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Parenthood and Well-Being: A Decade in Review

Understanding social aspects of parental well-being is vital because parents' welfare has implications not only for the parents themselves but also for child development, fertility, and the overall health of a society. This article provides a critical review of scholarship on parenthood and well-being in advanced economies published from 2010 to 2019. It focuses on the role of social, economic, cultural, and institutional contexts of parenting in influencing adult well-being. The authors identify major themes, achievements, and challenges and organize the review around the demands-rewards perspective and two other theoretical frameworks: the stress process model and the life course perspective. The analysis shows that rising economic insecurities and inequalities and a diffusion of intensive parenting ideology were major social contexts of parenting in the 2010s. Scholarship linking parenting contexts and parental well-being illuminated how stressors related to providing and caring for children could unjustly burden some parents, especially mothers, those with fewer socioeconomic resources, and those with marginalized statuses. In that vein, researchers continued to emphasize how stressors diverged by parents' socioeconomic status, gender, and partnership status, with new attention to strains experienced by racial/ethnic minority, immigrant, and sexual minority parents. Scholars' comparisons of parents' positions in various countries expanded, enhancing knowledge regarding specific policy supports that allow parents to thrive. Articulating future research within a stress process model framework, the authors show vibrant theoretical pathways, including conceptualizing potential parental social supports at multiple levels, attending to the intersection of multiple social locations of parents, and renewing attention to local contextual factors and parenting life stages.

A common saying—that being a parent is the most difficult and the most rewarding job in the world—resonates with many people. Parents shoulder a myriad of challenging responsibilities in raising the next generation during a long stretch of their adulthoods, but having children also provides adults with a sense of purpose and meaning in life (Musick, Meier, & Flood, 2016; Nelson, Kushlev, & Lyubomirsky, 2014; Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2017). Parental well-being has implications for child well-being, fertility, and society more broadly. Parenting strains, defined as felt difficulties with the demands and conflicts within the parenting role, and poor parental well-being can have significant implications for children's developmental outcomes (Mackler et al., 2015; Turney, 2011). Moreover, a decline in subjective well-being after a first birth decreases the odds of having subsequent births (Margolis & Myrskylä, 2015). Thus, investigating social patterns in how parenthood and parenting affect adults' well-being is imperative to create supports that allow parents to thrive. In this review, the term *parenthood* refers to being a parent versus

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remaining childless. The term *parenting* refers to what parents do in terms of raising, supporting, and socializing children throughout their lives. We define *well-being* broadly to include subjective well-being (e.g., life satisfaction, life meaning, loneliness), emotional health (e.g., anger, guilt), mental health (e.g., depression, anxiety), and physical heath.

During the 2010s, research on parenthood, parenting, and well-being produced a rich, diverse body of work, attesting to the importance of understanding this central adult role. The decade started in the aftermath of the Great Recession when people in advanced economies were reminded of the harsh reality of economic insecurity, economic inequalities, and thus uncertainties regarding children's futures (Cooper, 2014). The recognition of the diffusion and deepening of intensive parenting norms, seemingly accelerated by the rise of economic insecurities (Lan, 2018; Nelson, 2010; Ramey & Ramey, 2010), spurred researchers to investigate parental well-being, as mothers and fathers appeared to be under pressure. The decade saw an increase in cross-national studies and work by European scholars on parental well-being, many of which were motivated by understanding reasons for low fertility (e.g., Aassve, Mencarini, & Sironi, 2015). These studies found that whether parents were less happy and more depressed than nonparents depended on social contexts, including the types and level of support that the nation provides to help raise children (e.g., Glass, Simon, & Andersson, 2016). Research continued to emphasize diverse experiences of parenting strains by gender, social class, and marital and partnership status, with expanded attention to other major social statuses such as race–ethnicity, immigrant status, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) identities (e.g., Goldberg & Smith, 2013). Additionally, assessment of the variations in parenting strains and parental well-being by child age went beyond the dichotomy of minor versus adult children (e.g., Meier, Musick, Fischer, & Flood, 2018; Nomaguchi, 2012a; Simon & Caputo, 2019).

This review focuses on studies that examined the role of social, economic, cultural, and institutional contexts in shaping parenting strains and the well-being of parents. We reviewed hundreds of scholarly works published as peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and book chapters from 2010 to 2019. Most studies focused on North America with a few Western European countries and Australia due to the nature of the work reviewed. Because of space restrictions, the present review is highly selective, centering on major themes in the past decade's research. We begin with highlighting economic and cultural contexts of parenting in the 2010s and how these trends relate to scholarship on parental well-being. We then review studies that examined variations in parenting strain and the well-being of parents by major social statuses and life stages based on our demands-rewards perspective, as well as two important theoretical frameworks: the stress process model (SPM) and the life course perspective. Finally, we provide critique and future research directions.

Changing Norms of Parenting

Parenting research during the 2010s pointed to a diffusion of intensive parenting (Faircloth, 2014; Hays, 1996), a cultural backdrop of the era. Intensive parenting is a child-centered approach that demands great parental time, financial, and emotional investments in childrearing (Hays, 1996). Hays argued that although a child-centered approach already appeared in childrearing advice around World War II (e.g., Benjamin Spock), the emphasis on a parent's constant involvement became more extensive during the 1980s (e.g., Berry Brazelton and Penlope Leach). Intensive parenting, also called sensitive or responsive parenting (Belsky, Lerner, & Spanier, 1984), posits that a caregiver's—or a mother's, as Hays (1996) pointed to its gendered nature—consistent involvement, her emotional and verbal responsiveness, and her provisions of age-appropriate stimulations that are uniquely tailored to each child are essential for a child's healthy development. An important aspect of intensive parenting, which can undermine parents' well-being, is its assumption of parental determinism—that individual parents' actions to cultivate children's abilities and skills determine children's developmental and educational outcomes (Faircloth, 2014; Milkie & Warner, 2014; Villalobos, 2014). Another key feature of the ideology is that children are seen as innocent and vulnerable, and parents are held accountable for protecting their children from any potential harms that undermine their adequate development (Nelson, 2010). These

two assumptions make parents—especially mothers—feel as if they must attend to minute details of a child's physical, social, emotional and cognitive development to the point of exhaustion (Villalobos, 2014; Wall, 2018).

Studies in the 2010s recognized that the ideology of intensive parenting and its practice expanded further from the 1990s to the present (Faircloth, 2014; Nelson, 2010; Ramey & Ramey, 2010). In recent decades, the increases in income inequality and competition in the labor market have made adults feel insecure about children's futures (Cooper, 2014). The rise of economic insecurity for the next generation is reflected in Americans' changing values for children: A study using the General Social Survey found that from the mid-1980s to the mid-2010s, an increasing proportion of Americans emphasized that hard work is an important trait for children to prepare themselves for life (Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2019). In earlier decades, although Hays (1996) saw intensive parenting across the class spectrum, it was often considered more of a norm among more economically privileged parents (Lareau, 2011). Lareau's ethnography of families with third-grade children in the 1990s identified the practice of concerted cultivation, used predominantly by the more educated and affluent. This childrearing approach was characterized by parents painstakingly and methodically cultivating children's talents, academics, and futures through everyday interactions and activities. A growing number of studies in the past decade, however, suggest that intensive parenting ideology has been diffused across social classes (Dotti Sani & Treas, 2016; Elliott, Powell, & Brenton, 2015; Ishizuka, 2019; Putnam, 2015), although its practice takes different forms, and its implications for parental strain and well-being differ by social class.

For middle-class and affluent parents, rising global competition and income inequalities have made them worry that their children could tumble down the social class ladder (Lan, 2018; Nelson, 2010). An increase in the perceived economic return to attaining degrees from selective universities has driven parents to invest time and money to cultivate their children's talents and skills to build up children's extracurricular resumes (Doepke & Zilibotti, 2019; Ramey & Ramey, 2010). Indeed whereas the rise of intensive parenting is evident in research findings that mothers' and fathers' time in child care increased from the 1980s to

the mid-2000s (Bianchi, 2011), the increase was most prominent among the highly educated (Altintas, 2016; Dotti Sani & Treas, 2016). U.S. parents' increase in child-related spending in recent decades is also concentrated in higher income households (Kornrich & Furstenberg, 2013; Schneider, Hastings, & LaBriola, 2018). Although researchers have rightly voiced concerns about the increasing class disparities in parental investments for the reproduction of social class inequalities (Calarco, 2014; Putnam, 2015), ironically, intensified parental investments among the affluent are in part prompted by their perceptions of uncertainty about their children's securing middle- or upper-middle-class status.

Parents with fewer economic resources emphasize the importance of "being there" and making sacrifices to meet their children's needs (Edin & Nelson, 2013; Elliott et al., 2015). They are worried about their children's safety (Nomaguchi & Brown, 2011) and recognize it as their responsibility to protect their children from harmful influences (Elliott & Aseltine, 2013). Parents express desire to place their children in extracurricular activities to keep their children safe and busy, yet face financial constraints on having their children participate in quality programs (Elliott & Aseltine, 2013). Ominously, the notion of children's innocence evolved into the idea that the state—local child protective services—must intervene to punish "neglectful" parents to protect "innocent" children (Elliott & Bowen, 2018). The increasing surveillance by the state has made parents with lower economic resources, especially mothers who are on public assistance or formerly incarcerated, feel the need to guard themselves from the risk of being judged as neglectful parents, wherein they could receive a dire sanction of losing custody of the child (Desmond, 2016; Elliott & Bowen, 2018; Gurusami, 2018).

Still, to what extent intensive parenting is the framework for mothers' decisions and emotions across all social groups continues to be debated. For example, Dow's (2019) study of African American mothers showed that the ideology surrounding child care is mother focused but includes expectations that kin and community are a key part of raising children. In contrast, Elliott and colleagues (Elliott et al., 2015; Elliott & Reid, 2019) emphasized that low-income Black mothers feel pressure from having sole responsibility for protecting children

from making unwise decisions and getting into trouble, make various efforts to monitor or teach their children, and blame themselves when children cannot succeed. More research that examines aspects of intensive parenting ideology and its felt pressures on parents by race/ethnicity and other social statuses, as well as by geographic region is warranted.

The scholarly discourse elucidating intensive parenting norms indicates that parenting is more stressful today than in prior decades. A couple of studies examined changes in parental well-being during the past several decades. One study using U.S. national surveys collected in 1976 and 2002 found that mothers in the early 2000s, despite perceiving better neighborhood quality and better health of their children, reported feeling more exhausted from raising children than did mothers in the mid-1970s (Nomaguchi & Fettro, 2018). Another study, using the 1981 to 2008 European Values Survey, showed that the positive effects of parental status on life satisfaction decreased during this period (Ugur, 2019). Several studies that used convenience samples examined the effects of intensive parenting beliefs on mothers' well-being and found that mothers who believed in or enacted intensive parenting ideologies were more likely to report feeling anxious, guilty, stressed, and depressed (e.g., Gunderson & Barrett, 2017; Liss, Schiffrin, Mackintosh, Miles-McLean, & Erchull, 2013; Rizzo, Schiffrin, & Liss, 2013). Yet, concepts and measures of intensive parenting ideology varied widely across these studies. Moreover, it may be problematic if researchers included items tapping parenting exhaustion in a measure of intensive parenting ideology (e.g., Liss et al., 2013) to examine its link to parents' mental health. Although Hays (1996) indicated emotionally exhausting as one of the features of intensive parenting, this is a possible consequence of intensive parenting ideology that should be examined as an outcome.

The Demands and Rewards of Parenting

Many scholars conceptualize parenting strain and parental well-being using a framework that we call the *demands–rewards perspective*. Parenthood brings both demands and rewards to adult lives (Nelson et al., 2014; Nomaguchi, 2012a; Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2017). Demands refer to the aspects of parenting that require sustained physical, mental, and financial investments and effort. Rewards refer to the aspects of parenting that facilitate achievement of parenting goals or stimulate personal growth and a positive self-concept. As Musick and colleagues (2016) put it, parenting is a "mixed bag" with joyful, meaningful, and rewarding experiences interwoven with frustrating challenges and exhausting workloads of care. Although it is difficult to compare parents' lives with nonparents' lives, in part because of data limitations, the demands–rewards perspective potentially provides pathways to a more complete analysis. For example, recent studies examined the effects of parenthood on aspects of healthy living, such as body weight (Umberson, Liu, Mirowsky, & Reczek, 2011), men's body mass (Syrda, 2017), health behaviors such as diet and exercise (Reczek, Thomeer, Lodge, Umberson, & Underhill, 2014), alcohol use (Paradis, 2011; Simon & Caputo, 2019), and health check-ups (Anezaki & Hashimoto, 2018). Using the demands–rewards perspective on parenthood and well-being is illuminating—it shows how scholarship in this area collectively pointed to the paradox that parenthood promotes healthy lifestyle orientations through paying more attention to diet and reducing risk-taking behaviors, whereas the demands of parenting curtail parents' time to take care of themselves.

Researchers concur that the balance sheet between demands and rewards varies across social statuses and life course contexts, as the demands of parenting as well as the resources available for parents to use to cope with the demands are distributed unevenly across social statuses and life stages (Musick et al., 2016; Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2017; Simon & Caputo, 2019). Moreover, the resources for parents vary across countries with diverse social policy contexts, with parents faring better when supports from the state aid them in raising children (Glass et al., 2016). Understanding unequal distributions of parenting demands and rewards, as well as parenting resources, across these contexts is one of the key purposes of research in this area. Specific findings can inform policy makers about challenges and needs of parents that may differ across various social and life contexts (Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2017).

Aligned with our perspective, the SPM provides an insightful framework for assessing differences in the nature and the level of strains, defined as individuals' perceived difficulties in satisfying demands, and resources derived

from various social and institutional contexts (Pearlin, 1989, 1999; Pearlin & Bierman, 2013). The SPM regards stress as a process that includes the following three core components: stressors, resources, and stress outcomes (Pearlin, 1989). *Stressors*, defined as sources of stress, generally appear in two forms: major life events and more chronic problems. Chronic stressors are often rooted in social roles, which are called role strains, including parenting strain, marital or partner strain, and work strain. Other major chronic strains are indirectly tied to social roles, such as financial strain, time strain, and neighborhood stressors. *Resources* involve coping, defined as a behavioral or cognitive response to a stressor that helps to prevent or allay the harm otherwise caused by the stressor; social support, defined as the allieviating of one's problems through the actions of others; and personal resources, such as mastery, defined as individuals' self-perception of their ability to control the demands that confront them. Resources may suppress or prevent, interact with, or mediate the effects of stressors on well-being outcomes. Thus, even at the same level of exposure to stressors, whether these stressors lead to poorer well-being varies, depending on the availability and deployment of resources. Although the SPM focuses on individual-level resources such as mastery and felt social support (Milkie, 2010), we consider the supports that states, workplaces, or other institutions provide to help raise children as key resources that help reduce burdens of parenting, as we will discuss in a later section. Finally, *stress outcomes* include mental health, physical health, and subjective well-being.

Two other concepts in the SPM are also relevant in the present review. First, the effects of stressors originating in the parenting role on stress outcomes depend on the extent to which stressors proliferate into other life domains (Pearlin, 1999). That is, parenthood not only generates stressors that derive directly from parenting and the parent–child relationship but also can exacerbate problems or produces new stressors, most centrally financial strain, time strains, and conflicts with partners, which may result in poorer health and less subjective well-being of parents when compared with nonparents (e.g., Pollmann-Schult, 2014). Second, a crucial part of the SPM is that every component of the stress process is conditioned by social statuses, such as social class, gender and sexuality, marital status,

race/ethnicity, and immigration status (Pearlin & Bierman, 2013). In the following section, we discuss selected types of parenting role strains examined in the past decade's body of research.

Parenting Role Strain

Drawing on role strain theory, the SPM originally identified four types of parenting role strain, or chronic stressors rooted in the parenting role: role overload, interpersonal conflict, role captivity, and interrole conflict (Pearlin, 1989). Parenting role overload, defined as the perception that the amount of child-care demands exceeds the individual's capacity, is often measured as respondents' perceptions of feeling overwhelmed (e.g., "Being a parent is harder than I thought it would be"; Luthar & Ciciolla, 2016). Parent–child relationship conflict is a strong stressor that affects parents' mental health negatively (Gunderson & Barrett, 2017; Luthar & Ciciolla, 2016; Reczek & Zhang, 2016). On the flip side, not discussed in the SPM and underscoring a demands–rewards perspective, close parent–child relationships act as "rewards" that enhance parents' well-being (Nomaguchi, 2012a). Parenting role captivity, or parenting role restriction, refers to the extent to which people feel stuck because of parenting responsibilities (e.g., "I feel as if I am trapped in the parenting role"; Beernink, Swinkels, Van der Gaag, & Buitelaar, 2012; Nomaguchi & Brown, 2011). Future work could examine the level of thriving in parenting identities, which may provide rewarding experiences for many adults. Similar to Abidin's (1995) parenting stress index, parenting strain scales in national surveys, such as the Fragile Families and Child Well-Being Study (FFCWS), the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Cohort (ECLS-K), and the National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH), combine items that tap into these three types of strain. Finally, interrole conflict, especially work–parenting conflict, is a major challenge for today's parents, evidenced by the findings of many studies in the 2010s. We discuss this in the section below on the contexts of job characteristics and work–family integration.

Besides the conventional forms of stressors, research has advanced through examining unique stressors that parents experience today. One example is time deficits with children, which refers to parents' appraisals of not

spending enough time with children, a form of parenting role strain that is pervasive in contemporary North America (Milkie, Nomaguchi, & Schieman, 2019). In the intensive parenting era, parental time with children is considered precious and perhaps necessary to foster close parent–child relationships and children's proper development (Milkie, Nomaguchi, & Denny, 2015). Parents enjoy spending time with children, reporting feeling happier when they are with children than when they are without them (Musick et al., 2016). Time spent with children in fun or enrichment activities is positively related to parents' sense of work–family balance (Milkie, Kendig, Nomaguchi, & Denny, 2010), less work–family conflict (Nomaguchi, 2012b), and better emotional well-being (Offer, 2014). Spending more days per week singing songs, reading or telling stories, or playing together with preschool children is related to less parenting strain for both fathers and mothers (Nomaguchi & Johnson, 2016) and fewer depressive symptoms for fathers (Kotila & Dush, 2013). As intensive parenting ideology has deepened, the standard for the amount of parental time with children has become high (Milkie & Warner, 2014). Many employed parents find it difficult to achieve the ideal. Using the 2011 Canadian Work, Stress, and Health Study, Milkie et al. (2019) found that almost half of employed mothers and fathers felt as if their time with children was not enough, which in turn related to parents' sleep problems, anger, and psychological distress. Future research that addresses new types of parenting strain that emerge in changing social and cultural contexts is needed.

Parenting Minor Children in Social Context

Consistent with the SPM's emphasis, research in the past decade demonstrated that parenting strains and the well-being of parents vary by social, economic, and national contexts. We articulate broad themes in which scholarship advanced, including (a) parenting children with special needs; (b) parenting in combination with paid jobs, especially those with pernicious characteristics; and (c) challenges related to parents' key social statuses. Considering social statuses, researchers investigated divergent challenges that parents with various social status positions face, especially parents with racial/ethnic minority status, immigrants, and parents who are LGBTQ, while continuing to examine variations by gender and marital or partnership status. In addition, an important area of research has emerged on (d) national contexts influencing parental well-being.

Children With Special Needs

Parenting strain is greater when child-care demands are higher. One line of research that advanced in the past decade focused on the challenges of raising children with special health care needs or emotional and behavioral problems. Arranging and providing care for children with special health care needs imposes time burdens (Miller, Nugent, & Russell, 2015) as well as financial costs (Stabile & Allin, 2012) far beyond the time and money required by raising healthy children. Primary caregivers (often mothers) of children with special needs tend to reduce or stop paid work activities, which, in addition to children's health care costs, places these families into lifelong financial deprivation. Using the National Longitudinal Study of Youth 1979 (NLSY79) and NLSY79 Children, Houle and Berger (2017) found that mothers whose children had a disabling condition by age 4 were more likely than those whose children did not have disability to have unsecured debts (i.e., debts that are owed to banks, stores, hospitals, and other institutions and are not tied to an asset) that they were unable to repay for decades following the birth of a child with a disability.

Social stigma, referring to people's adverse reactions that often involve stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination, is another major stressor that parents raising children with physical disabilities or mental disorders must endure daily during encounters with medical professionals, school officials, neighbors, strangers, and friends (Farkas et al., 2019). In response to other people's stigmatizing attitudes, parents tend to blame themselves for their children's conditions and isolate themselves and their family from social interactions (Moses, 2010). Having a child with emotional problems or aggressive behaviors increases mothers' parenting strain (Vaughan, Feinn, Bernard, Brereton, & Kaufman, 2013) in part because it increases mothers' social isolation and role captivity (Beernink et al., 2012), and it affects the mother–child relationship negatively (Krahé, Bondü, Höse, & Esser, 2015). Support

from family members helps reduce mothers' self-blame and parenting strain (Lutz et al., 2012; Moses, 2010). Yet, because not everyone has resourceful family members who can help, scholars should investigate how institutional resources in medical or health care services or educational facilities can help reduce the burdens of raising children with special needs.

Researchers might expand the investigation of financial, time, and psychological demands of raising children with special needs to further assess variations by central social statuses. For example, although much research focuses on mothers, Hartley, Seltzer, Head, and Abbeduto (2012) focused on the psychological well-being of fathers of adolescent or young adult children with disabilities, underscoring the idea that gendered analyses are necessary. Moreover, a marriage or partnership is more fragile when children have special needs (Kvist, Nielsen, & Simonsen, 2013), so the burdens of caring for children with special needs may differ depending on whether there is a supportive spouse or partner who shares them. Furthermore, disparities in the diagnosis of and care for children with special needs by race/ethnicity and immigration status have been documented (Coker, Rodriguez, & Flores, 2010). More research is needed to understand differences in the effects of children's special needs on parents by race/ethnicity and immigration status.

Job Characteristics, Attitudes Toward Maternal Employment, and Work–Family Integration

In general, employed mothers and fathers with minor children report less parenting strain than their nonemployed counterparts (Buehler & O'Brien, 2011; Meier, Musick, Flood, & Dunifon, 2016; Nomaguchi & Brown, 2011; Nomaguchi & Johnson, 2016), perhaps because of the material, social, and psychological resources that employment may provide. The positive effects of employment depend on job characteristics, however. Long work hours make it difficult for parents to fulfill parenting responsibilities and increase parents' feelings of time deficits with children, which relates to poorer mental health (Milkie et al., 2019; Roxburgh, 2012). Workplace policies can make a difference, however. In general, schedule control is a key job resource that helps parents integrate work and family responsibilities (Kelly et al., 2014). Employed parents with schedule

control report more time spent with children (S. Lee et al., 2017; Milkie et al., 2019), lower parenting strain (Nomaguchi & Johnson, 2016), and better well-being (S. Lee et al., 2017) than those without schedule control.

Socioeconomic status (SES) differences in issues of work–family stress cannot be ignored. For low-wage workers, schedule control is rare (Bianchi, 2011). Even worse, in the 24-hour economy, low-wage workers in the service sector increasingly are placed on unpredictable work schedules, which is difficult for parents who must arrange child care (Carrillo, Harknett, Logan, Luhr, & Schneider, 2017). Indeed, child-care arrangements are a central factor influencing parents' work–family integration. Parents are concerned about the quality of child-care arrangements, and if they have to choose a particular arrangement for its convenience or price rather than its quality, it affects their mental health negatively (Gordon, Usdansky, Wang, & Gluzman, 2011). Child-care instability is stressful even if back-up care is available (Pilarz & Hill, 2017), perhaps because of hassles in making last-minute changes. Even after children become school age, how to supervise children when they are not in school but parents are at work continues to be an issue, especially when parents work long hours (Barnett, Gareis, Sabattini, & Carter, 2010), and presumably when they have no schedule control. More research is needed to investigate the role of after-school care in lessening the strain of employed parents.

For parents with professional jobs, who often have some schedule control, a main issue is blurred work–nonwork boundaries via work emails and other electronic notifications that allow job-related tasks to spill into family time. This makes them feel pressure to be always available and attending to paid work around the clock (Bianchi, 2011). In the face of dual pressures of the ideal worker norm and intensive parenting ideology, employed parents with professional careers use various individual coping strategies, including prioritizing family time, scaling back paid work or nonpaid work obligations, blocking out paid work or nonpaid work time, and moving paid work time around (Moen, Lam, Ammons, & Kelly, 2013). As Moen et al. (2013) noted, however, individuals' options are limited by the structural conditions and culture of their jobs and workplaces, underscoring the need for understanding the role of

institutional and state resources in influencing parental strains and well-being.

For mothers, cultural beliefs regarding maternal employment are also relevant to the pressures that they face and thus their emotional health (Collins, 2019). Intensive mothering is in conflict with ideal worker norms, pushing many mothers to make difficult choices and often sacrifice careers (Orgad, 2019) or feel much guilt (Collins, 2019). Yet Christopher (2012) showed how some employed mothers actively respond to cultural pressures by reframing the meaning of a "good mother" and a "good worker" to fit their situations, illuminating how *extensive mothering* meant being in charge of children's lives and well-being while delegating some care to others. Similarly, Dow (2016) argued that African American middle-class mothers' *integrated mothering* ideologies were based in beliefs that mothers should be employed and extended family and community members could provide good care for children. This ideology supported mothers' abilities to work and raise children with less angst. Yet for mothers who wished to stay home with children, tensions arose due to concerns about their being viewed by others in their community as taking an "easy" route (Dow, 2016).

Social Class—Parenting With Limited Economic Resources

Men and women with lower SES generally value children and parenthood highly (Edin & Nelson, 2013). Mothers without college degrees are more likely than mothers with college degrees to report that parenting young children has brought them new life meaning (Nomaguchi & Brown, 2011). Yet, parents with lower SES experience many tribulations in raising children that higher income families do not (Cooper, 2014). Among men and women in impoverished areas, pregnancy sometimes occurs before relationships are established (Edin & Nelson, 2013). Couples who spent a limited length of time with each other before becoming parents are more likely to report a decline in relationship satisfaction in the early months of parenting (Trillingsgaard, Baucom, & Heyman, 2014). Research in the 2010s highlighted the issue of living conditions and housing insecurity for parents with low-wage jobs, including home clutter (Thornock, Nelson, Robinson, & Hart, 2013) and fears about children's outdoor play (Kimbro & Schachter, 2011). Children make it harder to rent a home

and increase the risk of being evicted in part because landlords see children as troublesome (Desmond, 2016), and parenting while homeless is very challenging (Alleyne-Green, Kulick, & DeLoach McCutcheon, 2019). In addition to structural barriers to providing healthy housing and food for their children, cultural ideals that set unrealistically high standards to reach, such as for mothers to make tailored home-cooked meals from scratch for their families, can make low-income mothers feel depressed (Bowen, Brenton, & Elliott, 2019).

In the United States, mass incarceration has made parenting in impoverished areas even more difficult. Using data from the FFCWS, Wildeman, Schnittker, and Turney (2012) found that fathers' recent incarceration increased mothers' risk of experiencing major depressive symptoms and life dissatisfaction even after economic hardship and relationship instabilities were controlled for. Formerly incarcerated fathers face a vicious cycle of material challenges that prevent them from seeing their children because of child-support arrears, which make these fathers frustrated, discouraged, and depressed (Haney, 2018). Gurusami (2018) found that formerly incarcerated mothers, who faced various obstacles in resuming daily parenting, were under constant pressure to prove to state agencies—social workers and parole or probation officers—that they were fit to have custody of their children. Stringer and Barnes (2012) found that regular contact with their children through letter writing and phone calls helps imprisoned mothers maintain positive views about their role as a parent. More research should investigate parenting strain while in prison and what helps alleviate it.

Race, Ethnicity, and Immigration

Researchers in the 2010s made strides in documenting racial/ethnic minority parents' unique challenges with raising their children in a society where racial prejudice remains entrenched. Using the 1998 to 1999 ECLS-K, Nomaguchi and House (2013) found that Black mothers experienced elevated parenting strain from kindergarten to third grade, whereas White, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American mothers did not. Several qualitative studies showed that as their children get older, Black parents, regardless of SES, became increasingly concerned about their children's encounters with racial biases

by police officers, school personnel, or other people in the community (Dow, 2019; Elliott & Aseltine, 2013; Warner, 2010). These studies highlight that Black parents actively respond to these fears and protect their children from potential threats through various strategies, such as drilling them about how to interact with police officers, monitoring their children's friends, and carefully selecting school or extracurricular environments (Elliott & Aseltine, 2013). However, this vigilance work takes energy (Dow, 2019) and may influence the well-being of Black parents. Types of parenting challenges of Black children may differ by SES. For example, middle-class Black parents may face the difficult trade-off of choosing academically better schools that are predominantly White environments where their children may be marginalized (Allers, 2019), whereas working-class Black parents may face the dilemma between letting their children choose friends and their concern about their children's neighborhood peers being bad influences (Elliott & Aseltine, 2013). We need more research that examines how the intersection of race and class shapes parenting experiences.

Given the unique role of immigration status in influencing parenting as well as mental health (Diaz & Niño, 2019), we urge researchers to disentangle the effects of immigration status from the effects of race/ethnicity. A couple of studies using the 2003 NSCH and the 1998 to 1999 ECLS-K, respectively, found that foreign-born Hispanic and Asian mothers are more likely than U.S. native-born counterparts to report higher parenting strain (Yu & Singh, 2012). This was largely due to an authoritarian parenting style (which is related to greater parenting strain in part because it is more likely to create parent–child conflict than an authoritative style), low English proficiency, and, for Latina mothers, lower family income (Nomaguchi & House, 2013). In contrast, there is little difference in parenting strain across U.S-born Hispanic, Asian, and non-Hispanic White mothers (Nomaguchi & House, 2013). Legal status and neighborhood contexts shape strains of immigrant parents. Using the 2000 Los Angeles Family and Neighborhood Survey, Noah and Landale (2018) found that among Mexican-origin mothers, parenting strain was higher among undocumented immigrant mothers than U.S.-born or naturalized or documented immigrant mothers. The percentage of foreign-born residents in the neighborhood,

which did not affect U.S.-born mothers and was associated with less parenting strain for naturalized or documented mothers, was linked to greater parenting strain for undocumented mothers. This may be because of the fear that the geographic area with a higher concentration of immigrants could be targeted by Immigration Control Enforcement. Undocumented immigrant parents feel constrained in performing simple parenting activities such as taking their children to school, parks, or trips, because the lack of drivers' licenses and fears of the police limit their mobility (Cardoso, Scott, Faulkner, & Barros Lane, 2018). Recent changes in immigration policies, such as deportation, family separation, and uncertainties related to the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, and antiimmigrant sentiment spurred by the Trump administration in the United States, call for further research.

Gender

Hays (1996) called the ideology of sensitive parenting intensive *mothering*, underscoring gendered aspects of this parenting ideology. More than 20 years later, research suggests that the stressors and the well-being of parents remain gendered in several ways. Mothers feel more time pressure than fathers during the transition to parenthood (Ruppanner, Perales, & Baxter, 2019). Mothers spend more hours multitasking than fathers, and mothers' multitasking activities are more likely than fathers' to involve housework and child care and are more likely to be related to negative emotions, distress, and work–family conflict (Offer & Schneider, 2011). Mothers, but not fathers, experience greater parenting strain when partners work long hours (Craig & Brown, 2017), perhaps because mothers still serve their families even when working long hours, which protects fathers from experiencing parenting strains. Studies using data from the American Time Use Study suggest that when spending time with children, mothers are less happy, more stressed, and more fatigued when compared with fathers (Connelly & Kimmel, 2015; Musick et al., 2016). Finally, mothers and fathers differ in the types of parenting strains that challenge their mental health. For example, fathers' happiness is compromised by financial strain, whereas mothers' happiness is compromised by the time demands of parenting (Pollmann-Schult, 2014) and forging careers successfully (Orgad, 2019).

Yet, there are some indications that the gender gap in parenting strains and rewards has shrunk. Fathers report that becoming a father is a transformative experience that makes them reorient their worldviews, values, relationships, and perceptions of work (Daly, Ashbourne, & Brown, 2013). Employed fathers' felt work–family conflict has increased to the level of employed mothers' (Galinsky, Aumann, & Bond, 2013), perhaps because more fathers today than in the past feel the need to modify their work hours to be responsive to family needs, but still find it difficult to confront the ideal worker norm (Kelly, Ammons, Chermack, & Moen, 2010). Both employed fathers and mothers desire to spend more time with children, and when they are unable to do so it affects their well-being negatively (Milkie et al., 2019). Working-class fathers in the FFCWS feel more parenting strain when their job is not flexible enough to allow them to care for their children, just as working-class mothers do (Nomaguchi & Johnson, 2016).

Past research has made advances in examining gender differences in time with children, types of instrumental parenting tasks, and their influences on parental well-being. We know less about gender divisions of certain responsibility-based parenting activities such as planning and managing children's needs, and to what extent these less visile parenting activities may become a strain that affects adults' well-being. Using a convenience sample of middle-class couples with young children, Daminger (2019) found that cognitive labor, referring to mental activities such as anticipating needs, making decisions, and overseeing family logistics, was disproportionally done by mothers, and cognitive labor could be stressful especially when it was unnoticed and unappreciated. Among couples where men were the primary caregivers and women were the primary breadwinners, Doucet (2015) found that gender divisions of responsibility-based parenting activities were more fluid and situated in specific relationship, community, and life-stage contexts. Future research that examines how cognitive parenting activities are related to parenting strains and rewards and whether such associations vary by gender will advance our understanding of the role of gender in the association between parenting and adult well-being.

Marital or Partnership Status

Marital or partnership status affects parenting experiences greatly. The relationship of parenthood status with happiness is less positive for singles than partnered adults (Aassve, Goisis, & Sironi, 2012; Angeles, 2010; Meier et al., 2016; Ugur, 2019). Single parenting is related to more work–family conflict (Nomaguchi, 2012b), greater parenting strain (Nomaguchi & House, 2013), and more sadness, stress, and fatigue while spending time with children (Meier et al., 2016) than partnered parenting. These single parenthood penalties can be reduced if institutional support for raising children to all parents is available, however. Pollmann-Schult (2018) found that among 24 European countries, generous financial benefits for children, child-care provisions for children younger than age 3, and higher levels of gender equality were related to a smaller life satisfaction gap between single and partnered mothers. In the United States, where mother–father relationships are fragile while repartnering rates are high, the focus of research has shifted from single parenthood to family instability, or the number of relationship transitions, as a factor that increases parenting strain (Beck, Cooper, McLanahan, & Brooks-Gunn, 2010; Halpern-Meekin & Turney, 2016). Despite the increases in cohabiting parents (Sassler & Lichter, 2020), few studies have examined differences in parenting strain and parental well-being between cohabiting and married parents. In the United States, where cohabitors are more likely than the married to be economically disadvantaged (Sassler & Lichter, 2020), cohabiting parents' greater parenting strains at the descriptive level appear to be largely accounted for by economic disadvantages and relationship strains (Nomaguchi & Johnson, 2016). In Europe, differences in life satisfaction between cohabiting and married parents vary across countries, depending on social norms regarding childbearing outside of marriage (Stavrova & Fetchenhauer, 2015).

As divorced parents increasingly share physical custody of their children, how coparenting after divorce affects parental well-being is of great interest. Coparenting ex-couples typically feel that their relationship is contentious (Markham & Coleman, 2012); still, fathers' involvement in children's lives and share of parental responsibilities lighten mothers' parenting strain after separation (Nomaguchi,

Brown, & Leyman, 2017). Joint physical custody reduces mothers' sense of time pressure, compared with sole physical custody, whereas it does not increase fathers' time pressure (Van der Heijden, Poortman, & van der Lippe, 2016). We do not know much about how parents adjust to their new roles as divorced parents, especially when they do not live with their children (Troilo & Coleman, 2012). Parenting stepchildren may be more stressful than parenting biological children in part because there are no institutionalized rules about the roles of stepparents and stepchildren (Sweeney & Raley, 2020). One common stressor for stepparents is that children reject stepparents' parental authority (Ganong, Coleman, & Jamison, 2011). Shapiro and Stewart (2011) found that stepmothers were more likely than biological mothers to report parenting strain and depressive symptoms, largely because of their children's negativity toward them. Other research found that mothers living with stepchildren were more likely than those who had no stepchildren living in the household to report feeling that the division of child care with their partner was unfair (Guzzo, Hemez, Anderson, Manning, & Brown, 2019), suggesting that coparenting strain may be greater for stepmothers than biological mothers. Some research has investigated the effects of family complexity—that is, partners living with various combinations of biological and stepchildren while also having other children outside the home—on parents' depression (e.g., Pace & Shafer, 2015; Turney & Carlson, 2011). The challenge is how to allocate respondents to mutually exclusive groups when there are so many different types of parents. It is also crucial to isolate the effects of parenting strain from other compounded strains, particularly strains from relationship turbulence, which are known predictors of poor mental health (Umberson & Thomeer, 2020).

LGBTQ Parents

The movement toward the legalization of same-sex marriage and increased acceptance of LGBTQ families has helped spur research assessing the lives of sexual minorities who wanted to become or were parents. For gay and lesbian adults wishing to raise children through adoption or using other means such as insemination, the process can be stressful because of discrimination and fraught within legal and medical systems that render certain decisions infeasible (Frost et al., 2017; Goldberg & Scheib, 2015; Karpman, Ruppel, & Torres, 2018; Vinjamuri, 2015). Many LGBTQ individuals have had children in prior heterosexual relationships or through becoming partners with someone who is already raising children (Gates, 2011). Due to discriminatory policies, and because heteronormativity remains strong in parenting roles, negotiating coparental identities can be a complex task (Padavic & Butterfield, 2011), and unique strains arise. For example, how receptive workplaces and supervisors were to LGBTQ families mattered for how work-related stressors affect parents (Goldberg & Smith, 2013), and parents had to make complex determinations, such as whether and how insurance covered a stepchild within the same-sex partnership (Frost et al., 2017). Vigilance is necessary—gay parents faced pressures to consider finding and moving to the "right" neighborhood prior to having children to reduce discrimination (Goldberg, Downing, & Moyer, 2012). Gay parents' decision making depends on other intersecting social statuses, such as gender, social class, and race/ethnicity (Moore, 2011). In choosing schools for children, for example, White, urban, gay male parents focused on available financial resources, whereas Black lower income lesbian mothers centered decisions around racial–ethnic diversity (Goldberg, Allen, Black, Frist, & Manley, 2018). Unique combinations of social statuses, including how their family was formed (through unions, adoption, or insemination), were also linked to how LGBTQ parents were marginalized and resisted negative discourses (Carroll, 2018). Research on the diversity of experiences within the population of LGBTQ parents will continue to be important in the coming years (Reczek, 2020).

National Contexts

The past decade saw a growing body of research using cross-national data to examine the role of the support that societies provide to help raise children, such as expansive work–family policies, quality child-care provision, and child tax allowances, in reducing burdens of parenting (Aassve et al., 2015; Glass et al., 2016; Margolis & Myrskylä, 2011; Ugur, 2019). For example, among men and women aged 20 to 50 in 19 European countries from the European Social Survey, Aassve et al. (2015) found that although

fathers were happier than nonfathers regardless of institutional contexts, mothers were happier than nonmothers when institutional support for parents raising children was available, such as higher rates of child-care provisions for children younger than 3 years of age, when women's representation in policy making was higher, and when the overall measure of development was higher. Examining 22 counties that included the United States, New Zealand, Australia, Israel, and 18 European countries, Glass et al. (2016) showed that the gap in happiness between parents living with at least one child and nonparents (i.e., all other adults) varied across countries, with parents reporting less happiness than nonparents in 14 countries, and parents reporting more happiness in eight countries. The United States stood out in the size of the difference between the happiness of parents, who were worse off, when compared with nonparents. This gap was in part because of the lack of policies that can make workers' lives easier—for example, the United States has little paid vacation time from work and little public early childhood education when compared with the other developed countries analyzed. Although there is a concern that social programs that lend support for childrearing may decrease the well-being of nonparents (Ono & Lee, 2013), Glass et al. (2016) found that the work–family policies they examined were related to greater happiness among both parents and nonparents in all countries. Collins (2019) conducted in-depth interviews with middle-class employed mothers in Sweden, the former East and West Germany, Italy, and the United States. She argued that not only are strong work–family policies important for mothers' well-being, but transformations toward cultural values such as gender equality in childrearing also would help mothers feel content with the way they integrate paid work and parenting responsibilities.

A LIFE COURSE PERSPECTIVE

A life course perspective is another major framework important in parenthood, parenting, and well-being research (Umberson, Pudrovska, & Reczek, 2010). We note that the historical time period is highly relevant to the types of parenting strains experienced. As we discussed previously, the current intensive parenting culture amid economic insecurities are relevant to parents' experiences of strain in the 2010s.

Furthermore, the idea of "linked lives," a tenet of this perspective, gives researchers a framework to see how increases in economic insecurity among young adults at the national level influence aging parents' economic well-being and mental health through their adult children's struggles with establishing or maintaining independent living or romantic partnerships (Kalmijn & De Graaf, 2012; Maroto, 2017). Consistent with the perspective's concern with the consequences of an early life event or transition to later experiences, research suggests that early parenting experiences have lasting influences on parents' well-being throughout mid- to later life. For instance, Williams, Sassler, Frech, Addo, and Cooksey (2011) found that women who had a first birth outside of marriage had worse self-reported health at age 40 than women who had a first birth within marriage. The number of troubles that children had during adolescence (e.g., substance use, troubles at school) can have a long reach, even into elderly parents' psychological well-being (Milkie, Norris, & Bierman, 2011). Using the concept of the timing of events, researchers have shown that "off-time" transitions to parenthood, either early or late, have adverse effects on women's mental health at age 40 (Carlson, 2011). C. Lee and Ryff (2016) found that early childbearing was related to an early onset of heart problems using the 1995 Midlife in the United States survey (MIDUS). In contrast, using the NLSY79, Williams, Sassler, Addo, and Frech (2015) found that a first birth in the early 20s was related to worse self-reported health, whereas a first birth prior to age 20 was not related to health after controlling for marital status at childbirth, suggesting the importance of considering the intersection of timing and contextual factors of childbearing in influencing adult well-being. Future research using life course perspectives should elucidate the process and possible protective factors for the effects of early life events on the well-being of parents and children later in the life course. For example, Williams and Finch (2019) found that the detrimental effects of nonmarital childbearing on women's health (mentioned previously in this review) were in fact largely explained by earlier experiences—adverse childhood experiences—which led to both nonmarital childbearing and poor health. Finally, the emphasis on age-graded life patterns underscores that parenting stains and rewards take

different forms across different life stages. Next, we review major research themes and findings from the past decade in the following three life stages: (a) the transition to parenthood, (b) minor children's developmental stages, and (c) parenting adult children.

The Transition to Parenthood

Research in the 2010s made strides in scrutinizing how adult well-being changes during the transition to parenthood using longitudinal data collected in different countries. Studies using the German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP), the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) (Myrskylä & Margolis, 2014), and the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey (Matysiak, Mencarini, & Vignoli, 2016) found that pregnancy and a first birth were related to increases in life satisfaction for both men and women, but 2 years later, life satisfaction declined to the prepregnancy level. A similar pattern was found for a second birth, but life satisfaction levels returned to prepregnancy levels faster. Using the SOEP, Pollmann-Schult (2014) found that parenthood was related to increased life satisfaction only after controlling for increases in time demands and financial pressure, underscoring the demands–rewards perspective of parenthood. Gender differences were found in these studies. Women were more likely than men to experience larger increases and drops around a first birth in life satisfaction (Myrskylä & Margolis, 2014) and mental health (Ruppanner et al., 2019) and more likely to experience a decline in life satisfaction to below the prepregnancy levels a few years after a second or third birth (Matysiak et al., 2016). Using the HILDA, Ruppanner and colleagues (2019) found that women showed greater increases in time pressure than fathers during the transition to parenthood and after a second birth. With Swiss panel data, Roeters, Mandemakers, and Voorpostel (2016) found that becoming a parent was associated with better mental health for women but not for men.

Other contexts shape how the transition to parenthood influences adult well-being. Births following unintended pregnancy may be more stressful than planned births because adjustments are more difficult (Kavanaugh, Kost, Frohwirth, Maddow-Zimet, & Gor, 2017). Using data from the National Survey of Families and Households, Su (2012) found

that unintended parenthood was related to an increase in depressive symptoms among men and a decrease in happiness among women. As Stykes (2019) noted, partners may disagree with each other on birth intentions, and thus it is important to consider the effects of couple-level dynamics of birth intentions on individual well-being. In the Swiss study mentioned previously, time spent in leisure activities before parenthood is related to a smaller gain in mental health for women and a decline in mental health for men after becoming a parent (Roeters et al., 2016). Older parents—those who postponed parenthood—were more likely than younger ones to experience an increase in life satisfaction around the time of childbirth (Myrskylä & Margolis, 2014). The decline in life satisfaction a few years after a birth was greater when parents felt more work–family conflict (Matysiak et al., 2016). Some studies have shown family-friendly policies that help parents to reduce time pressure or financial pressure can moderate the adverse effects of the transition to parenthood on mental health. Hewitt, Strazdins, and Martin (2017) found that mothers who gave birth after the introduction of the 2011 Australian government paid parental leave scheme reported better physical and mental health 1 year after childbirth than mothers who gave birth before the paid parental leave did. Among working-class parents with infants, Perry-Jenkins, Smith, Wadsworth, and Halpern (2017) found that the availability of schedule flexibility was related to fewer depressive symptoms for mothers, whereas greater financial support for child-care costs was related to fewer depressive symptoms for fathers.

Research continued to show that the arrival of a child affects mother–father relationship quality. One shortcoming of some prior research was the lack of comparison with change in relationship quality among childless couples, which made it unclear whether any change in relationship quality was due to the transition to parenthood or due to the duration of the relationship. Using the BHPS Keizer and Schenk (2012) found a U-shaped pattern of relationship satisfaction for parents: It decreased sharply after the transition to parenthood but started to rise about 7 years after to the preparenthood level, whereas relationship satisfaction among childless couples changed little for men and decreased gradually for women over time. A sense of unfairness with the division of household labor

and child care within their partnerships, and a decline in time together alone, may be key reasons for the decline in relationship quality among parents (Dew & Wilcox, 2011; Schieman, Ruppanner, & Milkie, 2018). Fathers' taking paternity leave, which presumably helps to reduce the sense of unfairness with the division of labor, was positively associated with both parents' reports of relationship satisfaction; and length of paternity leave was positively associated with mothers' (but not fathers') reports of relationship satisfaction (Petts & Knoester, 2019). Gender differences in the effects of the transition to parenthood on perceived relationship quality were mixed (Don & Mickelson, 2014; Holmes, Sasaki, & Hazen, 2013; Keizer & Schenk, 2012), which could be attributed to differences in sample characteristics.

Children's Developmental Stage

Parenting lasts throughout adult life, whereas tasks of parenting and expectations in the parent–child relationship change significantly across life stages, along with types of parenting strain. Although earlier research tended to emphasize that having younger children is stressful, more recent studies have shown that parents' well-being may be better when children are very young than when children are elementary, middle, or high school ages. Indeed, physical care of young children is labor intensive and demanding, and parents with younger minor children sleep less than parents with older minor children (Hagen, Mirer, Palta, & Peppard, 2013). Employed mothers feel more work–family conflict when children are infants or toddlers than when children are in third or fifth grades in part because mothers with very young children feel less support in the workplace (Nomaguchi & Fettro, 2019). Yet, caring for infants and toddlers is related to more life satisfaction (Pollmann-Schult, 2014), greater self-esteem, self-efficacy, and less depression (Nomaguchi, 2012a) than caring for school-age and teenage children. These may be in part because many parents see the quality of relationships with their children is more satisfactory when their children are younger than when their children are school-age or teenage (Nomaguchi, 2012a). Luthar and Ciciolla (2016) suggest that although mothers' sense of parenting role overload is highest when children are preschoolers, mothers' parenting satisfaction is lowest when children are in middle school, when children's rejection, negativity, and maladjustment are relatively high. Similarly, parents report that caring for infants is more meaningful than caring for children ages 4 to 11, whereas caring for adolescents is most stressful (Meier et al., 2018), and both mothers and fathers with teenagers report less happiness than mothers and fathers with infants or toddlers while spending time with children (Meier et al., 2018). Although some of these studies used longitudinal data (Nomaguchi & Fettro, 2018; Pollmann-Schult, 2014), other studies used cross-sectional data. We urge researchers to include parental strain questions in large-scale longitudinal data collections.

Parenting Adult Children

Research in earlier decades emphasized that adult children bring more resources than strains to parents and thus foster better well-being of parents (Umberson et al., 2010). Research in the 2010s suggests that this is a question that merits reexamination. Given the transformation of the labor market, which increasingly requires college degrees for securing decent jobs, it takes longer for young people to achieve economic independence than in the past (Danziger & Ratner, 2010). These changes in the economic climate have stretched the number of years of active parenting, which can be burdens for mid-life and aging parents (Newman, 2012). Using data from the MIDUS, Simon and Caputo (2019) found that, already in the mid-1990s, parents with children aged 18 to 29 did not seem to fare better than parents with younger children in various well-being outcomes (e.g., depression, anxiety, life satisfaction, and self-rated physical health). Research using more recent data that examine the well-being of parents with young adults compared with parents with younger children is needed.

Some middle- and upper-middle-class parents, sometimes termed *helicopter parents*, feel obliged to continue to invest instrumentally and emotionally to ensure children's academic and social success throughout the young adult years. Helicopter parents typically refer to parents who are overly protective of their young adult children, mostly college students, providing substantial emotional and instrumental support to them (Reed et al., 2016). Studies have examined the effects of helicopter parenting on adult children's well-being, typically using

convenience samples of college students (e.g., LeMoyne & Buchanan, 2011; Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012); yet, the effects of helicopter parenting adult children on parental well-being are not well investigated. Using a convenience sample, Fingerman and colleagues (2012) found that providing intense emotional and practical support to adult children was related to parents' poorer life satisfaction only when parents felt that their adult children needed more support than others of similar age. As in the case of intensive parenting, concepts and measures of helicopter parenting vary across studies, from children's reports of their parents' interventions with interpersonal problems, their parents' making important decisions for them, or their parents' emotional control, to parents' reports of the degree of their emotional or financial help for their young adult children. Researchers should be clear what aspects of parenting they are measuring and how they differ from or are similar to other studies.

Even after children are well into adulthood, parents serve as a safety net for adult children who experience economic difficulties or other setbacks (Swartz et al., 2011). Parents in the 2000s gave more support to their adult children than their counterparts in earlier years (Kahn, Goldscheider, & García-Manglano, 2013). Parents often welcome adult children moving into their home to deal with economic insecurity (Kahn et al., 2013), yet coresidence with adult children may have negative implications for parents' well-being. Maroto (2017) found that coresidence with adult children decreased parents' assets and savings. Tosi and Grundy (2018) found that adult children's return to an "empty nest" home was related to a decline in parents' quality of life, especially when adult children are unemployed.

Underscoring the linked lives concept, adult children's life course transitions that are socially desirable, such as educational attainment, union formation, and parenthood, are generally related to parents' better mental and physical health (Kalmijn & De Graaf, 2012). Parents typically provide child care and household chore assistance to children who became parents (Bucx, van Wel, & Knijn, 2012). Caring for grandchildren is related to better cognitive functioning of aging parents (Arpino & Bordone, 2014) and increases the odds of receiving support from adult children later on (Geurts, Poortman, & Van Tilburg, 2012), although its effects on the quality of the parent–child relationship are not always positive (Tanskanen, 2017). In the same vein, various setbacks that adult children experience in life affect parents' well-being negatively. Kalmijn and De Graaf (2012) found that children's breakups with partners were related to more frequent depressive symptoms for parents, especially mothers. Barr and colleagues (2018) found that African American young adults' challenges during the transition to adulthood, such as unemployment, romantic relationship problems, and arrests, were related to parents' poor mental and physical health. Reczek and Zhang (2016) found that regardless of actual setbacks in adult children's lives, parents' feelings of dissatisfaction with how their children turned out were related to parents' poor psychological well-being, suggesting the significance of parents' perceptions of how adult children are doing in influencing their mental health. Despite the increase in awareness of substance use problems as a public health issue, we know little about the strains of parents whose adult children suffer from these problems. A Swedish qualitative study found that parents in this situation suffered from fear that their children might die of an overdose, struggled with getting support for their children from social and medical services, observed stigma toward their drug-addicted children, and felt guilty and ashamed for being a "failed" parent (Richert, Johnson, & Svensson, 2018).

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

In this section, we employ a critical stress process approach to select several promising future research directions to advance knowledge and inform policy makers to support parents. The SPM focuses on identifying pathways among stressors, resources, and stress outcomes, with social statuses influencing the entire process. We argue that the conceptualization of stressors should be expanded. In addition to the structural stressors created by workplaces and economic conditions as well as the strains inherent in everyday lives with children, cultural pressures should be theorized and measured more fully using a stress process approach (McLeod, 2012). As mentioned previously, more rigorous conceptualization and empirical research on the effects of intensive parenting culture on parental well-being are needed. Intensive parenting is a multifaceted concept, including the norms of parental determinism (i.e., the belief that how

children will turn out depends largely on parenting), gendered beliefs about child care, views of the sacredness of the child, and an investing mentally, financially, and emotionally in children's academics and talents to attempt to secure their futures (Milkie & Warner, 2014). It appears not only as practices (Lareau, 2011), beliefs (Ishizuka, 2019), or identities (Faircloth, 2014) of individual parents but also as a dominant ideology (Faircloth, 2014; Hays, 1996) that has been shaping social policies (Elliot & Bowen, 2018). These differences should be carefully articulated when researchers theorize, measure, and analyze the concept of intensive parenting (Milkie & Warner, 2014). Questions that the next decade's researchers might address include when and how intensive parenting beliefs or efforts, or "overinvolvement" may be linked to lower well-being of parents and how these patterns vary by parents' social statuses.

For resources protecting well-being, as we articulated in this review, the SPM should be expanded to incorporate meso- and macro-level resources rather than just focused on individual-level resources. In addition to employer resources, workplace cultures, and state policies, a major institutional context that deserves more attention when assessing parenting resources as well as challenges is education. What functions of school and characteristics of teachers can help or hinder parental well-being? For employed parents, school hours, breaks, and holidays as well as special events are hard to coordinate with their work schedules. U.S. schools have been emphasizing the importance of parental involvement for children's academic success (Epstein et al., 2018). Although research has shown that parental involvement in school—predominantly by affluent parents—facilitates reproduction of SES inequalities (Calarco, 2014), less is known about the possibility that such school policies reinforce the emphasis of parental responsibility and place pressures on parents. In the United States, parents deal with fallout from the increase in high-profile mass school shootings. How do increasing concerns about school safety and security affect parents? For example, research has shown that the use of security measures (e.g., metal detectors) within schools to improve student safety make parents more wary of potential threats to children's safety at school (Mowen & Freng, 2019). How do differential disciplinary and surveillance practices at school by SES and

race/ethnicity (Welch & Payne, 2010) affect parenting strains and well-being differently? How are parenting inequalities and well-being exacerbated by school segregation, funding mechanisms, and parallel systems of private and public schooling? Many important research questions in this realm deserve attention.

Similarly, we argue that more knowledge regarding the role of resources that local communities provide to help raise children in reducing parenting strains is needed. Neighborhoods for parents vary widely, and they can be both resources and detriment to parents' well-being. More focus on how built environments can help create community and trust of fellow parents in the neighborhood is an area ripe for research. Learning how neighborhood groups, as well as mothers' groups, daycares, religious organizations, and others can provide a safety network of nearby others who support parents instrumentally and emotionally during the many smaller and larger challenges of raising children, is vital (Small, 2009). Specific resources that are salient to parents may vary by children's developmental stage as well as social status. For example, for parents with young children, the availability of affordable, quality child-care centers and family daycare homes may help reduce work–family conflict (Young, 2019). For parents with school-age children, the availability of enrichment programs as well as the quality of schools in the local school district may be of importance. Local contexts may be especially relevant for minority parents in that some may expose them or protect them from specific stressors such as discrimination directed toward themselves or their children (Dow, 2019). For example, the U.S. legalization of same-sex marriage in 2015 has changed the legal landscape that surrounds gay parents. Yet, social acceptance remains varied by region of residence. Examining LGBTQ parents' experiences and well-being across geographic contexts is crucial (Stone, 2018).

Moreover, although past research is clear that, consistent with the SPM's major emphasis, challenges in parenting are not the same across different social status positions, future scholarship should continue to investigate complex intersections of social status, as indicated in the previous sections on race/ethnicity and LGBTQ status. Studies that examined variation in parenting strains by social class or race/ethnicity reviewed previously focused on mothers, leaving the intersectionality among race, class, and

gender less examined. Gender is a central axis of childrearing, and yet child-based national surveys, which provide rich information about children, parent–child relationships, and parenting, typically ask questions only for one "primary parent" who tends to be the child's mother (e.g., ECLS-K, NSCH). More focus on fathers' relationships with children and the effects of intensive parenting culture and practices on fathers (e.g., Shirani, Henwood, & Coltart, 2012), and whether such patterns vary by social class, can advance the field.

Aligned with a life course approach, future research should focus more on the well-being of parents with middle school and adolescent children. The influences of electronic device use among parents and children alike on parenting strain, parent–child relationships, and parental well-being should be further investigated (Fingerman, Huo, & Birditt, 2020; Nelson, 2010). Although work–family policy debates tend to focus on parental leave upon the birth or adoption of a child, issues of work–family conflict for parents may continue all the way through children's high school years, as adolescents have events that parents are expected to attend, and still need supervision, rides to school or extracurricular activities, and support in arranging and attending doctor, dentist, and other appointments. Investigating work–family strains among parents with preteen or teenage children and what could help support parents' complex time, energy, and emotional commitments to older offspring is warranted.

Parenthood, once embarked upon, lasts for all the remaining years of an adult's life. Research in the 2010s indicates that children's young adulthood can be challenging for parents and may be exacerbated by uncertain economic conditions facing offspring. Research on grandparents providing regular care around the new birth of a child to their employed adult children, living in a multigenerational household, and being the guardian of grandchildren are all vital areas of research in understanding intergenerational relations and its links to parents' well-being. Because of the increases in cohabitation, nonmarital childbearing, divorce, and repartnering, family contexts of adults in mid-life to later life today are different from those in earlier generations (Brown & Lin, 2012). The effects of parenthood on adult well-being in later life might have changed accordingly.

How multiple family member dynamics influence parenting strains and well-being is another question that has been less often examined, largely because of data limitations. For example, although a majority of parents have multiple children, most studies ask parents about one focal child or any children, but rarely ask about each of all the children they have. When parents have a mixture of children with various successes and problems, how does it affect parents' well-being? Is the old adage—parents are only as happy as their least happy child—correct? Fingerman, Cheng, Birditt, and Zarit (2012) found that having at least one adult child who had problems was related to parents' poorer well-being measured as a scale combining life satisfaction and depression and that parents who had multiple children with problems reported even worse well-being. Data collection of each child's major life events and problems is critical to better understand the effects of adult children's lives on parental well-being.

Finally, we point out major methodological advances and challenges, as well as a theoretical expansion. Research on parents' well-being demands appropriate comparison groups, and complexities abound (Deaton & Stone, 2014). When comparing parents with nonparents, researchers should pay careful attention to how nonparents are defined. Research defines parents in various ways, including the presence of children younger than age 18 living in the household (e.g., Herbst & Ifcher, 2016), the presence of offspring of any age living in the household (e.g., Aassve et al., 2015; Angeles, 2010; Glass et al., 2016), and the number of children respondents have regardless of age and residential status (e.g., Margolis & Myrskylä, 2011; Nelson, Kushlev, English, Dunn, & Lyubomirsky, 2013; Ugur, 2019). Because parenting demands vary by child age and residential status, parents should be defined carefully according to the purpose of study (e.g., Umberson et al., 2011). The key question here is who should be the appropriate comparison group of nonparents. People who have never had children consist of at least two groups—those in their 20s and early 30s, many of whom will have children in subsequent years and those in their 50s or older who will very likely never have children. These two groups are very different not only in age but also in economic conditions, both of which relate to mental health. To help solve this problem, some research limits the analytical

sample to those who are younger than age 50 (e.g., Aassve et al., 2015). Another question is whether parents with adult children, whether they live in or outside of the household, should be combined with the childless as the reference group (e.g., Herbst & Ifcher, 2016). Given the research finding that parents with young adult children report more strains and worse well-being than younger children for parents (Simon & Caputo, 2019), researchers may need to make a careful decision as to whether this group of parents should be included in non-parents, which serves as a reference group for parents. In terms of a theoretical expansion, the demands-rewards perspective calls on scholars to assess rewards as well as demands or challenges of parenting in a nuanced way. Indeed, some resources that serve to protect parents from strains such as overload — like social connections to other parents in a neighborhood — may also serve to build rewards for parents, such as increasing life satisfaction. Similarly, we expect that some social policies might not only act to alleviate strains of parenting, but also serve to increase rewards of the parental role. For example, policies enhancing quality pre-school education may ensure children thrive in school, thereby increase parents' pride in children's achievements.

Conclusion

Although policy makers and the public emphasize the responsibility of parents for managing risks to and opportunities for their children's future life chances, they tend to overlook the importance of parental well-being for children's developmental outcomes. Research on parenthood, parenting, and well-being is crucial to generate knowledge of parenting experiences—the tremendous work and many challenges of raising the next generation—that may inform policy making about what helps parents to meet financial, time, and emotional demands of raising children while having other obligations such as paid work. Cross-national studies in the past decade suggest that parents enjoy better well-being in societies where they are provided more policy and institutional supports to raise the next generation of citizens. Research in the next decade should continue to pay attention to variations in parenting strains and rewards across social locations and life stages, as well as across different countries, and

its link to the well-being of parents and children, as constraints and solutions for them may vary across these contexts. Parents supported by their local communities, workplaces, and states are able to raise healthier children, and thus help to create a better future.

Note

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