mediately is the failure to acknowledge same-sex unions. Until recently, surveys routinely failed to collect information on these unions, and studies of union formation continue to assume that all young adults are at risk of opposite-sex cohabitation and marriage. It is increasingly difficult to discuss greater freedom in family life over the course of recent decades without reference to sexual minorities.

Some minor issues aside, I urge scholars studying families and the life course to check out this book if they have not already. Although this book was published in 2007 and is somewhat dated in its scope (i.e., the analyses do not extend beyond 1993), it has some gems that make it an essential book on academic reading lists.

Family Configurations: A Structural Approach to Family Diversity. By Eric D. Widmer. Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate Publishing, 2010. Pp. xii+167. $99.95.

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The notion that families are an important site of sociological analysis remains uncontested in the face of debates about how to interpret observed changes in contemporary families. Eric Widmer's *Family Configurations: A Structural Approach to Family Diversity* examines family through the social relationships within family networks. The central goal of the book is to uncover general principles that cut across diverse family types, in an attempt to establish the continued relevance of family as a societal institution with the function of social integration.

The book introduces a configurational perspective based on the notion that families are not defined by institutional criteria, but rather by interdependencies that transcend marital ties, coresidence, or even blood relationships. The emphasis is not only on the existence but also on the nature of ties between social network members within and beyond the nuclear family.

Widmer draws on case studies as well as small and large data sets from the United States and Switzerland to document whom people see as part of their family and the type of relationship they have with these persons. Contemporary families do not have clear, obvious definitions and can best be conceptualized as sets of interdependencies. These interdependencies go beyond notions of financial interdependence and include communication and emotional ties, regardless of actual contact, and may be shaped more by perceived rather than actual support. Analysis of cross-national survey data indicates that individuals across society rely on a variety of people for social support, backing up the claim that social capital extends beyond the nuclear family unit. Examinations of both support and conflict

networks show that support and conflict often coexist in the same interdependent relationship.

Family configurations are not fully determined by structure. In fact, many individuals who have experienced divorce and remarriage have family configurations that are more similar to those that have never experienced divorce rather than other postdivorce individuals, putting into question the practice of treating stepfamilies as a distinct category. However, family configurations are embedded in demographic constraints: life events can change family configurations, sometimes even dramatically, especially in the wake of relationship changes. The book argues that while there is a finite number of life events with profound impact on peoples' social relationship networks, there is too much complexity for it to be captured by normative life cycle models.

One of the key arguments of the book is that those studying family dynamics cannot solely look at couple relationships or nuclear families. Examples illustrate that dyadic relationships are embedded in larger social networks, and through case studies the author shows how larger networks affect dyadic relationships. Overall, the book makes a significant contribution to the literature on family structure and composition and makes an important call for the study of larger family networks.

The book includes clinical samples of individuals with psychological problems, which seems somewhat disjointed. The finding that this population, on average, has smaller support networks is important, yet also highlights some of the issues not sufficiently addressed in the book. The configurational perspective claims to emphasize the role of time, space, and change over time. However, the geographic distance or coresidence status of family members is not usually known. This seems particularly important in the case of understanding family configurations of college students who nominate their friends as family members—is this based on living with them as roommates? And while possible change over time is well illustrated, there is no discussion of generational differences. The book discusses how, as respondents age, certain family members may no longer be alive and available as network members, but issues of social change in who counts as family are not addressed. This serves as a reminder that in many cases it is difficult to ascertain to what extent family configurations are driven by demographics, the availability of family members, or respondents' choice.

Another key issue that warrants further exploration is that of gender and marital status. Widmer uses neutral language, referring to partners when describing respondents' family configurations, rather than explicitly indicating marital status. How do cohabiting relationships and married couples differ in the way they are embedded in larger social networks? Because much of the book's analyses are based on samples of female respondents we do not learn whether there are substantial differences in the reports of men's and women's family configurations. Same-sex relationships are only mentioned in conjunction with the concept of fictive

kin, and while friendship ties are part of some of the described configurations we do not know whether the family networks of gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender individuals are different.

The book's author has widely published on the subject matter at hand, but the frequent references to previously published studies sometimes mean that concepts, such as role of bridging and bonding social capital in understanding family configurations, could be fleshed out more in the book. As a consequence the unique contribution is sometimes unclear.

This book makes a valuable contribution to the family literature and an accessible introduction to the concept of family configurations, and to the family network method. Although some issues remain unaddressed Widmer clearly illustrates the importance of relying on respondents' subjective reports of family rather than on preconceived notions about who relevant family members are. Families continue to matter, and the book makes it clear that people "do" family outside of nuclear families and that a network perspective is a fruitful way of understanding family dynamics.

Dividing the Domestic: Men, Women, and Household Work in Cross-national Perspective. Edited by Judith Treas and Sonja Drobnic. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2010. Pp. xv+261. $50.00.

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Dividing the Domestic: Men, Women, and Household Work in Cross-national Perspective features several new papers by leading scholars who embrace a comparative approach to the division of household labor, one informed by a common narrative. Since the 1970s, women in industrialized countries have reduced their housework time as their labor market participation has grown. Men's allocation of time to household tasks has increased, but their household behavior has changed far less dramatically. As a result, the "gender gap" in household time allocation is not nearly as large in most countries as it was three decades ago, but considerable gaps remain, without exception, in all countries.

The papers in this volume treat this story as backdrop to the main enterprise of the book—that is, documenting and advancing explanations for differences in the extent of inequality characterizing the division of household labor across countries. Most of the authors focus on country-level differences in inequalities between women and men, but a few turn their attention toward differences by class or income level in unpaid work burdens. Beyond a shared substantive interest in the effects of national context on the division of housework, these papers are unified by a view of unpaid family work that sees it as an integral aspect of the social division of labor and thereby a key driver of stratification and broader patterns of social inequality.