions of sibling relationships rarely include disability. The women in the study describe themselves as good sisters by emphasizing ways that they meet the cultural standard for women in relationship with those who are dependent. They accomplish the standing of goodness by normalizing their sibling's disability, minimizing personal sacrifices, and accepting the gendered nature of their family care. In addition, the sisters talked about their relationships with their siblings as an opportunity to transcend negative cultural attitudes towards persons with disabilities by learning to have compassion for those who are stigmatized.

In the following sections, I discuss in more detail both the empowering aspects of family work and the tensions that accompany this type of unpaid and under-recognized work. I summarize the conclusions from all of the studies. Then,

I offer policy suggestions to improve the lives of women. Finally, I discuss methodological and theoretical issues surrounding feminist family research.

THE EMPOWERING ASPECTS OF FAMILY WORK

The women in all of the studies highlight how participation in family work can be a joyful and empowering experience. The studies illustrate the connections between family ties and unpaid family work. Thompson (1991) put forth the idea that women, in part, engage in family work because they value the positive relationship outcomes that result. The first study in this dissertation suggests that Thompson was correct. Most of the aging mothers and their caregiving daughters enjoyed being together. Their enjoyment was supported by the respect they showed for themselves and each other. They paid attention to one another's lives and managed tension effectively.

In addition to being motivated by positive family relationships, women engage in family work to improve the lives of their families. Like other groups of women involved in grassroots community action (Jones, 1995; Pardo, 1990), fishing wives in our sample were motivated to use their traditional community networks to gain larger political influence. They aimed to shape the political process surrounding the fishing industry using the power of science. Through their research participation they advocated for themselves, other fishing families, and the fishing family way of life. The women were pleased with the attention that fishing families received as a result of participation in the project.

Finally, the able-bodied sisters of siblings with disabilities illustrate how women can gain moral enhancement through close relationships with those who are disabled. The women in the study transcended malevolent cultural attitudes towards persons with disabilities by emphasizing their siblings' normality and exceptionality. They explained that their siblings deserved to be loved and that their relationships were meaningful and important. The women also recalled fun times they enjoyed with their siblings. Many of the women in the study described ways that their sibling relationships were close because of their responsibility for providing care to their brothers and sisters with disabilities.

Taken together, the studies support the idea that engaging in family work encourages closer and more meaningful family ties. Larger-scale, quantitative research projects have found similar results (Rossi & Rossi, 1990; Silverstein & Bengtson, 1997). For example, women are the ones who perform the majority of unpaid family work (Coltrane, 2000). And, when women are involved in any type of family relationship, the relationship is closer (Rossi & Rossi, 1990). The qualitative studies within this dissertation build on the foundation of quantitative studies by providing details of women's every day pursuits. Through ongoing, regular acts of care and accommodation, women build close family ties.

THE TENSIONS IN FAMILY WORK

Though the women in the studies benefited from engaging in family work, they also experienced significant costs related to their responsibilities. Collectively,

the studies in this dissertation show that women continue to be responsible for family work, and they suffer the negative consequences for it.

Generally, the aging mothers and their caregiving daughters got along well. A few pairs, however, were classified as constrained. These mother-daughter pairs did not attend to each other's lives nor did they resolve conflict effectively. Daughters were less likely than those in other pairs to promote their mothers' autonomy. The women in these pairs may have been better served by a caregiving arrangement that minimized their contact with one another. Because of the cultural belief that women should provide care to dependent family members (Tronto, 1993), the women may have had difficulty imagining an alternative solution to their needs. They also may have been limited by lack of financial means to purchase alternative caregiving services.

Though the fishing wives were optimistic when they described how they used the research process to improve their lives, they also told of frustrations. For a few wives, the increased attentiveness to their roles and relationships brought about by the study led to feelings of guilt for not meeting an appropriate cultural standard of being a good wife and mother. Other participants described ambivalence about their role in the research process. They emphasized the tedious and time-consuming tasks involved in the behavioral self-report portion of the study while simultaneously discussing their belief that the research would benefit them and the fishing community. Finally, fishing wives' concerns about how the research results would be used highlighted their vulnerability throughout the process.

In the third study, able-bodied sisters were able to transcend cultural beliefs about disability but they remained firmly grounded in cultural beliefs about gender. For example, the women minimized personal hardships while describing difficulties related to their siblings' disabilities. Patriarchal society encourages women to be self-less (Baber & Allen, 1992) and most of the sisters described themselves, their mothers, and other female relatives in ways that were congruent with this belief. The women struggled, however, with this selfless image. They acknowledged tension between wanting to help their siblings and wanting to be free of the responsibility of care. Some of the sisters felt guilty when their siblings were institutionalized or involved with community assisted living situations, reprimanding themselves for not providing this care on their own. The women were generally happy, however, with the services their siblings received from these programs.

CONCLUSIONS DRAWN FROM EACH OF THE STUDIES

The contradictory results of the studies provide evidence for the complex and sometimes conflicting nature of engaging in family work. In the first study, aging mothers and their caregiving daughters created positive relationships with one another despite the many tensions they negotiated. The majority of the women empowered one another. Their responsibility for and participation in the undervalued labor of family care, paradoxically, promoted each intergenerational

partner's autonomy, particularly that of the woman with greater need. Not all of the pairs, however, were able to engage in positive relationships with one another.

The fishing wives study highlighted how volunteering to participate in family research is not a neutral process but, instead, is inherently political in content and in method (Nielsen, 1990). Though the fishing wives had optimistic views of their research participation, in reality, they were not in control of the process. Through an evaluation of our research practices, we concluded that the fishing wives would have been better served by participation in a collaborative research process. Collaboration increases the likelihood that research questions will have relevance and utility for participants, it promotes local ownership of the research process and findings, and it acknowledges the various sources and forms of knowledge that have legitimacy (Small, 1995).

In the final study, able-bodied sisters were *wise*, what Goffman (1963) defines as a willingness to adopt the stigmatized person's standpoint and share the belief that he or she is essentially normal in spite of appearances. They were not wise, however, in the sense that they were uncritical of their mothers', their sisters', and their own responsibility for caring for their siblings with disabilities. Our findings highlight the need for researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and family members alike to become more critically aware of how the lives of women and of those who are disabled are intricately intertwined.

FEMINIST FAMILY POLICIES

Together, these studies illustrate how women serve themselves, their families, and their larger communities through unpaid family work. As noted in the introductory chapter, however, they participate in this work within a social context that often ignores and devalues their efforts. As a step toward eradicating the injustices surrounding family work, I offer several feminist social policy reforms. These reforms are congruent with a socialist feminist perspective—a view that acknowledges economic, physical, and psychological forces that support patriarchy (Tong, 1989). hooks (1984) describes the need for an ongoing feminist revolution. Though revolution is the ultimate goal, hooks explains that reforms can play a vital role in the revolutionary process. To be effective, reforms must serve the ultimate goal of societal transformation. The policy reforms in this section are offered as steps toward the goal of justice and compassion for all who engage in and benefit from family work.

Financial Reforms

The most pressing issues related to family work are the financial consequences this type of work imposes on women. At present, the full costs of engaging in unpaid family work are unknown. One financial consequence that has been well documented, however, is the higher risk of poverty for women in later life partly as a result of lower retirement benefits through Social Security and private pensions (Meyer & Bellas, 1996).

The Social Security Insurance (SSI) system is predicated on the assumption that husbands will engage in a pattern of paid employment throughout their lives, providing for their dependent wives and children. Women, this model assumes, will engage in housework and dependent care without pay or disability benefits. Women receive SSI benefits as a result of their relationships to men and these men's work histories. Single women are treated like single men and are counted as contributors in their own right. Women who depend on husbands' benefits are restricted from collecting Social Security payments in the following ways: (a) a widow under age 60 with no children cannot collect benefits, (b) a widow who is age 60 or above can collect 71.5% of husband's benefit if he was still alive, (c) a divorced woman must be married to her husband for 10 years to collect 50% of her former spouse's benefits, and (d) a woman who becomes disabled as a homemaker does not qualify for social security benefits (Hooyman & Gonyea, 1995).

To address inequities in the Social Security system for women, a *Modified Earnings Sharing Plan* was developed by a feminist group based in Washington DC (Miller, 1994). The plan recognizes the economic value of family work. Under the plan, marriage is treated as an economic partnership. Couples share equally in the earnings accredited to SSI during the years of marriage. Separate earnings records are kept for each spouse, and wives who do not work for pay have money recorded in their own names based on 50% of their husbands' earnings. The plan also includes adequate disability and caregiver benefits for both spouses. In their review of this plan, Hooyman and Gonyea (1995) indicate that they are not

optimistic that this plan can become a law in the present political climate of the United States.

Instead of Social Security reform, Hooyman and Gonyea (1995) advocate for direct financial payments to those who provide care for dependent family members across the lifespan. They do not promote the idea that women should be solely responsible for care provision nor do they believe that a woman must be a care provider if she does not choose to be. They emphasize, rather, that care providers must have a choice about whether to assume the caregiver role. They also call for a woman's right to opt for gainful employment outside of the home. Finally, they argue that caregivers must have autonomy to decide how to spend their payments. Ann Crittenden (2001) also suggests that mothers receive direct financial payments for their childrearing services. She argues that, like those in the military, women provide an essential service to the country for raising children. She further states that those who raise children should be compensated in similar ways as those who serve in the military.

Community Reforms

To bolster family workers in the home, a range of well-financed community supports must be made available. Services such as day care, respite care, homemaker services, residential care, and counseling are all examples of supports families often need over their life courses. Families, however, should not be the only ones responsible for financing these services. Instead, society as a whole

should commit to supporting services aimed at enhancing the lives of caregivers and care recipients. With adequate financial supports, workers within these programs can be properly compensated.

Workplace Reforms

Workplaces need to become more responsive to family needs. Crittenden (2001) suggests the following workplace reforms: (a) give parents and family caregivers the right to a year's paid leave, (b) shorten the work week, (c) provide equal pay and benefits for equal part-time work, and (d) eliminate discrimination against parents and family caregivers in the workplace.

Organizing for Feminist Revolution

Although social reforms can help move us toward a transformation of a society characterized by nonoppressive relations among all people, ultimately, women must develop themselves politically in order to establish a new social order (hooks, 1984). hooks explains that a liberatory ideology must be shared with all people. Through love and dialogue, she argues that women can come together to bring about social reform. She says,

> The formation of an oppositional world view is necessary for feminist struggle. This means that the world we have most intimately known, the world in which we feel "safe" (even if such feelings are based on illusions) must be radically changed. Perhaps it is [the lack of] knowledge that everyone must change that has so far served to check our revolutionary impulses. (p. 163)

METHODOLOGICAL AND THEORETICAL ISSUES

Feminist research can facilitate a nonoppressive liberatory ideology to encourage women's political awareness. Feminist researchers seek to transform society by eliminating all systems of oppression, including those oppressed by age, class, disability, ethnicity, race, or sexual orientation. Feminist scientists can play an emancipatory role *for* and *with* women—through the knowledge they generate and through the research methods they use (Lather, 1991). In this section, I discuss how feminist philosophy and theory informed the studies within this dissertation.

Feminist philosophies provided a methodological map for focusing on women's lives and for creating nonoppressive and caring research relationships. The methods used within this dissertation, however, vary in the degree to which they meet high standards of feminist practice. The first study was designed along more traditional precepts, using observational and survey methods to collect information from mothers and daughters. The design also included less traditional practices such as (a) effort to build respectful relationships with participants, (b) allowance for mothers and daughters to deviate from taping guidelines, and (c) a qualitative data analysis. The second study began with a more traditional design and ended with a critique of that design. Finally, the third study was less traditional in that it was designed to be open-ended and participatory.

Though the studies failed always to meet high feminist standards, they were enriched by feminist goals of understanding how women struggle against and adapt

to family relations that nurture and oppress them, and by the belief that research relationships should be caring and just.

Feminist thought also shaped the questions that were asked and informed the data analyses in all of the studies. The gender perspective drew my attention to social tensions within and around women's family relationships. For example, family life often reflects the larger patriarchal sociocultural milieu (Allen & Walker, 2000; Osmond & Thorne, 1993), limiting the lives of girls and women. In each study, I integrated this idea into the framework of my discussion. I awas open, however, to contradictory findings that allowed me to understand the paradoxes inherent in women's lives.

A gender perspective also allowed me to take women's relationships seriously and to elevate family work to a worthy scholarly pursuit. In so doing, I learned how women articulate oppositional values to mainstream beliefs of what is important and worthy of respect and praise. All of the women, regardless of their life circumstances, provided care and nurturance to family members. Their practice of care helped them to work against dominant ideas and practices that devalue care.

Tronto (1993) argues that not only women but also working classes and people of color have been responsible for providing care to those who are privileged throughout western civilization. She says:

> To recognize the value of care calls into question the structure of values in our society. Care is not a parochial concern of women, a type of secondary moral question, or the work of the least well off in society. Care is a central concern of human life. It is time that

> we began to change our political and social institutions to reflect this truth. (p. 180)

She suggests that to see the world differently, we must perceive the activities that legitimate the power of the privileged as less valued, and we must see the activities that legitimate a sharing of power with the oppressed as more valued. A step in this direction is to value women's family work.

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