

Gilbert, Lucia Albino. (1993). *Two careers/One family*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Reviewed by

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Biographical Information

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Rapoport and Rapoport, who coined the phrase “dual-career family” (1969), recognized that family, work, and leisure were all intertwined—one could not comprehend the nature of leisure without understanding the two other institutions (1975). Academics in the field of recreation/parks/leisure studies who are interested in leisure as a behavior need to understand leisure behavior from an ecological, contextual perspective. The dual-career family is now a common context in which leisure behavior occurs, and we have a responsibility to ourselves and to our students to develop an understanding of that context if we are to develop an accurate understanding of leisure in today’s society.

In *Two careers/One family* Gilbert provides readers with an in-depth examination of two of the components cited by the Rapoport—work and family—within the context of the dual-career family. The book is separated into three sections: 1) The societal context of young adults today; 2) Expectations for and realities of dual-career family life; and 3) What’s ahead.

The first section of the book is primarily theoretical, and provides an excellent summary of gender theory. In a discussion of earlier and current views of the way in which gender operates in society and culture, Gilbert covers such topics as “gender as difference”, “gender as organizer or structure”, and “gender as process”. Knowledge of such issues is critical if educators and researchers are to understand the different conditions in which females and males exist, especially with specific reference to the family since it is the context which socializes people into, and perpetuates, gender roles. Gilbert’s review of the literature is clear and understandable. This section of the book also presents an interesting examination of the issues related to careers and relationships from both the contemporary female and male perspectives.

The second section of the book discusses the results of Gilbert’s and others’ studies of female and male expectations of marriage and family in the dual career family. The comparison of these expectations to their realities will no doubt surprise readers who are not familiar with research in the area. Gilbert also identifies the personal, relationship, and environmental/societal factors influencing how partners combine their occupational

and family roles. The author's framework may provide a useful basis for discussions regarding the ways in which people combine leisure, career, and family. Gilbert also describes the characteristics various workplace family policies, and identifies what is lacking in terms of private industry and government intervention.

The final section of Gilbert's book provides four predictions and directions for the future of dual-career families and gender equality. She suggests that there will continue to be a rise in college-educated members of dual-career families, and as a result our definitions of "career" will change as will the nature of what may be considered "on time" in career paths for both females and males.

Two issues regarding the usefulness of the book relate to the populations discussed. Firstly, Gilbert's book focuses primarily on heterosexual dual-career families, although she does incorporate discussions of lesbian and gay couples into some sections of the book. Gilbert recognizes that these couples face some similar and some very different issues to those of heterosexual couples. Secondly, the book is primarily relevant to dual-career families in the United States, since all of the academic research and government statistics reported are American, as are any discussions of government policy. However, the theoretical aspects of the book may be relevant in any country where there has been a shift to dual-career families.

The word "leisure" is only mentioned once in the book. However, this very quality makes *Two careers/One family* an excellent starting point for researchers or educators who are interested in family leisure but who have not read widely on the subject. Gilbert provides a comprehensive, focused discussion of the context in which a majority of couples exist today, which will provide a good foundation for readers interested in developing an understanding of the personal and social issues surrounding the dual-career family.

Two careers/One family would be most appropriate as reading material in classes devoted to work-leisure relationships or leisure and the family, most likely at the senior or graduate level where students could make the "leap" to the relevance of the book to leisure. The book is relatively short (129 pages of text), easy to read, and would supply students with an excellent introduction to the issues of work and family at the beginning of a course. Gilbert supplies information which will no doubt spark numerous discussions in the classroom. She provides many suggestions for young adults regarding how they can reduce the likelihood of the occurrence of the problems that face people in dual-career marriages that may help students develop on a personal as well as academic level.

Gilbert's book will also be a valuable resource to instructors who lecture on issues related to leisure and society, as the book provides a reality check regarding just how equitable things are (not) in both today's society and modern dual-career families.

Kelly (1993) suggested that we must develop a better understanding of the everyday contexts in which people live in order to understand the nature of leisure in the family. Gilbert's book provides an excellent foundation for understanding both the macro, societal context in which many families exist, and the micro, personal and interpersonal issues related to that context.

References

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