CHAPTER 12

Gender and Social Roles

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1. INTRODUCTION

I begin by presenting and stressing my definition of social role, because it varies from one still being used by many sociologists, which limits the social role to a set of expectations and focuses only on the social person holding the role title. This does not make sense for two reasons. First, social life could not exist if everyone merely expected behavior and interaction; complex subidentifiers are needed to determine what actually occurs. In their major book on role theory Biddle and Thomas (1966) do not make that mistake; they define social role behaviorally. However, even their definition of an individual role refers to "all behavior of an individual" (p. 30) in terms of a "person-behavior matrix" (p. 45). This is simply too broad for analyses of specific roles, and it retains the second problem— a focus on only one individual. In real life no social role can exist without a social circle toward whom the behavior of the social person is directed and from whom corresponding action is received, the combination forming sets of social relationships. Even when using the analogy to a role in a play, as do Biddle and Thomas (1966), one must be cognizant of the fact that a theatrical role involves a circle of other actors, as well as the writer of the script, producers, audience, and a large group of workers building the set, advertising the play, and so forth.

I find a symbolic interactionist modification of Znaniecki's concept of social role most satisfactory for analysis of any particular social role or as a foundation for related concepts, such as role cluster, role strain, or role conflict. Thus, I am using the following definition in this chapter:

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A Social Role is a set of patterned, mutually interdependent, social relations between a social person and a social circle involving negotiated duties and obligations, rights and privileges. (Lopata, 1994b, p. 4; see also 1966, 1969, 1971, 1991b; Znaniecki, 1965)

This definition shifts the focus from the person to the set of relations necessary for the social role to be carried forth. "The social person is that 'package' of characteristics with which an individual enters a specific role" (Lopata, 1994, p. 4). These are assumed to be necessary for the performance of the role-related duties and the receipt of the role-related rights. For example, to enter the role of mother in American society a woman must give birth, adopt, or in some other way acquire a child, whom she declares to society she will mother. Official recognition of motherhood is legally established. Generally speaking, a woman entering the role of mother must have the physical and mental characteristics that ensure care of the child in ways approved of by society. She must be able to bring together, if it is not provided for her, a whole social circle with whom to rear the child. The mother must also have the ability to socialize the child so that she or he can fit into societal life. Special consideration is given to mothers who do not see, hear, speak, or have the physical ability needed to carry, feed, and protect the child, but society gives itself the right to take the child away if it considers the care to be inadequate or if the child is endangered.

In other words, the society, community, and any preexisting social circle have the right to determine the necessary qualifications of a social person entering the role of mother, physician, plumber, or any other role over which these groups have jurisdictions. A person wishing to "make" or create a social role must pull together a circle of members willing to cooperate with her or him to meet the agreed upon purpose (Lopata, 1991b; Turner, 1962). Various tests have been created to establish whether an individual has the characteristics of the social person or social circle member of a specific social role.

The social circle consists of all those persons and other social units to whom the person at the center of the social role has duties and obligations and from whom she or he receives the rights needed to perform these duties. All these are negotiated with more or less freedom on either side and can vary considerably by setting, the society, community, and specific role. The social circle usually contains beneficiaries, such as "clients," students, or children, toward whom major obligations are directed, and assistants, colleagues, persons in similar roles, and suppliers. A role requires at least the person and two others, the beneficiary and assistant or supplier of resources. By this definition, a dyad is a social relationship but it takes at least three persons to create a social role (Znaniecki, 1965).

Circle members have obligations and rights not only in relation to the social person, but often to each other as well. Thus, this concept of social circle avoids some of the problems entailed in Merton's (1957a, 1957b) concept of role set, in that it recognizes that circle members may have relations with each other based on the central role. For example, although some patients of a physician may not know each other and never interact, each relates not only to the physician, but also to her or his receptionist, nurse, and those patients who are in the waiting room together. The nurses relate with all these in their contribution to the doctor's role.

The reason people can enter social roles, as social person or circle members, is due to cultural models that define, more or less specifically, what qualifications all participants should possess, and the rights and duties on all sides. This view of social roles makes evident the possibility of role strain when different segments of the social circle make simultaneous demands, all considering their needs to be primary in importance (see Goode, 1960). Role overload, conflicting demands from different segments of the

circle or from the same segment, can be prevented only if the social person has the power to establish, or can negotiate, priorities. One method of decreasing demands is by simplifying the social circle, although that solution has its own problems. Major sources of role strain result from the failure of the circle to provide adequate resources for approved action in the role. Finally, person-role strain can develop if the person does not have adequate qualifications and personal resources to meet the demands of a role or if such demands run contrary to her or his value system or personal preferences.

All persons are involved in more than one role, even if it is only as the social person of one and a circle member of another. Role clusters can contain roles within the same institution, such as the family, or in several different institutions, such as the family and occupation. The former role cluster can be identified as flat, regardless of the richness of multiple roles within it, the latter as multidimensional. Conflicts among roles are frequent, as I shall examine in relation to gender. They arise from too many or conflicting demands made on an individual by people in different roles, or from the lack of resources, such as time or money, with which to balance such demands. One way an individual may avoid some conflict is by withdrawing from a role. Organizations may also try to prevent role conflict, as in the case of the refusal in recent centuries of the Catholic Church to allow its priests to marry and have families.

Although cultures contain models of major social roles, such as mother or father, each role is carried forth by a social person in negotiated relations with circle members. This complexity results in relational problems, as each person entering a role may have very different perceptions of its obligations and rights. An employer may wish an employee to bring her or his own clothing, while the employee may assume that uniforms are provided. The matter of cost involved in these two arrangements may be a source of serious irritation. The cultural model may assume the presence of a specific circle member, such as a father in the case of the role of mother, while many American mothers must parent without a father. The title "doctor" is used by both M.D.s and Ph.D.s, but members of the society may assume it refers only to physicians (and, in not too distant a past, white male physicians). The title of the role and of the central person serves as a significant symbol for the organization of behavior by people wishing to interact with her or him. Some roles are rigidly defined, with little flexibility, as in the military. Some settings in a single society may treat same-gender partnerships the same way as traditional marriages, whereas others may forbid and even punish such relationships. The more complex the society in its composition and subcultures, the more variation there is on any social role, regardless of any assumed homogeneity. Yet, people socialized into certain symbols for social roles, such as titles, tend to take for granted an entire set of assumptions, providing constant opportunity for conflict, especially in rapidly changing settings.

I have one final comment on role theory. According to these definitions, there are no gender or race roles, only pervasive identities of social persons and circle members that enter, more or less significantly, into social roles. It is possible, and some thinkers believe this to be the case, that there are social roles of woman and man in modern society whose function is to distinguish between the genders in all social relationships. Caste roles were distinctly of such nature. However, Barrie Thorne and I (1978; see also Stacey & Thorne, 1985) have concluded that such a conceptualization of gender is meaningless, especially since it aggregates all men and all women with no internal differentiation within each category. It thus assumes that all men relate to all women in the same way, that is, according to the rules of such sex or gender roles. It appears to be more logical and realistic to visualize the situation in terms of the following processes: Sexual identification at birth,

or at a time of sexual change, seems universal. This becomes a gender identification and identity into which people are socialized and remain involved as they enter different social relations and roles throughout the life course. This pervasive identity becomes an important characteristic in some roles, (e.g., mother or father), but less so in other roles (e.g., physician or store clerk). It enters more in relationship with some members of the same or the other gender, less so in other interactions. It is part of the "package" that we carry with us in our social interactions, as are racial, religious, and ethnic identities, but is more important than, for instance, red hair before voluntary hair color changes, or extremes in height.

2. GENDER AND FAMILY ROLES

I now turn to an analysis of gendered roles, mainly in the complex American society, using the above definition of social role and related concepts. This will be an historical view of the changing cultural models in family and community social roles of men and women, recognizing that none of these exist except in the relation between a social person and a social circle. The subject is complex, and many social scientists have worked hard at making sense of it in terms of its social class, racial, and ethnic variations. The shortage of space for this analysis makes some omissions unavoidable.

Major problems with understanding social roles in this society are the rapidity of social change and the enormity of social diversity. Various aspects of the cultural models of major roles are constantly changing, first as deviations from prior ones, then as more accepted guidelines, and finally as old models to be gradually replaced. An example of this are same-gender variations on sexual partnership and parenthood roles. As Gusfield (1967) pointed out many years ago, social change cannot be conceptualized bipolarly, as into traditionalism and modernity. Various aspects of social roles can change at different rates. A perfect example of such variations in the rate of social change is in the case of family roles.

In brief, contemporary family roles have been deeply influenced by past changes in the economic structures of most societies, especially American. The processes of industrialization and urbanization, of the organization of most work into jobs within economically motivated organizations, and of the development of nation–states and of a series of accompanying cultural changes split the conceptualized world in many ways, including into two spheres, private and public (Lopata, 1993a, 1994b). Much of the work pulled into occupational roles became defined as masculine, with some clearly gendered exceptions (e.g., nursing and teaching). The private sphere became the province of the home and family, extended to those aspects of community life that were defined as associated with these. This province became the domain of women, whose role cluster was reconstructed from that of member of a cooperating family integrated with the community in all institutions, to that of homemaker, wife, and mother in a privatized home. In the meantime, the men's sphere was separated from this territory and simultaneously expanded to all institutions of public life: economic, political, religious, and higher educational. The enormous consequences of this division are still visible in the images of the ideal man and woman and in the relations between the genders. The images had to be reconstructed to fit this two-sphere world, in spite of the fact that neither gender could possibly exist in only one sphere. Women had to become defined and socialized into motherly, caregiving, empathetic, "expressive," and cooperative persons, while men became de-

fined and socialized as rational, efficient, strong, and competitive, as summarized by Parsons (1943/1954), who found such an arrangement systemically functional (see Chafetz, *this volume*). In addition, the two-sphere world visualized interaction between men and women as highly restricted, since it assumed that all they had in common was sex.[1]

Serious attempts have been made by cultural, religious, educational, and other leaders to ensure that such a dichotomized world is supported in every possible way. Such an ideal-typical world construct was never completely possible, however, and it has become increasingly apparent that it is "dysfunctional" to the system, not to mention to the lives of both men and women. Various social movements have drawn the society's and its individual members' attention to the problems of such a world. In social role terms, the attempt to create a two-sphere world and related gendered personalities resulted in tremendous problems for most social roles because it flattened the lifespace of social persons and changed the composition and characteristics of members of their social circles. This is illustrated by strains in the social roles of wife and husband, mother and father, and those in organized public life.

2.1. Wife and Husband Roles

The role of wife in pre- or even early-industrial times, especially in patriarchal, patrilineal, and patrilocal societies, involved the woman in cooperation with not only her husband, but also his family of orientation and often extended family, as well as his village (Thomas & Znaniecki, 1918–1920). It did not include her family of birth, since by marriage she joined the husband's family, often at a considerable distance from her own. Her position as a wife depended mainly upon the husband's position in his family, although her personal characteristics and her contributions to that family economically, socially, and in terms of the status she brought with her or developed were usually acknowledged. Her duties to her husband were often defined and supervised by her in-laws (Lopata, 1999). His family, in turn, granted her rights making possible the performance of these duties. For example, according to anthropologist Paul Bohannan (1963), men universally acquired certain rights over their wives upon marriage, including the right to share a domicile, sexual access, "*in genetricem* rights" of filiation of the children to the husband's line, and economic rights of various strength.[2] In return, the wife gained the right to a shared domicile; the results of sexual access (usually meaning children), shared responsibility over, and care of, the children; and economic cooperation and interdependent support. What happened to the role of wife after the death of the husband depended upon the status she held in the family and community and the status of widows. Family systems concerned with biological fatherhood usually forbade the widow to remarry, or even have sexual relations outside of the family line. They sometimes ensured that she continued having children and that these remained with the family through a levirate system, by which a male agnate of the deceased continued to impregnate her, although the resulting children were considered the offspring of the deceased (Bohannan, 1963; see also Lopata, 1987a, 1987b).[3]

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[1] This is evident in the strong conservative objection to men and women serving alongside in the military (see Lopata, 1992).

[2] Obviously, Bohannan based this conclusion on studies of patriarchal families.

[3] Numerous studies of widowhood convinced me that the situation of widows is highly indicative of the role of wife and of the situation of women in a society and its communities (see Lopata, 1996).

In heavily patriarchal societies the role of the husband was also embedded in his other family roles. Family members helped him provide the rights and resources for his wife in her role and received rights from her because she was his wife. Thus, both marital roles were submerged in the intertwining of complex, multiple family roles. In such family systems a widower could remarry without any problems, since the lineage of the wife did not count and since the family needed the work done by a wife.

The gradual processes of expansion of societal complexity decreased considerably the power of the patriarchal line over its youths to the extent that they could obtain an education and occupational preparation away from home, take a job, marry, and even move a distance away. This changed both marital roles by decreasing obligations to the male's family. For example, the wife could now set up her own household and run it with much less interference from the husband's family. The husband gradually lost the responsibility for his aged or widowed parents, so that he could concentrate upon his family of procreation. This, however, created problems for his family of orientation, which had lived in the anticipation of support from sons in old age. It did benefit the new unit. Such a shift has been documented, for example, in the recent case of Turkish sons who emigrated to Germany. The widowed mothers left behind gradually received fewer economic benefits, as the sons shifted their allegiance with Westernization (Heisel, 1987).

While the in-law segment of the wife's social circle diminished in importance in terms of her duties toward it, this also diminished the supports she had received from it in her role of wife, so that the main responsibility for the "care" of the husband fell on her shoulders with the help of whomever she could pull into the circle. The relative absence, or at least infrequency of contact, with the male line removed a possible source of abuse from that circle, but at the same time it also removed a possible source of protection from abuse from the husband, especially in the weakening of community support as the demand for personal privacy increased. The alleged right of relational partners to safety was often neglected; in fact, wife abuse sometimes received community approval, especially in subcultures characterized by strong patriarchal power.

Thus, the wife's duties toward the husband, along with the composition of her circle, changed dramatically as his job became increasingly important in economically focused societies. Her social circle often included his work associates toward whom she had definite duties of entertainment, communication, and other forms of interaction. According to Papanek (1973, 1979), the wife became the behind-the-scenes partner in a "two-person single career" in which she performed numerous instrumental and expressive duties that enabled her husband to succeed in his job, of which he was the official center. Papanek (1973, 1979), Finch (1983), Daniels (1988), Lopata (1971, 1993a, 1994b) and many other social scientists outlined these duties as including "stroking," to decrease the stress caused by his other relationships on the job; keeping all problems of the home and family from disturbing him, which means handling them herself; fulfilling her role as homemaker or manager of the home with little help from the househusband; child-rearing; and meeting the obligations of both parents to prevent his career from being interrupted.[4] Papanek (1979) pointed to the importance of status-maintaining work in their residential and his occupational communities and with the employing organization. The required

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[4] Interestingly enough, there is no equivalent role for a man that matches the "housewife" or more recently "homemaker" role of a woman. The label "househusband" usually refers to a husband who stays home to care for the children. It usually means that there is a wife and that she is the "breadwinner." I have not seen this concept applied to single-parent fathers, who do not automatically become homemakers.

behavior, including proper self-demeanor as well as that of properly educated and married offspring, necessitated refraining from involvement in competing social roles, such as employment. Ostrander (1984) and Daniels (1988) found that status work varied by whether the status of the family, reflected in the status of the husband, simply needed maintenance, or was also oriented toward upward mobility. The whole life of the wife became dependent upon the husband's job, its location, rhythm, costs, and benefits. The situation of Hillary Clinton is illuminating. Although she is known to be a highly successful and intelligent career woman, Americans see her not as a partner in the presidency, but only as the rather devalued "First Lady," who should model herself on the way prior "First Ladies" behaved. She was totally rebuked as the sponsor of a major presidential initiative.[5] Thus, her role is seen in two-person, single career terms.

During the height of the two-person career trend, which reached its peak in the post-World War II decades, the main function of the husband was that of being a "good provider" (Bernard, 1983), as evidenced by the home and family he supported financially. Being a good provider meant that his wife did not "need" to be employed, and that all her economic contributions to his and the rest of the family's welfare were devalued as being those of "only a housewife." When I (Lopata, 1971) asked full-time homemakers and employed suburbanites and urbanites in the 1950s and 1960s what were the most important roles of men, they most frequently listed "breadwinner," and most saw their own main, almost exclusive, roles as care of the family and motherhood. Roles outside of the family were placed last on a list of possible roles of women. Only a few of the respondents, married to business executive or professional men, felt that they had some influence on their husband' careers, thus underevaluating their contributions. Betty Friedan (1963) labeled this whole ideology *The Feminine Mystique* and started a revolutionary reconstruction of reality and roles.

Actually, when *The Feminine Mystique* was published, the behavior of women was already changing, although not yet in ideology and self-concepts, as wives began, or continued, moving into the occupational world. In the years of my *Occupation: Housewife* (1971) studies, a woman's justification for employment was that her paycheck would be used for "special projects" that did not detract from the husband's good provider role. Bird (1979) studied ways in which marital couples tried to incorporate the wife's paycheck, usually as "pin money" too insignificant to threaten the breadwinner. Although Bernard (1983) recorded the "fall" of the good provider role in the early 1980s, the wife's paycheck remains a problem in many families, especially if it is larger than that of her husband.

In the meantime, the occupational sphere, organized around the assumptions and expectations of the two-person career in which the major person is the man, has not changed much even to this day, with some exceptions on the part of some organizations that became aware of the economic advantages of flexibility in the scheduling of work. Coser (1974) called much of the occupational world "greedy" institutions. Most employing organizations still make the same demands of time, energy, and responsibility of their workers, and if they do provide, for example, paternity leaves, few male employees actually take advantage of them. The dramatic movement of wives and mothers into the labor

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[5] She certainly has an enormous social circle in her role of wife with whose members she must interact at various levels. She is doing so differently than from the wives of most other presidents, accentuating my point concerning the complexity of the society and variations in the ways role models are negotiated and modified by the contact and characteristics of social persons and social circles.

force has not been accompanied by major changes in occupational and related institutions or in the work patterns of husbands. This places a heavy burden on the wife as she struggles to continue meeting some of the traditional obligations to her career-minded husband in spite of the demands of her own often "greedy" occupation and "greedy" family (Coser, 1974; Coser & Coser, 1974). Hochschild (1989) found wives spending considerably more time than husbands in maintaining their home, even in the absence of children, but especially in their presence. She labeled the work employed women do, in their roles of wife, mother, and homemaker *The Second Shift.* Attempts to negotiate a decrease of obligations and an increase of rights from circle members, especially husbands, have proven difficult in the presence of traditional role models and in the absence of anyone in their social circle in the role of wife who is willing to take over some of their duties. Numerous studies indicate that role conflict on the part of women is not solved in any significant way by a shift of men's priorities. A partial exception to women's second shift occurs in cases in which the wife and husband start out together focused on the public sphere. Even then, the birth of children tends to unbalance whatever symmetry of work and household responsibility the couple developed before, or during, marriage. In contrast, Blumstein and Schwartz (1983) found lesbian and gay partnerships less concerned about the division of work, money, sexuality, and emotional support than married or cohabiting heterosexual couples.

2.2. Mother and Father Roles

British Common Law, which became the foundation of the American legal system, gave "absolute right to the custody of their minor children to the father" (Lindgren & Taub, 1988; see Lopata, 1994b, p. 65). The legal system has shifted to such an extent that the mother is now seen as the main parent, responsible not only for what she does, but also for what the father does and for the behavior of the children, seen as a result of such parenting. In the event of divorce, it is mainly the mother who is now given custody. The modern stress on the economic institution released the man from many family obligations, first to his family of orientation and then even to his family of procreation (as long as he supported this unit economically) so that he could devote all his time, energy, and emotion to competition on the job and to his career. This trend, in conjunction with the removal of the husband's family from control over the role of wife, has had repercussions upon other roles in the family institution, especially those of mother and of father. The circle of the mother no longer contains an important segment of grandparents, aunts and uncles, and relatives by marriage. On the other hand, the woman's birth family has been able to increase its participation in her role of mother, since she no longer has to leave it upon marriage and no longer has major obligations to her in-laws. Chodorow's (1978) and Sokoloff's (1980) influential thesis of the inevitable bond between mother and daughter ignores much of human history. It also ignores some contemporary societies in which the birth of a daughter is not welcome because she will have to be fed and cared for until an age in which she could be helpful, and then she will cost the family an expensive dowry and be gone. She cannot even perform the duties of ancestor worship. Thus, she is a burden, rather than a joy, as numerous accounts of the lot of girls in India (Gurjal, 1987), China (Barnes, 1987); see also Lopata, 1987a, 1996), and other countries have repeatedly stressed. Even recently, human rights commissions reports in the mass media document that girl children have been allowed to die or were even sold as concubines or wives, as beggars, or prostitutes (de Mause, 1974).

The transformation of the family system has changed the relationship of the mother to her own parents, especially to her mother, who has now entered the social circle of her daughter's role of mother (Lopata, 1991b). A young woman's mother can maintain contact with her daughter over the lifecourse, and the bond becomes even closer as the daughter becomes a mother herself (Fischer, 1986). Mothers-in-law generally have few rights and provide minimal support (Lopata, 1979). Maternal assistance is today important, in the relative absence of in-laws, the complete absence of servants in all but wealthy families, and of frequent absence of fathers in daily life (Hochschild, 1989). However, the mother's contribution to her daughter's role as mother rarely includes protection against harm to her or her family, usually from the father or his substitute, because of the older woman's lack of power.

An even more recent change in the role of young mother has been the decrease of the contributions of even her mother to her social circle, because women old enough to be grandmothers are likely to be in the labor force, with little time to actively help with the children. In addition, many of the widows I (Lopata, 1973, 1979) studied in the Chicago area are unwilling to become full-time participants in their daughters' roles of mothers, having already worked in that role themselves. Moreover, many have become economically self sufficient, and they do not have to exchange childcare work for their grown children for housing and maintenance. Those who wish and need to can do childcare for pay, controlling the conditions better than if working for their own families. Societal assistants and suppliers have not yet caught up with the need to help mothers in the care of the children. Individualism and an ideology of concern with one's own children alone have permeated American culture (see Grubb & Lazerson, 1982). Yet, there is an interesting social class difference in attitudes. Americans continue to believe that middle- and upper-class women should stay home to care for their homes, but insist that poor women take jobs away from their home. In all of the discussion of "selfish mothers" or "welfare mothers" there is little acknowledgement that there are more people than just mothers who need children and future generations of contributive adults. The feeling that fathers have responsibilities that are not met has not been strong enough to push societal action toward solutions of their parental problems. Throughout the mass media and even the social science literature, people other than the mother, including the father, are seen as merely "helping;" they are not defined as responsible members of parenting circles. There is a great deal of speculation as to when the society and its communities and organizations will seriously understand that "It takes a whole village to raise a child."

As a result of changes in parental roles, the rights of parents and the obligations of children have been strongly modified. In past centuries, and even today despite the redefinition of morality in the Western world, children have been valued mainly as contributors to the economic subsistence of the family (Sommerville, 1982). They were sent to work early on family lands or businesses, to factories, or to other people's homes as servants, with the obligation to turn over to the parents the products, profits, or wages from their labor. At one time, parents even took out insurance on their children in case they died, depriving the families of their labor. It is only recently that the image of children changed from them as expendable or economically productive to being "priceless" (Zelizer, 1987) members of families in the recent "century of the child" (Ehrenreich & English, 1979). Thus, the current view of children's obligations to their mothers is mostly that they "turn out OK," preferably bringing their mothers pride as they receive honors, a good marriage, and grandchildren for occasional visits. Fathers generally have the same expectations, besides possibly being "pals" with their sons and walking down the aisle with the

daughters at their wedding. Newer generations of fathers have begun to take an active, if still asymmetrical, part in parenting (Hochschild, 1989), although mothers still see themselves and are seen by the fathers as the ones most responsible for the children.

3. RACIAL, ETHNIC, AND CLASS INTERTWINING IN FAMILY ROLES

Racial, ethnic, religious, and social class variations exist in the roles of wife and husband, mother and father, but are complicated by the intertwining of these aspects and by change over time. Most American families, with a few exceptions such as among some native American tribes, have a patriarchal background in which marital and parental roles were clearly defined as to the characteristics of the social person and of the circle, as well as to the duties and rights of each role. Obedience by the wife to her husband and by children to parents was officially approved and strictly enforced by those in power, encouraged by Puritans and by other family systems. Numerous studies (de Mause, 1974; Pleck, 1983) have documented both the abuse that followed and the various means by which the dominated family members attempted to empower themselves. Rules were most strictly followed by the lower-working-class and by the status protecting upper-class, but the flavor of the relationships varied considerably and has changed considerably in recent times.

3.1. The Poor and the Working Class

Stack (1975), Liebow (1967), and others found fathers among the poor, sometimes called the underclass, less involved in parenting in the culturally defined manner than the "ideal-typical" image of the father in the middle and upper classes, primarily for socioeconomic reasons. The social circle of the role of mother may include men other than the biological father; her own family of orientation, especially mother and grandmother; friends; and neighbors. Fictive relatives appear in several roles, assisting mothers, intervening in marital relationships, and combining friendship with duties usually undertaken by socially defined kinship roles (Stack, 1975). The community of residence of the very poor, however, lacks the employment opportunities and the support of major institutions that were available to many immigrant families at the turn of the century (Wilson, 1987). Those people in the worst poverty conditions form segments of African-American, American Indian, Hispanic, and white, often of rural background, American communities, for whom a vicious circle of factors, including discrimination, lack of resources, and internal interdependence, make out-movement difficult (Stack, 1975). Female-headed households in this part of America's population are often dependent not only on Aid to Families with Dependent Children, but also on a variety of different resources that contribute small sums of money, products, or services (Edin & Lein, 1997). In the case of American Indians, the whole history of relations with the United States government involved dislocation, cultural disintegration, and social segregation, leading to numerous problems in all social roles. Wilkinson (1987) concludes that the history of family relations among native Americans has prevented movement of nuclear families away from their elderly and other kinship relations:

> Though variable, kinship bonding and obligations to relatives remain essential in familial interaction. . . ; They include residential propinquity, obligatory mutual aid, active participation in life

cycle events, and central figures around whom family ceremonies revolve. . . . Women play funda-
mental roles in these extended systems. . . . In many Indian tribes, the descent of children and the
ownership of property are traced through the mother's line. (pp. 191–192).

Thus, the role of mother in such families is central to women and includes numerous
relatives in the circle. The reservation housing of native Americans is very different from
the communities of Puerto Ricans, whose underclass members tend to live in internally
segregated areas of inner cities. Puerto Rican culture is very patriarchal, although "tradi-
tional norms of obedience and respect for adults, rules pertaining to endogamy, and those
governing male–female behavior have been modified" (Wilkinson, 1987, p. 192). There
remains a great deal of gender separation, women helping each other in their various
roles, with men being more distant as husbands and fathers. A similar pattern exists
among immigrant Mexican-Americans.

Asians have a different history in America, with different family results. In early
years of American development, anti-Chinese discriminatory laws created "split house-
hold families," the men coming from China for work, and returning only occasionally to
father children. The mothers remained in China with the children, because of laws for-
bidding Chinese women from entering the United States. They also took care of the eld-
erly in-laws for whom the son was technically responsible. The prejudice against daugh-
ters continued as families became united in America, being seen as expensive "temporary
members" and reputedly sold by families to become prostitutes in the new land (Dill,
1995, pp. 247–248). The abolition of the 1880s Exclusion Act in 1943 enabled the reunifi-
cation of families, assisted by community associations. Community cooperation and the
use of the American educational system have helped upward mobility of Asian families
that started at the bottom of the social class ladder in the wider society.

The employed, not-extremely poor part of the working-class, blue-collar couples
and parents usually came from immigrant backgrounds, from Europe and now from var-
ied countries on other continents. Those who settled in urban areas built "Polonias,"
"Little Italies," or "Chinatowns" with institutional complexity and an interweaving of
relationships (Lopata, 1994b). Parents generally retained patriarchal roles, with tight
discipline unless the street life of the children engrossed them in its own code of behavior
(Kohn, 1977; Langman, 1987). Kinship members appeared often in the circle of mothers
and in-laws in the circle of wives. Husbands and wives worked hard, the men in unre-
warding jobs, the women taking in boarders and contributing elsewhere in the informal
labor market. Rubin (1976) describes the roles of wife and mother, husband and father of
such families in *Worlds of Pain*. Ethnic families gradually moved out of the ethnic ghet-
tos to the outskirts of cities and, by the third generation, to the suburbs. Such mobility,
however, makes difficult kinship contacts, so that relatives are less apt to be involved in
each other's social circles than in the past. As they move away from ethnic backgrounds,
working-class families adopt middle-class values, adding to this large band of American
social structure.

The combination of Jewish religious and American democratic middle-class values
among even lower-class Jewish immigrants led to great sacrifices for the education of the
young in the American educational system, in addition to traditional Hebrew schools.
Such an emphasis paid off in upward mobility, as the offspring moved up the occupa-
tional ladder into professions and out of the ghettos into those suburbs that did not have
discriminatory practices (Lopata, 1994a, p. 83). The same value system and strict learn-
ing schedules enforced by families have also helped Asians move out of socioeconomic
areas of initial geographical and social settlement. Of course, some immigrants, such as

early Cubans or families from modern Hong Kong, came with language and occupational abilities and financial resources that put them immediately into the middle class. In fact, immigration into United States has often been a multiclass phenomenon, with the ability to reproduce social status in the home country in America highly dependent upon knowledge of English and the transferability of occupations, as evidenced by new waves of Poles coming to this country (Lopata, 1994a). In general, however, traditional norms of family behavior, including a strong division of labor and responsibility within the roles of wife and husband, mother and father, remain among upwardly mobile ethnic individuals who form the main part of the working class in this society.

Stacey (1992) found great complexities in the interweaving of race, class, and gender among postmodern families in the Silicon Valley, especially as blue-collar jobs declined and two-earner couples expanded when women entered the labor force.

3.2. The Middle Class

Upward mobility has been experienced by most Americans, with the exception of those in the current underclass. Mobility was accomplished through education and occupational achievement and was accompanied by geographical movement into "nicer" neighborhoods and suburbs. The successful movers were primarily white, but some African-Americans began moving out, often meeting serious problems with neighbors or finding only segregated areas in suburbia. It is within such families that the two-person career thrived for decades and that the greatest amount of change has been occurring recently. The couples that moved away from the old neighborhoods after World War II created a whole new life, dissimilar from that of their more ethnically and racially identified families (Lopata, 1971). Having mastered the new home, community, and way of mothering, with the help of Dr. Spock's baby books, women started moving out into occupational roles, as mentioned previously, creating role strain in their role of wife and conflicts within the role cluster. Recent migration waves of Asians and various groups of Hispanics are now moving to suburbia at a more rapid rate. Among these new members of the middle class, roles are becoming much more flexible, with some protest by privilege-losing husbands and fathers and some ideational coverups camouflaging continued asymmetry of responsibilities, as mentioned previously. I will discuss some of the role conflicts in a later section.

3.3. The Upper Class

Although some of the women of the upper class are converting the skills they developed in volunteer work and tasks of status development and maintenance into paid occupations, many are still restricted in several ways within the world of organized jobs. In the first place, the whole structure of this class is built upon their unpaid work in the community, the husband's career and child socialization. The servants that they pull into their various social circles must be hired, trained, and supervised, which are time- and energy-consuming tasks. The activities of associates of the offspring also need organization, transportation, and supervision. The home and how it is used are symbols of the husband's success and of the wife's ability to maintain social status. Volunteer work beautifying and making smooth the functioning of the community in which they live is still needed, al-

though some adjustments in time of day and rhythm are made in cases of occupational involvement. Such involvement is, however, seriously discouraged because of the needs of the roles required of the women. Daniels (1988) and Ostrander (1984) describe in great detail not only the work, but also the feelings of class and community obligations, shared by the wives and mothers in the upper class of America, and descriptions of the duties of women of this class in other countries abound. The husbands remain in jobs or moneymaking ventures that are inflexible and demanding of their time and attention.

4.GENDER AND PUBLIC ROLES

When the constructed reality distinguished sharply between two spheres, women's involvement in the public sphere, aside from that which was required of them in the roles of wife, mother, or homemaker, was simply ignored. Women were earning money, products, or services in a variety of ways and performed politically or religiously significant work without carrying official titles. Unmarried women were employed, in fact, in many types of jobs besides farming and, when these developed into occupations, in nursing and teaching. However, most of the high-status occupations, especially in the professions and organizational management, were closed to women, or employed only a few as tokens (Kanter, 1977). Women also participated in the activities of all the other public institutions, but often in subsidiary roles with much resistance to their gain of higher positions, as evidenced in many struggles in religious organizations. This section is devoted to the complexities of women's entrance into a variety of occupations and levels of authority in the world of organized, paid, work.

A major obstacle to women's entry into male-dominated occupations has been the assumed lack of match between the necessary characteristics of the social person in a particular occupation and the personality characteristics inevitably connected with each gender. American culture contains stereotypes of occupations—what kind of person is most suited to perform surgical operations (rational and scientific) or teach little children (caring)—as well as gender-specific temperamental and physical characteristics. These stereotypes grew out of the two-sphere world ideology—women are caring, men are scientific and rational. One of the commonly held images, used as justification for not hiring women into high-level positions, has been that women do not like complexity in their jobs. A major study of Chicago area women aged 25 to 54 (Lopata, Miller, & Barnewolt, 1984) found this not to be true (see also Lopata, Barnewolt, & Miller, 1985). Women who expressed satisfaction with their jobs also perceived them to be "more complex than the average job" along several dimensions, such as work complexity, opportunity for self-development, independence, and creativity. An interesting aspect of the women's perceptions of job complexity is that they considered not only tasks but also social relations. Thus, even jobs that the United States Department of Labor's (1965) *Dictionary of Occupational Titles: Vol. 1, Defintion of Title* considered low in complexity such as nurse's aide or beautician, received high-complexity scores on some dimensions by more than half of the Chicago employees. The aides accepted the medical ideology of helping people get well, the beauticians the cultural ideology that they make people look good and increase their self-respect. Sales clerks did not see their jobs as complex and had low scores on our scales, but sales agents scored high, especially on independence and responsibility. Women who managed single-parent households considered their job to be less com-

plex than did the managers of adults-only households, several comments leading us to conclude that the absence of a husband/father simplified rather than complicated life.

Our study questioned another assumption concerning women: their commitment to their occupation (see Lopata, 1993b; Schrimsher, 1996, 1998). American society assumes that women, regardless of family roles, will not be as strongly committed to their occupations and employing organizations as will men. We found many of the Chicago women, particularly the younger ones, investing serious "side bets" into their general commitment to the role of career/worker. This included occupational preparation in the past and planned future in an appropriate school or training center, selection of a job that would meet their career needs, marriage to a man who supported these decisions, self-image in terms of that occupational title, and congruence of constructed reality. However, some of these side bets were difficult to maintain, especially after entrance into the role of mother. Schrimsher (1998) used the same side bet theory and found that women graduates of Case Western Reserve University Law School in 1981 were less successful in 1991 in their career progress than were the men. The men were less apt to marry persons in demanding occupations and more apt to receive practical support from partners than were the women. Initial investment in the career throughout law school and early job search and willingness to commit time and energy heavily in the occupation did not pay off as well for the women as for the men, not because of their lack of commitment to their career, but due to the strength of the occupational-gender system, built during the two-sphere world times, that favors men and expects women to allow priority to husbands' jobs.

One of the problems with current attempts to use stereotypes of occupation and of gender in analyses of the influence of gender on the world of paid work is their focus on the characteristics of only the social person. The assumption is made, or implied, not only that all women (or all men, for that matter) are alike, but also that all jobs with the same title are alike. This ignores the fact that all social roles are negotiated sets of relations of a social person with all the members of the role's social circle. Obviously, therefore, each social role builds uniquely as the relations develop. This chapter's social role theory thus points to the illogicality of occupational stereotyping and can help illuminate the diversity of gender identities depending on job and setting. Assumption of a single pervasive identity of "woman" or "man" ignores the many nuances in a variety of settings of social persons in different jobs. Waitresses act and are related to as different persons than waiters, but also as different from women teachers. The recent expansion of women into a variety of occupations shows an even greater variety of ways in which a woman's pervasive identity varies by, for example, whether she is a truck driver or professor, manager or artist. In studying settings of employed women, I (Lopata, 1994) kept noticing how different were these roles depending also on the composition of the social circle. Teachers of small children, for example, behave differently than teachers of college students. The latter do not have to deal with the parents of their pupils. Kanter (1977) introduced the concept of token, pointing out that a token woman in a man's occupation in an industrial organization has very different relationships with others than does a woman in the same occupation when a significant number of workers have the same identity. A physician often relates to men patients differently from women patients and those relations are influenced by which assistants, such as nurses, receptionists, or technicians, are in his/her circle. A manager interacts with employees differently if they are relatives in a family business than if they are simply occupiers of a job. A surgeon in a MASH unit must function in innovative ways not necessary if she or he has all the personal or technological resources of a hospital.

5. GENDER ASPECTS OF ROLE CONFLICT

As mentioned previously, role conflict is usually referred to in terms of the role cluster of any one individual. Typically in recent American history, such conflict has been perceived in the role cluster of women, especially when they began to officially enter the world of greedy and prestigeful occupations. However, conflict between various aspects of work in the home and in family roles had been (and often still is) taken for granted as normal. Work in the informal market, such as taking care of boarders or taking in laundry, even employment in lower-status jobs, such as domestic, has also been neglected as a source of role conflict. It has long been acceptable for single women to hold jobs, regardless of their other roles. It is when women began to enter the world of prestigeful occupations, originally monopolized by men and organized with the rights and privileges of the male sphere, that American media and male family scientists began loud warnings. First, they warned women that such behavior was inappropriate because it conflicted with their obligations in the role of wife—hurting the husband's career by neglecting duties owed him. Next came the warning that the children were being hurt because jobs make impossible 24-hour presence in and around the home, as preached in the "fantasy of the perfect mother" (Chodorow & Contratto, 1982); although it was all right for her to be absent for volunteer work, which was needed by the community, as Daniels (1988) discovered in her research. The whole argument about the need for constant mothering ignores the centuries during which children were taken care of mainly by servants or sent to other people's homes as servants to be properly socialized into society (Aries, 1965). The latest argument has been that occupational involvement is bad for the woman herself, because it causes serious anxiety, a harried and pulled apart life, and guilt. This is a good example of constructed person-role cluster strain, in which there is an assumed conflict between what a person is and what the roles demand. Although this set of arguments about the inevitability of role conflict in the lives of women is still directed mainly toward those with small children, it often is extended to all women, regardless of marital or parental roles. People seem less concerned with role conflict in lesbian partnerships, possibly because these have been relatively invisible and only recently are recognized as possibly also involving children.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The social roles of men, but especially of women, have changed considerably in recent decades in America and other developed nations, moving away at least partially from the restrictions of the two-sphere world. Even before these dramatic changes, the two-sphere world existed mainly as a constructed ideology that ignored much of what went on in human life in America and Europe. Its strength lay in that it formed a consistent base of childhood socialization by forcing gender differentiation and social role segregation. However, as with all ideologies, it narrowed and constricted humans. It has taken a great deal of consciousness raising and innovative behavior to understand its detrimental effects and to open up new opportunities for role changes. This chapter is an attempt to analyze some of the revolutionary changes in pervasive gendered identities of both social persons at the center of social roles and of members of their social circles that provide resources and rights, and receive these from the person. Social roles have changed considerably, not only in the characteristics of social persons, but also in the composition of

social circles. This is apparent in the few social roles we have examined here, those of wife and husband, mother and father. and those in the public sphere of labor force workers.

Although each culture contains models of various social roles, the role itself is carried forth in negotiated cooperation between the social person and circle members. The more complex and internally diversified the society and heterogeneous the culture, the greater the possibility of role strain and role conflict as people get together to carry forth social roles. What is surprising about social life in American society is not that such problems arise, but that people can actually carry forth their roles together. Social change is not even; it affects members of a society, and therefore social persons and circle members, at different rates and in different ways. Recently, wives and mothers have been changing their role definitions at a more rapid rate and in different ways than husbands and fathers, the composition and behavior of their social circles often differing from that of the social persons. The complexity of the interweaving of social roles can be illustrated by problems in attempts to introduce occupational changes in complex organizations based on a Weberian logical and rational model. These efforts often, if not usually, neglect to take into account the social roles of their employees as interdependent sets of relations. Gerald Handel (1967) and associates have repeatedly warned family practitioners that the psychological interior of the family must be recognized when attempts are made to change the behavior of one member. Changes in the behavior of one individual have repercussions on the members of each of the social circles in which she or he is involved (see also Lopata, 1990). It is no wonder that sociologists have a difficult time analyzing any social role or role cluster.

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