Chapter-2

SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY
We find that now-a-days the media has been frequently raising the issue of the need for women empowerment and gender equality. Men & women's roles are being challenged what with new role definitions like the metro sexual man & the superman. Are men & women moving towards more of an androgynous role sharing or are they still entrenched in traditional roles? How shall we tackle this area of research? These are some of the questions that need to be understood. This chapter delineates the need for research in the above area.

Significance Of Study

Research on men and women cannot be looked at from one perspective i.e. by focusing on the specifics of one gender to arrive at a total picture of gender interplay. Women centered research (as has been the trend for studying family) should not be the only way to understand family - centric life. Our knowledge of how men's family roles relate to other aspects of life has only begun to accumulate. Thus a simultaneous comparison between male and female roles and interaction will help bring out the intensity of the gender interplay. Hence, we have gender analysis which concerns itself with unraveling the dynamics of this relationship between the male and female being. Society constructs maleness and femaleness as opposed categories with unequal social values. The gender perspective focuses on the symbolic and ideological meanings as well as structural and material conditions. Gender is something evolved, created and sustained in day by day interaction among at
the basic level the family members. Women and men participate together to construct the meaning of gender and distinguish themselves from each other as women or men. Gender roles within the family influence gender roles outside the family and vice-versa. Also with every new generation, there is social change and stability as children observe patterns of adult behavior and attitudes and adopt parts of their patterns of adult behaviors. Lastly the broader social context bolsters the construction of gender.

Our core social structure is in transition. Basic social institutions, values and ascribed roles are being questioned. Today, men and women are monetarily contributing to their household by being a part of the economic workforce. It is said that women are inhibited in participating equally in societal processes like men because they are constrained by three external processes namely education, income and occupation. In our study we shall be focusing on women who have surpassed these constraints of education, occupation and income and see whether they have a different gender interplay at their home and at their workplace.

In the Indian context, the number of professional women like doctors, engineers etc. are very small. Hence the number of professional couples with the same professional qualifications is even more smaller. As women have reached parity with men in attending medical school, little information is available on dual doctor marriages and their personal and professional lives.

In our study we shall be focusing on couples, who are consultants i.e. both husband and wives who have completed their
specializations and are working. These couples have children as we are interested in learning about their family life and professional life. Family is the core societal unit and is also a battle ground for power and hence it would be of sociological interest to study the dynamics of gender interplay at home too. One of the banes of the household domain has always been between the household division of tasks i.e. who ends up with the physical drudgery of housework. This aspect has always been a battleground between the two sexes. Infact in a country like Spain, the situation has reached such proportions that the Spanish parliament is going to pass a law that legally requires Spanish men to do more housework i.e. “share domestic responsibility and the care and attention” of children and elderly relatives (source: Hindustan Times, Tuesday 12 April, 2005).

So does the household domain etch out men and women’s gender interplay in the wider social context? Because of the intricacy and encompassing nature of work-family interrelations, the two spheres, work and family are enclosed deeply and affect each other. The demands of household duties, the role perception, the power equation of the husband and wife all affect their family life and career. This becomes even more salient if we focus on dual professional (doctor) couples. It is also of sociological interest to study dual professional families in India as slowly they are on the increase and very few studies have been done on them. We want to gain an insight into their professional and family lives and see how it affects them.
Therefore, in our research we propose to study men and women who are on equal footing (i.e. having similar education, occupation and income) and examine gender interplay at home and at work. In our study we shall be focusing specifically on consultants i.e. doctors, who are specialists in their particular fields. It is easier to find a large number of couples in the medical profession as compared to other professions and hence we decided to base our study on the medical professionals. These couples are likely to bring into their marriage partnership more or less equal personal resources to start with namely education, occupation and the attendant commensurate income and hence it would be ideal to understand how they balance their personal and professional life.