

Bowling Green State University
The Center for Family and Demographic Research

<http://www.bgsu.edu/organizations/cfdr>

Phone: (419) 372-7279 cfdr@bgsu.edu

Working Paper Series 2009-05

**WHEN SHE BRINGS HOME THE BACON:
BREADWINNING AND THE SEXUAL-EMOTIONAL LIVES OF
COHABITING COUPLES**

Jessica J. Wyse
Department of Sociology
The University of Michigan

Pamela J. Smock
Department of Sociology and Population Studies Center
Institute for Social Research
The University of Michigan

Wendy D. Manning
Department of Sociology and
Center for Family and Demographic Research
Bowling Green State University

**When She Brings Home the Bacon:
Breadwinning and the Sexual-Emotional Lives of Cohabiting Couples**

ABSTRACT

This paper explores linkages between cohabiting couples' relative income contributions and their emotional and sexual lives. Drawing on data from forty individual, in-depth interviews with both partners in 20 couples (n=40), our findings suggest that when women are the primary breadwinners, they also perform the majority of emotion work. While we do not find that female breadwinning couples emphasize traditional gender sexually, we do find less egalitarianism in sexual satisfaction and desire expressed among these couples. In contrast, in couples in which men are the primary breadwinners, relationships appear to be marked by greater equality in the emotional and sexual spheres. Although exploratory, our results suggest that the exclusion of the sexual-emotional domain from prior studies has likely underestimated the extent to which relationships remain gendered even among cohabiting couples.

Key words: Gender, Emotion Work, Sex, Cohabitation

“The interior of the family is a scene of multilayered relationships folded over on each other like geological strata. In no other institution are relationships so extended in time, so intensive in contact, so dense in their interweaving of economics, emotion, power and resistance” (Connell, 1987).

Gender is learned, practiced and reproduced interpersonally within families. These interpersonal determinants of gender are affected by, and emerge from, larger social forces. In the past fifty years, cultural and structural changes have radically altered the social expectations for, and experiences of, women. Compared to their recent predecessors, contemporary women more often delay marriage and childbirth, pursue higher education and employment, and increasingly out-earn their male partners (Blau, 1998; Goldstein & Kenney, 2001; Raley, Mattingly, & Bianchi, 2006; Winkler, 1998). These changes suggest greater independence and empowerment for women within their romantic relationships.

Yet previous research has called this into doubt. For instance, studies have shown that women with incomes greater than those of their male partners tend to do more housework than women who do not earn the majority of family income (Atkinson and Boles 1984; Bittman, England et al. 2003; Brines 1994; Greenstein 2000; Hochschild and Machung 1989, but see Gupta 2007).

This finding has been explained as women engaging in gender-compensating strategies to preserve traditional gender roles, a perspective commonly termed “doing gender” (Bittman, England et al. 2003; Coltrane 2000; Tichenor 1999, 2005; West and Zimmerman 1987).

Researchers typically look to the gendered division of household labor for evidence of gender display.

While the division of domestic labor is a vital dimension of gender-based disparities in romantic relationships, extant research has neglected other fundamental aspects of romantic relationships. This study begins to address this gap by examining emotion work, sexual satisfaction and desire

expressed within cohabiting couples. Emotion work performed in relationships is generally conceptualized as the effort made to enhance and maintain the emotional well-being of others and provide emotional support (Erickson, 1993). Emotion work may encompass the time and energy spent emotionally caretaking, supporting, listening, problem solving, and showing affection, as well as the effort necessary to manage and shape emotions – either in outward manifestation or internally –to conform with social expectations (Hochschild, 1983). It may be that, much like housework, women out-earning their male partners are not advantaged emotionally and sexually. Rather, female breadwinning couples may “do gender” in these realms to compensate for women’s earning advantage.

To explore this notion, we analyze data from 40 in-depth interviews with each partner in 20 cohabiting relationships. In seven of the 20 couples, the woman earns more money than her male partner. We categorize these cases as “female breadwinning couples” or FBC. Thirteen couples are classified as “male breadwinning couples” or MBC. While some studies employ an income gap of \$5,000 or greater to establish female breadwinning, due to the low absolute level of earnings among our subjects, we deem female out-earners of any amount to be breadwinners. Though the wage difference may appear small to middle or upper class readers, we assume that a wage advantage of two dollars per hour would be both recognized and accorded some significance by an individual earning the Federal minimum wage, or \$6.55/hour. We include both male out-earning and equal-earning couples in a single category – “male breadwinning couples” or MBC – as past empirical work has shown that it is women’s out-earning, not earning equivalence, that leads women to “do gender” via housework (Bittman et al, 2003). Our analysis uncovers patterns in the expression of emotion work, sexual satisfaction and desire among

cohabiting couples, and compares differences between FBC and MBC couples across these domains.

Our research questions are as follows: First, how do cohabiting couples perceive the distribution of emotion work within their partnerships? Do men and women agree that it is equally shared, do both agree that one member of the pair does more, or do they disagree? Second, do men and women feel that sexual desire and satisfaction are equally shared by both members of the partnership? Is one member of the pair more or less sexually desirous than the other and do they agree on this point? Are men and women equally sexually satisfied in the partnership, or is there disequilibrium in satisfaction? We then compare the pattern of responses drawn from FBC versus MBC couples, seeking emergent patterns.

The rationale for our focus on cohabiting couples is three-fold. First, most marriages today start as cohabitations; about 62% of marriages that occurred between 1997 and 2001 were preceded by a cohabitation, and the percentage continues to climb (Kennedy & Bumpass, 2008; Smock, 2000). Second, relative to married couples, cohabiting couples tend to have greater equality in earnings and espouse more egalitarian expectations for gender roles (Brines, 1994; Brines & Joyner, 1999; Casper & Bianchi, 2002). Thus, women's breadwinning may not be associated with "doing gender" to the same extent as for married couples. Third, we simply know less about "doing gender" and the relational lives of cohabiting couples than we do married couples.

Our findings will not only fill an empirical gap in knowledge regarding the association between female breadwinning and emotion work, sexual satisfaction and desire, but also extend knowledge about the relationships of cohabiting couples, an increasingly prevalent family form (Smock, 2000). As we will show, cohabitators appear to "do gender" emotionally and sexually

similarly to traditional married couples, at least when the female partner out-earns her male partner.

BACKGROUND

Today, women have greater access to independent economic resources than they have at any other time in U.S. history. Between 1981 and 2005, married couples in which women out-earned their husbands increased from 15.9 to 25.5 percent (US Census Bureau 2007). This shift is even more apparent among cohabiting couples, which tend to be more egalitarian in terms of earnings and are more likely to have a woman out-earner than married couples. When the income advantage is defined as at least \$5,000 (a more rigorous standard), 23 percent of cohabiting women versus 17 percent of married women out-earned their male partners (Fields, 2003). These economic trends might suggest that women are increasingly advantaged within their relationships, as women's relative income disadvantage has been widely believed to account for their lesser "bargaining power" within their partnerships. This view is best expressed through the theory of bargain-exchange.

The bargain-exchange theory of household labor is variously known as neoclassical economic, microeconomic, new household economics, the dependency model, resource-bargaining perspective, or relative resource perspective (Becker, 1974; Brines, 1994; Coltrane, 2000). With small differences, these perspectives primarily conceive of the division of labor within the home as an outcome of each partner's comparative advantage in terms of human capital (e.g., work experience, earnings potential); with the lower earner held responsible for the greater share of housework (Brines, 1994; Coltrane, 2000). Individuals are undifferentiated by gender in this story. So, while women tend to specialize in housework and men in paid labor, this

is because each is relatively advantaged in his or her domain, and family welfare is maximized by this arrangement. The division of labor which results (with men in paid and women in unpaid or lower paid positions) has been used to explain why working women perform more household and childcare labor than their male partners. Though the bargain-exchange perspective has been critiqued for its neglect of gendered power dynamics, it remains descriptive of the division of labor among married couples in which men out-earn their female partners. However, among female breadwinning couples (FBC), women have been found to perform more housework than their lower-earning peers (Bittman et al., 2003).

Gender construction theory has been used to explain this phenomenon (West & Zimmerman, 1987). This theoretical perspective holds that daily gendered practices allow men and women to “affirm and reproduce gendered selves” (Coltrane, 2000). Therefore, a traditionally gendered division of household labor is explained not as due to women’s relative earning disadvantage, but rather as a means for men and women to validate their gendered self-concepts. Performing the bulk of the housework becomes a means for women to affirm their gender identity given the “gender challenge” posed by female breadwinning. While cohabiting men report performing more household labor than married men, cohabiting women do somewhat less housework than their married counterparts (Davis et al., 2007; but see Gupta, 1999). Thus, cohabitation may be a context enabling more egalitarian gender dynamics.

We propose looking beyond housework to consider whether cohabiting couples “do gender” emotionally and sexually in female breadwinning relationships. We posit that the emotional-sexual sphere is a key – although often neglected – area from which to examine how traditional gender is maintained within relationships (for exceptions see (Erickson, 1993, 2005; Hochschild & Machung, 1989). Theoretical accounts which have explored men’s and women’s

emotional and sexual contributions in their partnerships hold that emotional contribution and sexual satisfaction are partially determined by relative income (Giddens, 1992; Hochschild, 1983). Women's lesser likelihood of demanding and receiving emotional and sexual fulfillment from male partners is then partially reflective of a relative disadvantage in earnings, though this proposition has not been subject to rigorous evaluation as has housework (Becker, 1974; Hochschild, 1979, 1983).

Yet, perhaps even more so than housework, emotion work, sexual satisfaction and desire carry heavily gendered cultural associations. For instance, the perceptive or intuitive care giving manifest in emotion work has traditionally been more characteristic of a woman's than a man's role. Women's familial role has historically been "to act as the provider of emotional warmth and stability for the whole family, to maintain good, tension-free relationships between the family members; to keep the family together" (DeVault, 1991; Oakley, 1975). Hochschild explains that women tend to do emotion work that "affirms, enhances, and celebrates the well-being and status of others," and in so doing "expresses her own deference" (Hochschild, 1983). It might then be surprising if the gendered patterns of emotion work, sexual satisfaction and desire within couples were substantially altered by women's rising income. While theoretical work tends to assume that as women's income rises relative to men's over time, women should experience emotional and sexual advantages within their (marital) partnerships, the limited empirical work on the sexual and emotional practices of female out-earners suggests a more complicated dynamic.

Research on married couples suggests that women may "do gender" emotionally and sexually to compensate for both the perceived inadequacy of their male partner's employment or financial status or for their own economic success, echoing findings from the housework literature. Blumstein and Schwartz (1983) find that women are more cautious about initiating sex

when husbands are experiencing trouble at work, or other vulnerabilities. Atkinson and Boles (1984) find that female out-earners devoted extra time to romancing their partners and worked to increase their attractiveness to compensate for their “male” earnings. In both studies, women enact conscious sexual strategies to “normalize” gender in their partnerships. Men’s beliefs and reactions, however, remain relatively unexamined. Also unexamined is how men and women respond emotionally to “gender challenge.” In this paper, we expand upon this work, exploring the relational context in which coupled cohabitators “do gender” emotionally and sexually.

DATA AND METHODS

Forty semi-structured interviews with partners in cohabiting couples were fielded between June and July of 2005. We obtained the sample in and around a Midwestern city through personal contacts, referrals, advertisements in local newspapers, and flyer distribution in local businesses. Selected couples had been partnered for no more than three years. American cohabitations are relatively short-lived: only 1/6 cohabitations last three years, while only 1/10 last five years or more (Bumpass and Lu 2000). Limiting the sample to cohabitators who have lived together for no more than three years guarantees a sample more representative of typical cohabitators.

Interviewees were selected to maximize racial diversity: the sample includes 13 white women, 13 white men, four black women, five black men, three Latinas and two Latinos. The sample was intentionally skewed toward the working and lower middle-classes, as there has been much qualitative research on the poor but less on the working-class, lower-middle class and near poor (Newman & Chen, 2007; Pattillo-McCoy, 1999). Sample members’ average age was just under 24 years, with an age range of 34 to 19 years. The average education level was slightly more than a high school degree. Twelve sample members, six men and six women, were not working

outside of the home at the time of the interview, though of these, two were currently in school. Among those working for pay, the average wage was roughly \$7 per hour or \$1120 monthly. Seven respondents worked part-time and 20 worked full-time. One subject did not expressly address whether the work performed was full or part-time. As full-time work is considered standard, we classify this unknown as a full-time worker. The highest-earning sample member earned \$55,000 per year, while the lowest earned roughly \$6,000 yearly working part-time. Eight sample members were currently in school.

The interviews were conducted primarily by an interviewer with ten years of experience working in diverse settings; she has conducted more than 500 qualitative interviews and administered thousands of surveys. A small number of interviews were conducted by a trained graduate student. In all cases, both partners of each sampled couple were interviewed by the same interviewer. Although both interviewers are white women, and thus could not be matched with all respondents on gender or race, the transcripts reveal that they established strong rapport with the subjects, eliciting deep and rich information. Income, education, division of labor within the home, sexual frequency and satisfaction, and commitment were asked explicitly; while contribution and receipt of emotion work was ascertained from a series of questions including: What do you do for you partner? What does your partner do for you? What do you like and dislike about your partner? Do you believe you will be with this partner a year from now? How committed are you to this relationship? Conducting separate interviews for each member of the cohabiting pair allowed direct comparison between how men and women conceptualize their relationships, as well as some verification of the factual content of the interviews.

The qualitative interview technique employed in this study was chosen as the research strategy best suited to uncover the layered and complex beliefs and interpretations individuals hold

regarding their relationships. Qualitative work can uncover the unstated assumptions partners rely upon to understand relationship functioning, aspects of relational functioning that couples do not entirely understand or find difficult to articulate (stuttering and repetition of filler phrases is not captured in a survey), and the stories couples tell themselves about the meanings of their roles (see Maher & Singleton, 2003). For instance, quantitative methodology may tell us that a woman earns more money than her partner, but it would not tell us how she feels about this disparity – for instance, that she nonetheless feels her partner works harder than she does, as one female breadwinner in our sample did, because of the physical nature of his work.

Prior to analysis, each subject was assigned a pseudonym to protect their identity. Couples were assigned pseudonyms beginning with the same letter of the alphabet. To analyze the data, we studied all interviews in their entirety. We focused particularly on those portions of the interview that discussed employment, earnings and income, and the emotional and sexual lives of the couple. Our chief analytic task involved analyzing and comparing how respondents in FBC and MBC pairs characterized emotion work and sexual satisfaction and desire, searching for patterns that arose within these groups in words, frames and interpretations. While the non-random nature of our subject recruitment does not allow for “generalizability” of results, it does allow for theoretical exploration, or how female out-earning might affect the emotional and sexual content of relationships. The gendered emotional and sexual processes-the dynamics and constraints-faced by our cohabitators are not likely to be unique to this convenience sample, and as such we might expect similar results from a sample randomly drawn (Weiss, 1995).

FINDINGS

In the discussion below, each section will first analyze findings and quotations from FBC couples and then move to compare and discuss findings gleaned from MBC couples. We first summarize our findings on emotion work and then illustrate the findings with selected quotations. We then summarize findings regarding sexual satisfaction and desire, and illustrate these findings. We conclude with a summary of the primary findings, and strengths and limitations of the current research.

Emotion Work

In our analyses, we examined how men and women in the same couple described the distribution of emotion work within their partnership. We noted which couples were marked by dominant female or male emotion work, as well as whether couples agreed upon who did more emotion work. We used four categories to classify the couples – Emotional Equals, Female Giver, Male Giver, or Indeterminate – depending upon the reported level of giving and receiving of emotional support. That is, if both partners agreed that emotion work was shared more or less equally, or that the female or male partner clearly did more emotion work, then the couple was classified as (respectively) Emotional Equals, Female Giver, or Male Giver. When the partners did not agree on this point, the couple was classified as Indeterminate.

Notably, 11 of the 13 MBCs perceived themselves as Emotional Equals, while none of the FBCs did. Among the 7 FBCs, 4 saw themselves as Female Giver couples, 1 as Male Giver, and 2 were Indeterminate, with the male in one case reporting he did more, while his partner thought it was equal, while the reverse held in the other case. FBCs were marked by greater emotional

inegalitarianism, with both partners in over half of these couples reporting that the woman contributed more emotionally.

The analysis below first addresses FBC couples in which both partners agree that the woman does more emotion work than does her male partner. The section following addresses FBC couples that disagreed about who carried the burden of the emotion work, with the man expressing that the woman did not do enough, and his partner expressing that emotion work was equally shared. The next section discusses a pattern that emerged among women in FBC couples, that of framing their own emotional contribution deferentially. Finally, these findings are contrasted with those of MBC couples in which the dominant theme was of emotional equality perceived and expressed by both members of the couple.

“She Does Anything I Need...”

White 25-year-old Mandy is a college student working part-time as a nursing assistant at a local care facility. Her partner, 25-year-old white Michael is a graduate of a technical high school, only sporadically and informally employed. Despite the advantages Mandy’s greater earning and education profile would seem to bestow, she describes herself as “not a very woman’s libber.” While she understands the economic necessity of a two-income family in the current economic climate, she speaks nostalgically of 1950’s America “I’d love to be back in the fifties and have my husband come home and have dinner on the table.” In contrast Michael believes that he could not be involved in a relationship with a woman who wasn’t serious about her career; he believes that men and women should split things “fifty-fifty.” Both Michael and Mandy’s descriptions of how a relationship “should” function are at odds with their current situation.

Michael was laid off from a lucrative blue-collar position due to a positive drug test at work; both he and Mandy describe themselves as recovering addicts. Mandy has also struggled with mental illness in the past. She was hospitalized and diagnosed about a year prior to the interview, right before the couple moved in together. In the interview Michael mentions her mental illness as a factor in his declining sexual interest. Because of the conjuncture of events that occurred simultaneously to change the relationship (her hospitalization, their moving-in together and then later their sobriety and his job loss), it is not possible to single out the one causal actor, though her mental illness is likely to play a significant role. Since the initial hospitalization, Mandy has remained stable. Michael works only occasionally for his father's construction business, though he hopes that he may eventually be able to take over the business. Until then, Mandy is the primary breadwinner.

Both partners feel the partnership has deteriorated over time, both sexually and emotionally, and both agree that it is Michael's behavior that has changed. Michael comments on how the emotional content of the relationship has changed over time: "Well I think I would say slightly in an emotional way I've treated her . . . it's changed to, I wouldn't say the worst, but I've changed for the different away from her." Though this answer suggests that Michael's affection or expression of closeness has not diminished, but simply changed, when asked what he does emotionally for his partner he states, "I don't do as much as I should for her. . . I, I don't know. I don't really know what I do. She says I do nothing." Michael then cannot name *anything* he does for the benefit of his partner, and admits that she accuses him of doing nothing. In contrast, when asked what Mandy does for him, Michael responds, "anything I need. She does more stuff that I don't ask than what I ask, I think." Mandy then anticipates his needs-something that requires constant monitoring and emotional energy to sustain.

Mandy concurs with Michael's description of their partnership. Of her own emotion work she says, "I try very hard to build him up. You know? To, umm, compliment him and make him feel like, you know, he's, you know, smart and, you know. And he is smart." Mandy also provides Michael with a lot of affection and physical closeness, frequently hugging and kissing him. She describes herself as "touchy-feely" with an "inborn need to care for other people." While he attempts to reciprocate, it is not to the extent, or in the way, that she would prefer.

Umm, for me, he, he has an interesting way of, like, dealing with me. When things are bad with me, he'll try to make me feel better and try to make me laugh and that kind of stuff. But he's just not, he's not as forthcoming with affection as I would like. Umm, but he says that's just him and that's just the way he is. It's a lot different from when we were dating. You know, however long ago, it just seemed different.

It is not accurate to say that Michael does nothing for Mandy emotionally, as he claims; she does rely upon him, particularly to distract her from cravings for drugs or alcohol or the boredom which can bring these cravings on. However, the extent to which he gives her the affection and closeness she needs has diminished over time. Mandy reports,

And, umm, it's just hard because it's just like I . . . I need that affection. I need that emotional bond. And it's hard when I don't get that. And it's just like we're moving about in the same house but there's not that intimacy.

Notably, while he claims “that just the way [I am],” she remember a time in the past when things were different.

She elaborates upon this unfulfilled need in answer to the question: do you think men and women think differently about relationships? She answers:

Absolutely. Absolutely... Umm, women want more of an emotional bond. Umm, they want, umm, well at least in my case, more reassurance. You know? Umm, that they’re loved and that they’re needed. Umm, and men, I think, you know, like to have somebody to take care of them and like to have somebody, you know, kind of hover over them, you know, at the times that they want it. They’re kinda like cats. You know? When they want it, it’s cool. When they don’t, it’s kinda that they’re the master of their domain... Whereas girls like need and want.

Though Mandy has talked explicitly about the needs she fulfills for Michael through her own emotional effort, she nonetheless doesn’t see him as emotionally “needy” as she believes herself to be. She is not emotionally satisfied by Michael, and for this she blames her own demanding female nature. Yet this FBC was at one time marked by a shared-and equally given-emotional and sexual intensity that they both acknowledge has declined over time.

The notion that the lower-earner would contribute less emotionally to the relationship runs counter to the bargain-exchange model previously discussed; here we see the higher earner (female) performing more of the care work while the lower-earner (male) performs less. Both couples acknowledge that the woman does more emotion work in the relationship, and both seem aware that she wants more intimacy than he feels he can provide.

“I Need More of Her. . .”

In two cases, the FBC partners disagreed about the distribution of care-giving and emotional support in the relationship. Twenty-one year old African American Calvin is currently unemployed, though he occasionally picks up temporary jobs. He has a GED, and no clear plan for returning to school or finding another job. His partner, African American 25-year old Chelsea is a junior in college, works as a part time cashier and receives public assistance in both cash and housing. She has two young children from a prior relationship. From a bargain-exchange perspective, Chelsea would seem to be better situated than Calvin to have her emotional and sexual needs met. Yet it is Calvin who feels that something is missing from the relationship:

I wish she was there to support me more emotionally—like, some ideas I be having an[d] things I be wanting to go do, she don’t really show true support. She just be, like, okay that’s good, and ignore me or something like that. . . I need more of her.

He sees Chelsea’s lack of interest in his ideas and actions – two domains related to his potential to provide – as an emotional failure on her part. When the interviewer asks him to elaborate on what’s missing from the relationship he responds only with great difficulty: “What I need for her to put her all into it? Like, like, like I ain’t gonna say. . . I don’t know. I don’t know, man. I really don’t know.” Though eventually he is able to name attention, support for what he does and patience as three qualities he finds lacking, it is only after a long period of back-and-forth between he and the interviewer that he is able to put these feelings to voice.

Yet, he also describes her as very caring and expressive of her feelings for him,

I think it's [the relationship] kinda good for the simple fact that she's a good female. She, she does stuff. She really does stuff to please me. You know what I'm saying? It's, like, she wouldn't mind doing stuff to please me. She don't always go out of her way, but she will go out of her way to please me. You don't find that in too many females these days.

He also calls Chelsea "wife material" explaining that he sees this potential in their partnership,

Because she makes me happy in all types of ways. She keeps me smiling. Even on my bad days she still, you know, show me the gooder part of Monday. It's, like, she's my better half basically.

This characterization of the partnership is at odds with his earlier description. Also at odds is his statement that he does not expect to marry Chelsea, and is not even certain they will be together in one year. Calvin's inconsistent characterization of Chelsea's emotional contribution was present throughout the interview.

His characterization is also inconsistent with how Chelsea perceives the emotional quality of the relationship. She perceives the emotion work in the partnership as equally shared. She does her best to be as emotionally giving and supportive of him as he is for her, stating "I try to do the same things back." She cooks his favorite foods for him and always keeps an eye out for things he might like when she's shopping at the grocery store. Chelsea explains that she shows her caring and commitment to the relationship by cooking and cleaning for him, "what a woman's supposed to do." Chelsea believes that she gives plentifully to the relationship and at times he

seems to agree with her. In contrast to the mismatch in how Chelsea and Calvin understand the emotion work she contributes, both agree that he provides her with the emotional support she needs.

Chelsea perceives his caring to be expressed in large part through his willingness to “take her on” with her two children. His willingness to be a family and fill the father role for her children was a big part of what he did for her emotionally, as she considered her children to be an extension of herself. In addition, Chelsea feels that he is deeply comforting for her, a calm person who balances her own tendency towards anxiety.

I mean, he’s...well, as far as emotional, he can be very comforting. You know, he’s, he’s more of the type of person that says, okay you know, calm down; you know, breathe. . . He’s more calm when he comes down in situations that I might just totally freak out in—you know, cry and everything from. And he’s the type of person that’s like, calm down; it’s gonna be okay. You know? So I think emotionally he’s a good person.

He agrees, explaining how he provides her with support,

I don’t know. I just be there. I mean, like, anything, like, if I see that she having a hard time with something, I ask if she need my help—what can I do, you know, to make it go a little bit faster or easier. Umm, just about everything I can do. Whenever I see her struggling with anything, I’m there to help.

Chelsea does not seem aware of his reservations about the relationship, nor of his concern that she doesn't do enough for him. When she discusses problems in the relationship, she speaks primarily of minor arguments or everyday challenges. For her, there is no reason to think they won't get married in the future; they are already a family.

Such divergent views on the adequacy of female-to-male emotional care giving suggest a gap in expectations. He is troubled by emotional aspects of the relationship, but has difficulty expressing exactly what his concerns are. She, attending college, working part time and raising two young children, feels that her needs are being met and the relationship is going well. Despite all that she contributes financially, it is her unemployed male partner who is emotionally dissatisfied.

An alternative explanation could be related to the presence of her two biological children in the household. Children play an important role in the processes and commitment levels of relationships, and excluding children from the analysis could bias the findings. We did not find this to be the case. At one point during the interview Chelsea states, "he accepted the fact too that I have two kids, but he could still love me and love them. Basically he accepted me and my package." In other words she doesn't find her own kids create problems in their relationship. In fact, part of what drew her to Calvin was how much he cared for her children. Calvin did express some ambivalence about the children, explaining that they could be one reason he feels Chelsea cannot provide him with the attention he would like. At the same time he states, "It's like I've grown attached to them as much as I've grown attached to her." While he found that assuming a paternal role took some getting used to, he does not find that the children cause the problems in their relationship. It is *her* characteristics and failings that he cites as issues, not stresses related to the children. While this could reflect simple time constraints-she is unable to

care for him as a childless woman would given the care she gives to her children-we did not find the presence of children to be correlated with relationship dissatisfaction among MBCs in our sample. Alternatively, Calvin's emotional doubts could be related to the fact that the children were not biologically his; among our sample this was true of only one other couple with children. Yet in the MBC couple in this situation, both expressed high commitment, equal emotional giving and an improvement in sex over time. Among the five couples who had children together, only the FBC presented less emotional satisfaction by the male partner.

“I Think He Works Harder”

Men and women in FBCs described the inequality in emotional care giving in one of two ways: the woman did more or the woman didn't do enough. In either case, they tended to see the burden of emotion work as falling upon the woman. More than their lesser earning counterparts, women out-earners tend to discount the emotional (as well as economic) contributions they made, highlighting their deficiencies and constructing themselves as dependent upon their lower-earning partners by failing to mention or denying their earnings advantage, or by asserting their dependence in other areas such as their need for protection and for “masculine” household help. These findings are in line with Hochschild's notion of emotion work as deference (1983), but also diverge from them, suggesting that it is not earnings disadvantage but simply the concept of gender itself that is at the heart of power inequality. Out-earning women seem to pursue compensatory strategies to counter their nontraditional breadwinning position, struggling to make their relationships and their positioning in them personally and socially acceptable. Emma, a 28 year -old white woman with significantly more education and income than her partner, Eric, downplays this earnings advantage “This week I happen to have more money than

he does, and three other weeks out of the month he'll have more money than I do and pay for dinner or whatever." Later in the interview she adds, "I mean, I think, I think he works harder. . . He's accepting of my oodles of debt." She claims that Eric often has more money than she does (difficult to imagine given the \$15,000 advantage of her \$42,000 salary over his). She constructs herself as burdensome and focuses on Eric's willingness to "take her on" in spite of her educational debt, never mentioning the connection between this debt and her more lucrative career. Instead, she focuses on the relative physical difficulty of their jobs, claiming his blue collar job is more demanding than her white-collar position. This is consistent with Hochschild's (1989) descriptions of the gendered frames men and women construct to force their economic realities into alignment with their ideological ones, for instance, when the woman earns more but the couple desires a traditionally gendered arrangement. Describing the relationship in this way allows Emma to be grateful, even indebted, to her partner.

Similarly female-out earner Natalie and her interviewer hold this telling exchange: The interviewer asks, "What do you think would change and stay the same if you guys get married?" Natalie responds, "Well I can't get any lazier {LAUGH}." To which the interviewer comments, "Working twelve hour days, well I wouldn't really call that lazy." When Natalie assesses her contributions to the relationship, she entirely ignores the work she does outside of the home. It is as though she judges her relationship contribution only in terms of what she contributes to the traditional female role, and in these terms, she considers herself lazy.

Another female out-earner, 20-year-old white Sarah, downplays the emotional support she provides her partner, Sheridan, and frames the relationship as one of dependency

I: What about emotionally, what do the two of you do for each other? R: Umm, I don't really know what I do for him, but I would say for me he kinda makes me feel protected. Like, that's the whole thing I get from him, like living with him. It's, like, I'm not worried at night...like, for, you know, people breaking in or anything like that.

Throughout the interview, Sarah focuses on the provider role played by her male partner, Sheridan, and minimizes her own economic and emotional contribution. This aligns with Tichenor (2005), who finds that higher earning women strive to hide their income advantage and maintain traditional structures of male privilege and dominance. Using this language of dependence and minimizing the emotional and economic contribution made by women within the relationship, though not absent, was much less common among women in our MBCs.

“Love, Respect, Caring and Support”

In contrast, respondents in MBCs were more likely to describe the love and support they offered in the partnership. Twenty-four year old African-American Drew works at a warehouse making \$8.50 an hour. His partner Desiree is currently a stay-at-home mom, though she plans to start working at a local hospital soon. Drew comments,

Love, respect, caring and support. . . I believe that's the same things she wants . . . so we do things for each other. She tell me all the time that the only thing she wants is my love and my respect, and I tell her the same thing. That's all we need.

Twenty-four year old African-American Desiree describes the relationship similarly, as a partnership, though she characterizes emotion work somewhat differently, as expressed through the division of housework and caring for one another during illness. She concurs with Drew's characterization of their relationship as one of equal emotional sharing and caretaking. Previous research has found that women (but not men) view male housework as an expression of care and commitment (Hochschild 1989).

We do everything for each other. He'll clean my clothes; I clean his. He might iron mine; I might iron his. Ahh, if he needs something picked up or something, I might be here to help him pick it up. Ahh, he sick, I help him back to health. If I'm sick, he help me back to health. It's both ways.

Women in MBCs tended to construct themselves as more independent and more egalitarian in sharing home life responsibilities with their partners. These women more readily discuss and seem less apologetic for their roles vis-à-vis their male partners in terms of taking charge of money management, sharing equally in decision making and household tasks, and needing as well as giving emotional support.

African-American stay-at-home 26 year-old Asia explains that she and her boyfriend balance and share responsibilities of all kinds in their partnership,

We help each other out. Certain things that he lacks in, I have that strong quality. Certain things that I lack in, he knows how to do. So therefore, we kind of...when I say we click, we click.

It would be inaccurate to say that decision making, housework, and care giving were always equally shared among our MBCs; however women in these couples seem more willing to acknowledge the work they do contribute, as well as the struggles that remain at issue.

Asia admits that Andre does not contribute all that she would like emotionally; this is an aspect of the relationship they are working to improve upon.

So, there's certain, like there are certain things that he does do for me, but just as far as being nice...like he has a problem with, I'm sorry, thank you and things like that. But, like within the last probably four months, we've been dealing with that. Because we had a problem with that, and we sat and talked about it. And he's gotten much better at it, to the point where now he'll say, thank you, for some of the things I do. Or, if I do things for him, he used to be to the point where he was so cold he would say, well did I ask you to do it? And I would just sit there and look at him like, are you serious?

Asia does not apologize for having emotional needs, nor does she believe it to be something that is inherent to male and female gender roles. Rather, she identifies emotional support as an area in their relationship that she is not satisfied with, and is actively working with her partner to address. Though Asia's feelings are reminiscent of FBC partner Mandy's (that her partner doesn't appreciate her enough or show his feelings emotionally) how she talks about the feelings, and how the problem is approached with her partner, seem quite different. Among FBC couples, the emotional inequalities in the relationships are interpreted to be women's "fault" (by both men

and women) either she is too emotionally needy or not giving enough emotionally, whereas here, Andre's problems are his own.

Also in contrast to FBC's, men in MBC's seemed more emotionally satisfied than did men in FBCs. Here Andre explains why he is satisfied with his relationship. " 'Cause it's a good deal. I think I met a good person. She helped me change my life around. . . I get happiness out of it. We're there for each other." The benefit that Andre feels from being in the relationship is evident. When Andre is asked what he would like from the relationship that he is not currently receiving, he responds: "Ummm, I don't think I can say anything." He feels cared for by Asia, and he wants to care for her in any way that he can, "I try to give her the world, if I could." Emotionally, MBCs are marked by greater give-and-take, with both men and women readily discussing the emotional support they provide to and receive from their partners. MBC partners tended to praise each other's emotional stability and reliability, noting that they could count on their partners to listen and act as a source of comfort. This feeling of mutual support seemed to reinforce both partners' happiness in the relationship and commitment to it.

Sexual Satisfaction and Desire

In the discussion of sexual satisfaction and desire, we first address how we classified the distribution of sexual desire and satisfaction within couples. We then illustrate these findings first with FBC, and then with MBC couples.

We classified couples' characterization of their sexual relationships as follows: couples could feel that sex was equally important to both of them (or equally unimportant) 'Equals'; one or both members of the pair could feel that sex was more important to one member of the couple than the other 'MaleDrive' and 'FemaleDrive, respectively. Or one member of the couple could

express disinterest in sex, characterized as ‘MaleDisinterest’ and ‘Female Disinterest.’ Of MBCs, nine couples felt they were equally interested in and satisfied with sex, while four couples jointly agreed that the man was more interested in sex. Among FBCs, only two reported equal interest in sex, while three were characterized by FemaleDrive and two by MaleDisinterest. Three FBCs disagreed about who was more interested in sex; couples in these cases were included in both categories in order to display the full range of responses. In one case, the woman reported the two to be equally interested, while the male partner stated that she was more interested, in two others, respondents expressed views characteristic of FemaleDrive and MaleDisinterest. As a whole, FBCs were less likely to report equal desire, disagreed more often about who was more desirous, and men seemed less desirous (and/or woman more) than MBCs.

The story is nearly identical for sexual satisfaction. Among MBC couples, all couples reported satisfaction with their sexual lives. This did not mean that couples were having sex as frequently, or infrequently, as they desired. In many cases one partner (most often the man) wanted more sex than the other. Despite this, these couples reported that when they did have sexual relations, they found them to be satisfying. In contrast, among FBC couples, four couples said that they were satisfied with sex, while three reported that they were not sexually satisfied. Two men in FBCs expressed a decline in their sexual desire over time, and their female partners expressed dissatisfaction with the infrequency of sex and men’s lack of desire.

“I’m Just Not As Attracted to Her as I Used to Be. . .”

Michael, the male member of an FBC explains how his sexual desire has declined over time,

I, I, my attraction toward her is less because she's not the same person she used to be.

Therefore, I think that's because I do less. Like I don't rub her back. It's something that most of the times that she would like. I don't you know, have sex with her as much, you know, as she would like, because I'm just not as attracted to her as I used to be.

In the course of the interview Michael attributes his decline in attraction to Mandy as stemming from an episode of mental illness she had experienced. He suggests that, even in her recovery, he no longer thinks of her in the same way he had in the past. Higher-earning Mandy still longs for the relationship they once had,

It was just so different from now. You know? How he pursued me and how, you know, he just wanted me. You know? It's so different. And I, I mean, I still feel that way about him. You know? I still want him very much, and you know, I just adore him. You know? But I just wish, I just wish it was that way for him now.

This pattern presented again in an FBC couple in which gender roles were, admittedly by both partners, reversed. Thirty-one year old white Nate had recently lost a telemarketing job earning about \$400 per week. His past employment had been physical labor, though he had been forced to leave this field after undergoing back surgery. Prior to the surgery he made between \$6-800/week. Natalie, in contrast, managed a local store making roughly \$30,000 a year, and talked about the strong possibility of being promoted to the position of regional manager. Nate talked at length about his dissatisfaction with the sexual and emotional components of the relationship.

We're not a couple. I don't look at us as a couple. We've been here a long time. She does too many things that drive me nuts. I've caught her cheating on me more than once [on-line 'sex']. I've, way back in the day like I said, I was doing what I was doing [cheating]. But now that we're together all this time, and since I'm not attracted to her and I'm not in love with her, she's doing what I expect her to do. Because I'm not giving her what she needs.

He explains her cheating as resultant from his failure to fulfill her sexual needs; he in fact "expects her" to cheat on him. Yet at the same time he expresses strong dissatisfaction with the partnership. When asked what was keeping him from marrying Natalie, he responds,

Like I said, I want to be married. But I don't feel like I'm in love. There's no physical attraction. There's no closeness. I want to be working. I want to have a steady job and income.

It is telling that Nate transitions seamlessly between a description of his dampened desire and his wish to be employed. He goes on to state that having a well-paying job would help him to feel better about himself, "cause you know we do live off of her money." And yet, in spite of his professed unhappiness, when asked if he would consider having another child with his current partner Natalie he states, "Lottery, hit the lottery. And then I'd be more than happy." It then seems that Nate is less dissatisfied with his relationship than he is with his economic dependency.

Women were unsure of why the intimacy and frequency of sex had declined. When asked by the interviewer why they believed this had occurred, they explored a number of different

possibilities: the challenge of pleasing her, a loss in her partner's attraction to her, or a drop in his libido due to stress and anxiety. Mandy illustrates this here,

If I could have it every day, I would {LAUGH}. Every day. Umm, but you know, for him I don't know. He, he, a lot of things weigh on his mind that kinda take it, his libido, away.

While women searched for possible explanations, disinterested men explain diminished sexual intimacy primarily as due to the loss of attraction they felt for their partner.

Contrary to our expectations, we found female out earners expressing greater interest in sex, relative to their male partners than was the case in MBCs. However, we suspect that this increase in desire emanates more from a decrease in the absolute number of times the couples have sex, based upon the man's declining interest, rather than the woman's increased empowerment to express desire or sexual fulfillment. The despondency with which our female sample expressed their "increased" sexual desire supports this interpretation. Both couples in which women reported being more interested in sex than their partners had sex only once or twice monthly. While half of FBCs were marked by the aforementioned pattern, half were marked by either men's sexual drive or equal interest in sex. Interestingly, of the two FBCs that expressed equal satisfaction with sex, both were marked by strong patterns of disproportionate emotion work, housework, and gendered framing of dependency by the women. Emma, one-half of an equally sexually satisfied FBC characterizes her emotional relationship this way: "He lets me have my mood swings and have my friends time, and he lets me be a spoiled brat but also knows that I'm gonna take care of him too." Not only does highly educated, higher earning Emma speak about herself as though she is a moody adolescent or a child, she describes her partner as *letting her*

behave this way, explicitly granting him greater power in the relationship. Even in the seemingly empowering acts Emma describes here: spending time with friends, acting selfishly, she uses belittling language to minimize this empowerment. After granting herself these half-hearted freedoms, she acknowledges that she continues to do the emotional work and caretaking in the relationship, seemingly as a means of justifying her freedom in the other domains.

There's So Much More Emotion and Love. . .”

Our MBC's were more likely to be equally satisfied with sex. These couples described sex as becoming more intimate over time, and as an important means of expressing love for one another. Sex was not always a big part of these couples' relationships, in four cases both members of the couple felt that sex was not important. Nonetheless, when they did have sex, it was described as enhancing closeness.

Twenty-four-year-old white breadwinning John discusses why he finds sex more satisfying now than he did at an earlier point in the relationship,

Umm, possibly the longer wait in between, I guess. And also because I, I just have a lot more emotional, more, I guess it's more of an emotional connection to her while having sex now.

Although sex has decreased in frequency, it is a part of the relationship that has improved over time as the relationship grew stronger and closer. Sex is both an expression of this closeness and a means of furthering the connection. John's partner 19 year-old, white Julia agrees: “I guess looking back on it, it was less than what it is now. Because now there's so much more emotion and love—more passion, I guess you could say, put into it.”

While the majority of MBC's were marked by an equivalent satisfaction with sex, three couples did feel that sex was more important to the man than it was to the woman. Given cultural stereotypes regarding male sexuality, this is hardly surprising. Yet the skew towards MaleDrive among MBC's makes the findings for women out-earners even more noteworthy.

We did not expect that the majority of MBC couples would express equality in sexual interest and satisfaction. Women in these couples recognized their sexual desires as equivalent in strength and importance to those of their male partners. Contrary to the predictions of the bargain-exchange model, we did not find women in MBC couples to be dissatisfied with sex in the partnership or feel that their needs were neglected. This was true, though to a lesser extent, among FBC couples. In both MBCs and FBCs, women most frequently reported sexual interest and satisfaction as at least equivalent to that of their partners. Women were often forthright about their sexual desire, and willing to express whether sex within their relationships was satisfying (or was not).

Our interviews suggest that women's expression of sexuality is relatively independent of earnings. Men's desire, however, appears to be more linked to earnings. This is supported by other research which suggests that masculinity may be threatened by a loss of earnings (unemployment, for instance) in a way that femininity is not (Teachman, Polonko, & Scanzoni, 1987; Willott & Griffin, 1996). These findings are contrary to the expectations we had at the onset for how sexual desire and satisfaction would be characterized among FBC couples. If the pattern evident in emotion work was found for sexual functioning, we would expect to see women and men emphasizing either women's lack of desire, or men's greater desire and satisfaction. That is, we expected that FBCs would demonstrate traditional values about male and female sexuality, "doing gender" in sexual behaviors or characterizations. We expected men to

be more vocal and insistent regarding sex and women to be more passive and dismissive of their own sexual desires. We did not find this to be the case.

CONCLUSIONS

As the traditional gendered division of labor continues to transform, and women's relative earnings rise, our results suggest the importance of looking to the emotio-sexual sphere to capture how traditional gendered arrangements continue to be produced interpersonally. Women in FBC relationships seem to contribute more emotion work to their partnerships, and more frequently discount their own contributions—be that emotionally, in terms of earnings, or otherwise. Interviews with women in FBCs seem to be laced with apologies, as they catalogue what they cannot do or are not doing well enough. Some men in FBCs agree that women contribute more emotionally, and some men feel that women do not do enough. In both cases, women in FBCs are seen to be more responsible for emotional caretaking and support than are their male partners. Contrarily, both women and men in MBCs seem less distraught and emotional giving seems more equally distributed in these partnerships. Women in MBCs are also less likely to discount their relational contributions and more willing to discuss challenges as originating not just from their own actions but those of their male partner as well. Men in MBCs are also less likely to point to women's failures as the source of relational problems. In line with our expectations, women appear to “do gender” emotionally in FBCs. Sexually this pattern is less consistent, however. Women in all relationships in our sample expressed sexual desire, regardless of breadwinning status. Men in MBCs more frequently reported sexual desire greater than that of their female partner; this was less true among men in FBC couples. In some cases men in FBC couples expressed less sexual desire than that of their

partner. Thus while women's sexual desire seems relatively unaffected by earnings, there is some evidence that men's may be responsive to relative earnings. In terms of sexual satisfaction, men and women in MBC couples uniformly reported equal satisfaction with sex. Among our FBCs, 3 of 7 men and 2 of 7 women reported that they were not satisfied with sex in their partnerships. Contrary to our expectations, women and men did not seem to "do gender" sexually.

Though these findings were not true of every FBC couple, the general pattern points towards a division based on the gender of the primary breadwinner. Race differences were not evident in our findings, suggesting that female breadwinning may affect the emotional and sexual functioning of relationships across racial categories, though future research should verify this with a larger sample. Importantly, we found no "negative cases" – that is, cases in which partners in FBCs did not rely upon at least one gender compensating strategy (emotional "over" work, or framing deference) to neutralize the apparent emotional or relational discomfort associated with female breadwinning. We suggest that this reliance upon gendered compensating strategies in FBC's helps to reaffirm traditional gender arrangements in relationships that challenge those concepts.

These findings are in partial contradiction to the bargain exchange model posited by Hochschild (1983) and others. Here we find the contrary: that women in FBCs actually contribute more emotionally to their partnerships and that women and men believe that the women should give more. Apologetic, deferent female higher-earners certainly do not appear to be gaining power to assert their needs nor have these needs met by their partners. Men also do not appear to be thinking of their partners along these lines, rather seeming more critical of the emotion work women put in to the partnership, and to some extent, less sexually attracted. Theoretical models

such as “doing gender” informed by models linking macro and micro level processes, such as Connell’s concept of gender production (1987), may be more appropriate to understand how men and women negotiate emotion work and sexual desire with partnerships.

This research has both strengths and limitations worthy of note. The research is strengthened by the unique sample on which it relies. Our data contributes to documentation of the experiences of cohabitators, a relatively understudied family form that is nonetheless increasingly common among modern American families. The rich and extensive data draws from interviews with cohabiting, near-poor or working class, ethnically diverse young adults. Importantly we have interview data with both members of the cohabiting pair. Our couple data help to reveal the mismatch in relationship characterization that helped us to draw our conclusions.

In addition to data strengths, this study contributes to the literature by moving away from a focus on housework to explore the possibility that couples “do gender” emotionally and sexually within partnerships. Emotions and sexuality are concepts that, while not easy to measure or isolate, are fundamental and vital aspects of romantic relationships. Our work ultimately suggests that cohabiting pairs are gendered in ways similar to those of marital pairs, at least when the woman earns more.

There are also clear limitations. One is the small size of our sample. While we have forty interviews over all, only seven of the couples could be characterized as FBCs, with 13 characterized as MBC’s. We cannot draw conclusive inferences from a sample of seven, but we reiterate that our findings are meant to be suggestive and anticipatory of further research.

Further, while we did not find racial differences, in our study the sample was too small to draw any conclusions about the significance of race. Given the historic differences in employment

patterns between Black, white and Latino women, it seems plausible that female breadwinning may differentially affect relationships between members of these groups.

The unemployment status of several of our sample members is a potential methodological problem with our analysis. Our sample was not drawn explicitly to support this line of inquiry and thus includes several unemployed men and women. A substantial body of work suggests that, particularly for husbands, unemployment leads to a decline in marital quality (Conger et al., 1990; Liker & Elder Jr, 1983; Teachman et al., 1987; Willott & Griffin, 1996). Thus the loss of sexual interest and emotional support for female partners that we found could result from men's unemployment status, and not female out-earning per se. While we cannot wholly discount this possibility, we believe our results remain useful and valid for two reasons: for one, extant research linking unemployment to declining marital quality assumes that men would be more negatively affected by unemployment but does not explain the mechanisms by which we should expect this theoretically. Crucial to our analysis is the notion that it is men's earnings capacity *relative to his female partner* which leads to disrupted masculine identity and subsequent loss of emotional and sexual satisfaction. This explains why we found these patterns of declining sexual interest and emotional support by unemployed men *only when the woman was employed*. In the two couples in which neither partner was employed, the sexual and emotional functioning of the partnership was much more positive and the relationship functioned similarly to MBC's.

Finally, another limitation is the lack of longitudinal data. Though interviews with partners in FBCs suggest that the emotional and sexual content of their relationships differed in the past, when the man was the primary breadwinner, past satisfaction was not discussed in all interviews. As such, it is not possible to determine whether our results are more consistent with a selection versus a causation story. It may be that our FBCs were marked by emotional and sexual

disequilibrium throughout the partnership, and that our findings are thus independent of the primary breadwinner's gender. As such, we cannot speculate about whether the emotio-sexual disequilibrium we report is indicative of future relationship failure, or simply growing pains accompanying adjustment to new cultural patterns.

We hope this paper encourages future studies of the emotional and sexual aspects of gender as it is lived within relationships. In this, we concur with theorists who argue that academic inattention to emotionality in the family has presented an inadequate picture of the gendering of family life (Duncombe & Marsden, 1993; Erickson, 2005; Hochschild, 1983). Further exploration into the emotio-sexual sphere may deepen our understanding of the persistence of inequality in contemporary heterosexual relationships, and could even reveal small ripples of cultural change as families turn toward gender equality.

Works Cited

- Atkinson, MP and J Boles 1984. "WASP: Wives as Senior Partners." *Journal of Marriage and the Family*. Vol. 46, No. 4, 861-870.
- Becker, G. S. (1974). A theory of social interactions. *Journal of Political Economy*, 82(6), 1063.
- Bittman, M., England, P., Sayer, L., Folbre, N., & Matheson, G. (2003). When Does Gender Trump Money? Bargaining and Time in Household Work 1. *American Journal of Sociology*, 109(1), 186-214.
- Blau, F. D. (1998). Trends in the well-being of American women, 1970-1995. *Journal of Economic Literature*, 112-165.
- Blumstein, P., P. Schwartz. 1983. American couples. New York: Morrow.
- Brines, J. (1994). Economic dependency, gender, and the division of labor at home. *American Journal of Sociology*, 652-688.
- Brines, J., & Joyner, K. (1999). The ties that bind: Principles of cohesion in cohabitation and marriage. *American Sociological Review*, 333-355.
- Casper, L. M., & Bianchi, S. M. (2002). *Continuity & change in the American family*: Sage Publications Inc.
- Coltrane, S. (2000). Research on household labor: Modeling and measuring the social embeddedness of routine family work. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 1208-1233.

- Conger, R. D., Elder Jr, G. H., Lorenz, F. O., Conger, K. J., Simons, R. L., Whitbeck, L. B., et al. (1990). Linking economic hardship to marital quality and instability. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 643-656.
- Connell, R. W. (1987). *Gender and power: Society, the person, and sexual politics*: Stanford University Press.
- Davis, (2007). Effects of Union Type on Division of Household Labor. *Journal of Family Issues*, 28(9) 1246-1272.
- DeVault, M. L. (1991). *Feeding the family*: University of Chicago Press.
- Duncombe, J., & Marsden, D. (1993). Love and Intimacy: The Gender Division of Emotion and Emotion Work': A Neglected Aspect of Sociological Discussion of Heterosexual Relationships. *Sociology*, 27(2), 221.
- Erickson, R. J. (1993). Reconceptualizing family work: The effect of emotion work on perceptions of marital quality. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 888-900.
- Erickson, R. J. (2005). Why emotion work matters: Sex, gender, and the division of household labor. *Journal of marriage and family*, 67(2), 337-351.
- Fields, J. (2003). America's families and living arrangements: 2003 (Current Population Reports, P20-553). *Washington, DC: US Census Bureau*.
- Giddens, A. (1992). *The transformation of intimacy: Sexuality, love, and eroticism in modern societies*: Stanford University Press.
- Goldstein, J. R., & Kenney, C. T. (2001). Marriage delayed or marriage forgone? New cohort forecasts of first marriage for US women. *American Sociological Review*, 506-519.
- Greenstein, T. 2000. "Economic Dependence, Gender, and the Division of Labor in the Home: A Replication and Extension." *Journal of Marriage and Family*. 62 (May) 322-335.
- Gupta, S. 1999. "The Effects of Transitions in Marital Status Transitions on Men's Performance of Housework." *Journal of Marriage and Family*. 61, 700-711.
- Gupta, S. 2007. "Autonomy, Dependence or Display? The Relationship Between Married Women's Earnings and Housework." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 69 (2), 399-417.
- Hochschild, A. R. (1979). Emotion work, feeling rules, and social structure. *American Journal of Sociology*, 85(3), 551.
- Hochschild, A. R. (1983). *The managed heart*. Berkeley: CA: University of California Press.
- Hochschild, A. R., & Machung, A. (1989). *The second shift: Working parents and the revolution at home*: Viking New York.
- Kennedy, S., & Bumpass, L. (2008). Cohabitation and children's living arrangements: New estimates from the United States. *Demographic research*, 19, 1663.
- Liker, J. K., & Elder Jr, G. H. (1983). Economic hardship and marital relations in the 1930s. *American Sociological Review*, 343-359.
- Maher, J. M., & Singleton, A. (2003). " I Wonder What He's Saying": Investigating Domestic Discourse in Young Cohabiting Heterosexual Couples. *Gender Issues*, 21(1), 59-77.
- Newman, K. S., & Chen, V. T. (2007). *The missing class: portraits of the near poor in America*: Beacon Press.
- Oakley, A. (1975). *The sociology of housework*: Pantheon Books.
- Pattillo-McCoy, M. (1999). *Black picket fences: Privilege and peril among the Black middle class*: University of Chicago Press.
- Raley, S. B., Mattingly, M. J., & Bianchi, S. M. (2006). How dual are dual-income couples? Documenting change from 1970 to 2001. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 68(1), 11-28.

- Smock, P. J. (2000). Cohabitation in the United States: An appraisal of research themes, findings, and implications. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26(1), 1-20.
- Teachman, J. D., Polonko, K. A., & Scanzoni, J. (1987). Demography of the family. *Handbook of marriage and the family*, 3-36.
- Tichenor, V. (1999). Status and Income as Gendered Resources: the Case of Marital Power. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*. 61 (3), 638-650.
- Tichenor, V. (2005). Maintaining Men's Dominance: Negotiating Identity and Power When She Earns More. *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research*. 53 (3-4), 191-205.
- Weiss, R. S. (1995). *Learning from strangers: The art and method of qualitative interview studies*: Free Press.
- West, C., & Zimmerman, D. H. (1987). Doing gender. *Gender and society*, 125-151.
- Willott, S., & Griffin, C. (1996). Men, masculinity and the challenge of long-term unemployment. *Understanding masculinities*, 77-92.
- Winkler, A. E. (1998). Earnings of husbands and wives in dual-earner families. *Monthly Labor Review*, 121(4), 42-48.