there is an artificial divide between our lives at work and our lives at home with our families. This is a condition of the modern era: divisions between work outside and inside the home increased tremendously during industrialization.¹ The divide is also shaped by gender norms, which have determined the roles that men and women take in both the workforce and at home.² Vast increases in women in the formal labor force have created new challenges, what contemporary writers describe as work-family conflict. These conflicts vary by class, with different types of workers negotiating distinct boundaries between their lives in the workforce and at home.³ They also vary by race, because racial and ethnic groups concentrate in different employment sectors. Above all else, we know our efforts to compartmentalize the demands of work and home have a pervasive impact on our daily lives. They affect not only things like scheduling and sleep patterns but such minute details as the arrangement of keys on key chains and money in wallets.⁴ The demands of work and family life are real. That these demands somehow fragment us into two separate individuals—one who is a worker and one who is a mother or father, daughter or son, or husband or wife—is a social construction of the contemporary era.
Academics from a variety of disciplines study work-family conflict at both local and international levels. Ironically, despite having fairly flexible jobs that do not require punching in at a clock or regular overtime hours, we academics often replicate this work and family divide in our own lives. Over the years we all have heard of the numerous strategies our colleagues use to structure their time on the job and their time at home. Some work squirreled away in a carefully decorated office or work space in their bedrooms. Others work nine to five at the office, even when not required to be there. Some, especially those with children, put in some hours during the day and some hours at night or on weekends, like one colleague who works late nights during the week and also every Saturday from ten to two while her husband takes charge of the kids. Those of us with family have often found ourselves counting up our formal work hours as though they were badges of honor and organizing our time around hectic schedules of meetings (service), teaching obligations, and research (see Chapter 8). “I allocate two days a week for research and do all my teaching and meetings during the other three,” one colleague says. “I write every morning for two hours, regardless. I find myself more productive with my research this way,” says another.

These strategies say a lot, not so much because they help determine the rhythms of our lives (although this too is interesting) but because they illustrate how people feel compelled to structure their lives in a divided fashion, segmenting the hours spent on the job from those spent working in the home. But how many of us can really say that we actually do this? How many times have we had the next great idea in the shower (or at a hockey game or while in the waiting room at the dentist office)? How often have we thrown in a load of laundry while supposedly writing? (Just did so now to prove the point!) The truth is that we work a lot. It is also true that it is extremely difficult to entirely separate the work done in the formal labor force from that done as a member of a family.

Academics are not the only ones struggling to separate work and family; modern-day workers across all walks of life often while at work text or e-mail spouses or other family members to schedule doctor appointments for the children, pay bills, or print photos for a school project. Working Mother Magazine offers tips on how to successfully manage mothering and a career. Blogs and Internet sites abound; websites like http://www.workingmomsagainstguilt.com,

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http://www.workingmomsbreak.com, http://www.momsrefuge.com, and http://www.workitmom.com attest to the difficulties women face in managing it all. Men too may face similar struggles to meet the demands of work and home, although the issues are certainly different. Working Fathers Magazine does not exist, because there is nothing novel about men’s economic participation; we expect men to work and to provide. Evidence suggests that men’s work in the home has steadily increased over time even though women continue to do the majority of household work. And children in dual-parent households consistently report that they do not feel they spend enough time with their fathers. Clearly, men experience tensions between work and family, albeit in different ways.

Everyday Ethnography

A subset of social scientists—both men and women—reject the artificial divide between work and family as a methodological practice. Ethnographers in this group, all fieldworkers, study the world by immersing themselves in it. They strive to understand a particular culture or group of people in society by becoming as close to being a member of the group as possible. For ethnographers, it is through engagement that real insight into the rhythms and rules of daily life emerges. For ethnographers, critical examination of these daily experiences through the lens of a social scientist brings social meaning sharply into focus. To be an ethnographer is to cast off, to some extent, the division between everyday experiences as a member of a family and experiences in the workforce.

Nonetheless, as with the artificial divide between work and family, ethnographers often draw an artificial divide between the self and “the other” in the name of social science objectivity. It is, of course, a fine line. Too much discussion of one’s own life becomes a project of self-exploration, not a tale that honors the lives of the people a project intends to learn about. Yet too much of a focus on the other, and not enough self-reflection, is not true to a method in which the researcher plays such a large role (see Chapter 2). Today’s convention calls for ethnographers to disclose something about their positionality, or how their social status in society shapes their relationship with those being studied, either in an appendix or methodological chapter of a book or a paragraph of a journal article.
Chapter 1

Disclosing race, class, and gender and how this affects ethnographic projects may have become the norm. But academics, and ethnographers specifically, have remained strangely silent on that artificial divide between work and family. In practice, ethnographers—and to some extent other academics—eliminate work-family divisions in their daily lives. But they do not write about it.

This edited volume, in contrast, exposes the intimate relationship between ethnographers’ work in their roles as family members and their work as researchers. Although the focus is on this specific group of workers, the stories that follow relate experiences reminiscent of work-family dilemmas in all types of environments, whether the struggles of professional mothers to minimize their protruding pregnant bellies in executive meetings or those of child care workers to simultaneously watch their own children and their charges. Ultimately, these are the stories of working parents.

But they are also the stories of a group of working parents who spend a lot of time developing personal relationships in work environments, workers who are typically skilled at self-reflection and analysis of the rhythms of daily life but who, ironically, given existing conventions, rarely reflect on the deeply personal ways their experiences as family members affect their work and the ways their work affects their family life.

This volume aims squarely to stand the practice of silencing the uneasy union of work and family on its head. Contributions question and problematize the artificial division between work and family that continues to permeate writing on ethnographic fieldwork and work-family conflict by bringing together the voices of different family members. We asked pregnant women, mothers, fathers, and children to reflect boldly on their experiences and asked researchers how the thin lines between work and home have affected their projects. The raw accounts that follow demonstrate how the bizarre mixture of work and family in this particular occupation has made many of us question our roles in our families, our work as ethnographers, and ultimately, the artificial divides that any worker, in any occupation, may experience between the world of the home and family and that of the paid labor force.

Our goal is threefold.

First, this volume pushes the bounds of contemporary social science research methods that continue to silence the ways researchers’
personal lives affect the research process. For all our contributors, roles at home and in families have had a profound impact on the research process. Motherhood and fatherhood shape the nature and the quality of data collection. Motherhood and fatherhood are critical pieces of the research process that have so often been overlooked, underemphasized, or simply ignored by scholars. This volume contributes to methodological innovation by framing roles in families as key components—along with race, class, and gender—that shape researchers’ positionality. In this sense, this volume heeds the advice of feminist reflexivity but takes this advice a step further. It is not simply social statuses, such as being a woman or a man, but the roles we undertake as women and men, and mothers and fathers, that define ethnographers’ relationships with those in their studies.

Second, this volume contributes to theoretical debates on work-family issues. Researchers continue to outline the types of work-family conflicts that contemporary men, women, and children experience. But the contributors to this volume have managed to find synergy between their work lives and their home lives. Although in many ways unique to the specifics of the work of the ethnographer, these bold attempts to wed work and home proves that in some cases, at least, the divides between work and home are, indeed, artificial. Men, women, and children can be members of family while contributing significantly to scientific knowledge. This vanguard of researchers rejects the convention that work and home need to be separate spheres of life. The experiences of the contributors in this volume illustrate the myriad ways the everyday decisions of men, women, and children challenge the artificial division between work and family.

Third, we hope that these accounts serve as practical examples of the ways that researchers, mothers and fathers, have dealt with the conflicting demands of work and family in their daily lives. Contributions explore the strategies women and men have used to manage fieldwork and home life and reflect on the impact fieldwork has had on their families, especially their children, and on their identities as mothers and fathers, and husbands and wives. The reflective essays that follow demonstrate creativity and flexibility to change and adapt these strategies over time. Ultimately, we hope these ethnographic accounts of ethnography inspire.
Today women and men struggle to meet the demands of their roles at work and their roles in their families. With the growth of dual-earner families, concerns over work-family conflict have increased considerably. The onslaught of parenting books, both academic and popular, attests to the great interest in these dilemmas among professionals, including academics.10 Now more than ever, working parents seem to struggle to balance the demands of their jobs with those of their families. And they are looking for help to figure out how to make this balance not only feasible but fulfilling.

Ethnographers have long rejected the artificial divide between work and family, which has become an organizing principle in the way we define contemporary society. Much as farmers did in previous centuries, ethnographers live in the places they work and work in the places where they raise their families. The stories in this volume, addressing the difficulties and rewards of fieldwork and parenting, are thus not merely about methodological innovation. They exemplify a way of life that other professional workers seemingly aspire to. The honest accounts in this book show that while the path may be hard, synergy between work and family is possible.

The chapters that follow thus represent the voices of a small group of individuals who have rejected the imposition of the artificial divide between work and family on their lives. It is a lifestyle choice that many more parents, professionals and others, strive for. Researchers interested in work-family issues should take these stories seriously. These are not simply anecdotal accounts. They are evidence that some people are pushing back against work-family strife. Some people integrate their work lives and their personal lives in such a way that they create significant social science work while simultaneously cultivating relationships in their families. Until now, however, they have not written about it.

Pushing the Bounds of Ethnography

Whether these stories inspire, they significantly alter the ways we think about ethnography. At the heart of ethnographic fieldwork is self-immersion. To become part of another group is to engage and to
Ethnographers have traditionally reflected deeply about their engagement. When ethnographers such as Clifford Geertz and Margaret Mead crossed oceans and entered new societies completely different from those in which they were born, they were uniquely aware of encounters with “the other.” They wrote about the experience of encountering different social rules and customs and how the people they met perceived them as outsiders.

Modern ethnographers, particularly in the field of sociology, have turned toward subject matters that are quite a bit closer to home. Many choose field sites in the urban or suburban communities in which they live. Doing so involves not only living but also engaging in the everyday practices of family routines, alongside others. While some early fieldworkers might have taken their children with them abroad, those types of excursions unfolded as family adventures. Today when ethnographers raise their children in the communities where they work and live, reflections are of a distinctly different variety.

Yet when contemporary ethnographers do reflect, it is within the constraints of earlier decades. They acknowledge how class status may inform the work and the relationships that unfold with participants. They problematize how their differences in racial or ethnic backgrounds may affect research or, in some cases, how shared race and ethnicity aids or abets data collection. Most comfortably, because of the contributions of feminist scholars, ethnographers acknowledge how gender matters in our interactions with others. Ethnographers today accept that social status—that is, race, class, and gender—influence the research process, especially when sharing geographic and social spaces with research participants to a greater degree than did those who went to explore distant and exotic field sites in times past.

But the language of reflexivity has yet to evolve. Ethnographers consider the influence of social status on research but not the equally profound ways that social roles shape methods. Contributions to this volume suggest that our standpoint is shaped not only by being a woman or a man but also by being a mother, a pregnant woman, or a father. As Leah Schmalzbauer (Chapter 6) points out, her experience when she was a young, female activist studying families was distinctly different from when she was a mother of young children. It is also profoundly different to be a man with a child than to be a father, as Randol Contreras (Chapter 9) suggests. Men may not really question how parenting is related to fieldwork until attempting
to actively father. And it is children’s roles in families, not their being young members of society, that affects data collection efforts. When Joanna Dreby (Chapter 5) took her children with her on interviews, that they were young people was not a problem. It was that they were young people whom she was responsible for, who at times required her parenting, that complicated matters.

Contributions to this volume show that social roles and the social construction of the work-family divide alter methodological practice. It is one thing to be a woman and quite another to act as a mother while in the field. With the exception of a few ethnographers, the mother role (and more so the father role) is nonexistent. As noted by Carol Warren, motherhood becomes significant when we study interactions between researcher and participant (2001). Many, working in both qualitative and quantitative traditions, question the objectivity of the data collection because of the personal engagement that ethnography requires. Yet social scientists also know that there is rarely anything truly objective about data collection. The more explicit and forthright we are about our standpoints, the more we expose the ethically neutral and value-free illusion that has been set forth by our disciplines. Ethnographers need to be attentive to their active social roles—whether as parents, workers, participants in activities, and so on—and not simply their social statuses as they enter the field. It is through reflections on these actions, these chapters suggest, that real methodological innovation is made.

Managing Research and Family Life

The silence on parenting in the field is clearly a result of gender norms in our society. It is no secret that parenthood affects women’s careers more than men’s. In the past, when men primarily engaged in field research, women typically remained with the children. Pioneering women in the field might have felt a need to underemphasize the ways their roles as mothers had affected their research process to gain legitimacy among their peers. They had to prove themselves to be as productive as men, with or without children. Those who did have children often minimized the impact of children on their work or talked about it informally and not openly. Many women chose to postpone childbearing until they gained tenure or some other level of job security.
Times are changing. With the vast increase in women in higher education since the 1970s, families are becoming more prevalent among professionals, specifically among social scientists. And advice about balancing parenting and academic careers, especially fieldwork, has circulated informally among women working in different disciplines throughout the United States. Common questions we have heard include “When is the best time to have a baby?” “What will study participants think of me if I’m pregnant, and what are the consequences of being visibly pregnant while in the field?” “Can I get grant money to cover the expense of bringing my child with me into the field?” “How is all of this going to affect my family?” “How do children affect the research process?” and “How do I deal with personal trauma and get research done?” Popular books such as Mama, PhD and Professor Mommy capture the imaginations of professional mothers who have struggled to balance their careers as academics with their desire to form families. More recently, men have begun asking similar questions. Men actively care for their children much more frequently than in previous decades. Concerns about balancing their child care responsibilities have increased among male academics.

As the following chapters illustrate, there is no one pathway to balancing work and family. Researchers use different strategies depending on the age of the children, their personalities, and child care availability. These strategies also vary by the network of adults who help researchers raise their children (see Chapters 3 and 8). For some, there is a delicate balance between spouses to manage child care duties. For single parents this is not an option, yet other family members often pitch in (see Chapters 5 and 9). Even for those who are not raising their children with another parent, the relationship with that absent parent spills over into the relationships we have with our children (see Chapter 9). Above all else, the strategies we take depend on our roles in our families. Pregnant women, mothers, fathers, and children come to the table with different expectations, both of themselves and of the family experience.

Following Chapter 2, an introduction by Barbara Katz Rothman, we organize the remaining chapters according to the distinctive roles, or standpoints, we bring to family life. In Part II, contributors explore the highly physical experience of expecting. As Chapter 3, by Erynn Masi de Casanova, shows, the physical experience of
pregnancy is not unlike our expectations as researchers. In Chapter 4, by Jennifer Reich, we see that embodiment is a sharp physical marker that women bring into the field with them that ultimately changes the way they are perceived by and also perceive others. In Part III, contributors move beyond bodily expectations to consider how the powerful tugs of managing motherhood seep into our fieldwork practice. Joanna Dreby in Chapter 5 probes the endless feedback loops between her work as a family researcher, aided and abetted by her children, who are often affected by their participation in her research projects, and her work as a mother, which is often affected by her work as a researcher. Leah Schmalzbauer in Chapter 6 explores how young motherhood altered not only her relationship with women but also her awareness of other forms of class and racial inequality between her and her study participants. In Chapter 7, Chris Bobel provides a raw account of how personal tragedy has forever altered her operating assumptions as a teacher, qualitative researcher, and mother.

The next two parts delve into more tentative areas, topics less familiar to feminist researchers or male ethnographers. Part IV looks at what it means to be a father doing fieldwork. Gregory Smithsimon describes in Chapter 8 how he unconsciously creatively used his male privilege by seeking funding to take his daughter with him on fieldwork, while Charles Aiden Downey tells in Chapter 10 how he more haphazardly, in an emergency, ended up at his fieldwork site with his baby strapped to his chest. Both found meaning in their respective fieldwork settings from their unexpected explorations of fatherhood. Randol Contreras, on the other hand, has found his role as a father and fieldworker woven together, at times more tightly than others, and muses in Chapter 9 on how he has grappled with his guilt as a father and strove to make up “for lost time.”

Part V faces a second understudied topic, but one that gets at the heart of the matter, from parents’ perspectives: how children themselves experience the challenges of fieldwork. In Chapter 11 Tanya Golash-Boza contributes letters her young children wrote while accompanying her to various field sites away from home. For them, pets and friends were the most significant aspects of fieldwork. For older children, as we hear from Steven Gold and his two children in Chapter 12, the takeaway from participation in parents’ fieldwork may be a greater appreciation of food or quite simply cross-cultural awareness.
As Sherri Grasmuck’s account in Chapter 13 so poignantly illustrates, children’s changing reactions to fieldwork over time are powerful in and of themselves but also in the ways that we, as parents, react to them. These contributions may assuage what are often parents’ deepest hopes and fears about the impact fieldwork may have on their children. At times, the blurring of work and family may be uncomfortable for children and parents. Yet in the end the experience may not have as deep an impact on our children as we fear, or hope.

Where Do We Go from Here?

While all the following chapters discuss the blurred boundaries of work and family for academics coming with diverse backgrounds and perspectives from public and private institutions, we should note the different strategies each author used. There is not one set of answers for dealing with the artificial divide of work and family, since many decisions become strategies as afterthoughts. But we expect that readers will be able to identify with some of the challenges in bending social expectations. The rigor of the profession along with reflexive analyses must be considered when immersed in the research process. Balancing identities, social roles, and research goals is all part of the interaction between researcher and participant, between researcher and family, and between researcher and the field. Even those without children can understand their positionality in the field as a family member because they have been a child themselves and have been parented in some capacity.

As researchers, we interact in the field from a position that has been molded by our family lives. Whether from the standpoint of a mother or father, a child or pregnant woman, or a grieving parent, the stories in this volume speak to the ways parents have made career and family work together despite trials and tribulations. It is for this reason that we believe the researcher’s position should not be solely relegated to a book’s appendix but proudly displayed up front in a manuscript to lay the contextual landscape for the research at hand. These chapters illustrate the varying pathways researchers take in meeting work and family obligations simultaneously. In the end, they demonstrate that the work-family divide that so profoundly shapes ideas about our work and our home, and even the title of this book and chapter, are not a given. They are negotiable.
NOTES


5. See the Annals of the American Academy of Political Science and Social Science: Work, Family and Workplace Flexibility and the Journal of Family Issues. Other sources are groups and programs dedicated to the study of work and family such as the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation and the Industrial and Labor Relations School at Cornell University. For international studies, see Stephen Sweet and Peter Meiksins, Changing Contours of Work: Jobs and Opportunities in the New Economy, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2012).


10. New York University Press recently published Raising Brooklyn by Tamara Mose Brown (2011) and Parenting Out of Control by Margaret Nelson (2011) and will soon publish Parental Incarceration and the Family by Joyce A. Arditti, just to name a few. Other examples include Elrena Evans and Caroline Grant, Mama, PhD: Women Write about Motherhood and Academic Life (Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2008), and Rachel Connelly and Kristen Ghodsee, Professor Mommy: Finding Work-Family Balance in Academia (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2011).

11. See, for example, Phillipe Bourgois, In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Kathryn Edin and Maria Kefalas, Promises I Keep: Why Poor Women Put Motherhood before Marriage (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011); Barbara Meyerhoff, Number Our Days: A Triumph of Continuity and Culture among Jewish Old People in an Urban Ghetto


22. Evans and Grant, *Mama, PhD*. 
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.; Connelly and Ghodsee, *Professor Mommy*.