PART FIVE

The Unfinished Gender Revolution

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Betwixt and Be Tween: Gender Contradictions among Middle Schoolers

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This research is based on interviews with middle-school children in a southeastern city of the United States. In this paper, we ask whether the gender revolution has freed these children from being constrained by stereotypes. We find that both boys and girls are still punished for going beyond gender expectations, but boys much more so than girls. For girls, participation in traditionally masculine activities, such as sports and academic competition, is now quite acceptable and even encouraged by both parents and peers. We find, indeed, that girls are more likely to tease each other for being too girly than for being a sports star. Girls still feel pressure, however, to be thin and to dress in feminine ways, to "do gender" in their self-presentation. Boys are quickly teased for doing any behavior that is traditionally considered feminine. Boys who deviate in any way from traditional masculinity are stigmatized as "gay." Whereas girls can and do participate in a wide range of activities without being teased, boys consistently avoid activities defined as female to avoid peer harassment. Homophobia, at least toward boys, is alive and well in middle school.

Today parents and educators tell children that they can be whatever they want to be. Children are taught that women and men and whites and blacks are equal.[1] Changes in gender norms have created opportunities for girls that never before existed. For instance, in school, Title IX has encouraged girls' participation in athletics. But are boys and girls actually free to construct personal identities that leave behind gender stereotypes, even when their parents and teachers encourage them to do so?

How free are middle-school boys and girls to form identities outside the constraining gender expectations that have traditionally disadvantaged girls in the public sphere and repressed boys from exploring their emotional side? We approached this subject by interviewing forty-four middle-school children in a mid-sized southeastern city. They were not yet teenagers but were already adapting to pressures to view the world through the eyes of their peers. Middle school is a time when peers become a crucial reference group. Conformity to group norms becomes central to popularity, fitting in, and self-image.[2] What do the experiences and perceptions of these preadolescent kids (tween-agers) tell us about growing up in contemporary society? How much have their expectations and self-images transcended traditional gender norms?

Peers become centrally important as tween-agers face new and complicated situations in which they must negotiate friendships, issues of sexuality, self-image, conflict, stratification, cliques, and the like. In this so-called "tween" culture, these kids try to make sense of things in their daily lives by using new tools as well as old ones taken from "cultural tool kits." The lives of tween-agers provide a glimpse into how contemporary definitions of race and gender are shaping the next generation, and what new realities the children themselves may be creating at a time when their core identities are developing.

Our data suggest that American middle-school children, at least in the mid-sized southeastern city we examined, have adopted an ideal of equality. Nearly all the kids say that men and women are equal, and that race no longer matters, or at least that it shouldn't. These children have been raised in a society that posits the ideals of gender and racial equality, and the kids seem to accept and believe in those ideals, at least when you scratch the surface of their opinions. But that ideal of equality is not what they experience in their real lives, and at least half of them recognize and identify contradictions between what should be and what is.

Despite their acceptance of the rhetoric of gender equality, these tween-agers hold very gender-stereotypical beliefs about boys, although not about girls. Any male gender nonconformity, where boys engage in behaviors or activities traditionally considered female, is taken as evidence that the boy is "gay." As a result, boys are afraid to cross any gender boundaries for fear of having that stigma attached to them. By contrast, the lives of girls are much less constricted by stereotypes about femininity. In fact, girls are more likely to be teased for being "too girly," than for being a tomboy. Girls still police each other's behavior, but the rules of femininity that they enforce now seem to focus almost exclusively on clothes, makeup, diet, and bodily presentation. The girls in our study still "do gender,"[3] but mostly by how they look.

Research on Gender and Youth

Research on how traditional femininity constrains girls is contradictory. Some studies suggest that girls are viewed as less feminine if they participate in sports. Others argue that athleticism is no longer seen as incompatible with femininity and may indeed be part of the "ideal girlhood" package.[4]

In their study of middle-school cheerleaders, Adams and Bettis also point to fundamental contradictions in the contemporary ideal of girlhood. Traditional feminine characteristics like passivity and docility, they argue, have been replaced by independence, assertiveness, and strength, and participation in sports is considered an "essential component of girl culture today."[5] At the same time, when it comes to popularity, attractiveness trumps all other attributes. Cheerleading, in keeping up with changing gender expectations, has incorporated the new ideals of girlhood, including "confidence, rationality, risk-taking, athleticism, independence, and fearlessness."[6] But it continues to attract girls who value feminine looks and who are interested in attracting boys. Becoming a cheerleader is one way to cope with the contradictions of girlhood because it allows girls to be athletic and adopt some desired masculine traits, while retaining feminine characteristics that the girls enjoy and that make them desirable to boys.[7]

A few studies address how race and class differences among young women affect their standards of femininity. Bettie found class- and race-specific versions of femininity among high-school girls.[8] Lower-class white and nonwhite girls adopted a more sexualized style of femininity than white middle-class girls. Bettie suggested that "las chicas," the Latina girls, adapted a style of femininity that emphasized their ethnicity, preferring darker and more visible makeup and tight-fitting clothes. Working-class white girls also generally wore more makeup than middle-class students. While school officials and middle-class peers commonly interpreted these bodily expressions as evidence of "looser" sexual morals, Bettie found that these girls were less interested in romantic attachments than outsiders supposed, and that their styles of bodily presentation had more to do with incorporating racial and community markers into their gender displays. For example, working-class white girls expressed resistance to middle-class culture by "dressing down" in torn jeans, whereas Mexican-American girls, feeling that their brown skin was already perceived as a "dressed down" appearance, would dress "up" in an effort to deny any link between color and poverty. Bettie also found that although these girls presented a very sexualized version of femininity, they did not want to or expect to lead traditional lives as at-home mothers and wives and they were in favor of gender equality for adults.

Many studies of middle- and high-school girls find strong evidence of pressures to be attractive to boys.[9] Lemish finds that widely different modes of femininity

are acceptable among preadolescent girls, as long as the girl is also "pretty." One of the paradoxes of contemporary girlhood is that there are confusing and conflicting messages about what a girl should be like, as well as what type of girl should be (de)valued.

There is very little latitude or tolerance for boys to behave in ways that have been traditionally labeled as girlish. Engaging in any traditionally feminine activity, from dancing well, to knitting, to playing the piano opens boys up to being taunted as "gay." Usually it is boys who tease other boys, but sometimes girls do as well. Researchers suggest that homophobia is not merely antihomosexual prejudice. It also reinforces sharp gender divisions through the deployment of fear. This is seen particularly at the high-school level, but some research suggests it is also evident in elementary school and in middle school.[10] Thorne found that by the fourth grade "fag" is sometimes used as an insult. But Plummer points out that homophobic insults used in grade school do not actually carry sexual meaning.[11] Rather they are used to tease boys who are different, including boys viewed as effeminate. The use of homophobic terms as insults, Plummer maintains, increases with adolescence. Eder and her coauthors discuss homophobic insults among middle-school boys as a ritualistic way to assert masculine dominance, as a way to insult and further isolate the lowest on the peer hierarchy, and as a self-defense mechanism in identifying oneself as heterosexual and normal.[12] Their research illustrates the intense anxiety over peer approval and acceptance, and how that fosters bullying in middle school for both girls and boys, although more so for boys. By middle school, any sign of gender boundary crossing by boys is taken as signifying homosexuality, and elicits strong homophobic teasing.

As boys grow older, the gender expectations appear to become more rigid and regulated. Among high-school youth, masculinity is defined as toughness: a potential if not an inclination for violence, lack of emotion, and sexual objectification of girls. By high school, it is a major insult for a boy to be called gay and the label may be applied to any boy who is different from his male peers in some way, any boy who is considered feminine or unpopular, any boy who is a target for being bullied. Among young people, the word "gay" has acquired such a negative connotation that it is commonly used to describe anything that is bad, undesirable, or "lame."[13]

Pascoe (2005) identifies a "fag" discourse through which high-school boys use the term as an epithet on a daily basis. Any boy, she notes, may be temporarily labeled a "faggot," and so all boys continually struggle to avoid being stigmatized. With the possibility of being called a "faggot" only an insult away, constant work is required to be sufficiently masculine to avoid the label. In fact, the primary use of homophobia in policing the activities of boys is not to root out, expose, or

punish potential homosexuals, but rather to regulate gender behavior and narrowly channel boys toward accepted activities and away from others.

It is not clear whether or how this use of homophobia to police boys' gender varies according to race. In Pascoe's (2007) study of "fag" discourse among high-school boys in a working-class California school, she found that behaviors that incur a "fag" stigma for white boys, such as attention to fashion, or dancing with another man, are accepted as normal by nonwhite boys. She suggests that the use of homophobic insults is more common among white than nonwhite teenagers.

Froyum studied an underclass African-American summer program in a large East Coast city, however, and found heavy policing of heterosexuality among both boys and girls.[14] She argues that these impoverished urban kids use heterosexuality to carve out some self-esteem from the only stratification in which they can feel superior to someone else, that they take solace in the fact that "at least they aren't gay."

Methods

The authors and several graduate students interviewed forty-four middle-school students. We asked the children a set of questions, told them stories and solicited their responses, and had them draw pictures and write poems in order to find out what these boys and girls thought about their own lives, their friends, and their interactions with peers at school. We wanted to delve into middle-school students' expectations around gender, to examine how it feels to grow up in a society that proclaims gender equality, and to encourage "girl power."

We wanted to find out if children today still see limitations based on their sex, or if they really feel they live in a post-feminist world. We asked about family life, friendship, popularity, cliques, pressures to conform to stereotypes around being a boy or a girl, what "girl power" means, and attitudes regarding racial inequality. This was a diverse group of children, mostly white and African-American, and we paid careful attention to whether the answers to our questions differed by race and/or ethnicity.

The interviews took place between the fall of 2003 and the summer of 2004. They typically lasted between one and two hours and were recorded. Respondents were in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades and ranged in age from eleven to fourteen. The children were recruited at a racially integrated magnet middle school, a diverse YWCA after-school program and summer camp, and an urban, mostly black Girls' Club. All attended public middle schools in a mid-sized city in the southeastern United States. Because we did not get data on many topics of interest from two of the middle schoolers, we reduced our sample to be

discussed here to forty-two. The pseudonyms and specific demographic information for each student are listed in a chart in the appendix. Most were middle class, although a few were from working-class or upper middle-class professional families. We paid careful attention to any racial differences in the responses. But having only four nonwhite boys, two of whom were black, hampered our ability to examine racial or ethnic differences among boys. We hoped to learn something about what it is like to grow up in today's world. Interviewers asked the children many questions. How are you similar to other boys/girls? How are you different from other girls/boys? We also asked about likes and dislikes, activities, friendship groups, cliques at school, and favorite subjects. Many of our questions dealt specifically with the children's perceptions of gender. What does it mean when someone is called a "girly-girl"? What does it mean when a girl is called a tomboy? Is there a word (like "girly" for prissy girls) that refers to boys who are really tough or macho? Is there a word for a boy who is quiet and thoughtful and likes to do arts and crafts, one who likes the kinds of activities that girls more often like to do?

Using a hypothetical scenario to draw them out, we asked students to describe what their lives would be like as the opposite sex. We asked: "If an alien with supernatural powers came into your bedroom one night and turned you into a boy/girl, how would your life be different in the morning?" We also asked: "How would your life be different if an alien made you gay?"

We asked students to write a poem or paragraph beginning with "If I were a boy/girl . . ." If they preferred they could draw a picture elaborating on that theme. We also explored their acceptance of nontraditional gender behavior by using vignettes and asking how they or their peers would react to a person who crossed a gender boundary.

To understand the boundary of female behavior, we used this hypothetical story: "Pretend for a moment that there is a girl in your grade named Jasmine. Jasmine is very athletic and loves competition. She decides that she wants to start an all-girls football club at your school. She places posters all over student lockers and the hallways promoting the girl's club and asking for players. Then she approaches the principal and asks if she can start the team." For male gender nonconformity, we constructed this story: "Imagine that there is a boy in your grade named Marcus. He loves to dance. He has taken gymnastics since he was little, and is very good. Now that he is older, he wants to be a cheerleader. He knows that [Name of University] has male cheerleaders and he wants to join that squad when he goes to college." Students who seemed mature enough were asked about homosexuality, including how they and their peers would react to a gay student.

Due to time constraints, variations in maturity levels, and the occasional tape malfunction, we do not have responses to all of these questions from every

student. Although we do have a wealth of information from almost every student to utilize for analysis, with such open-ended qualitative data it is very challenging to compare responses across kids for interpretation.

There were several limitations to the methods we employed. Because we did not directly observe interactions between the middle schoolers, we had to rely on what they told us, and how they explained their thoughts on boys, girls, gender nonconformity, gender expectations, homosexuality, heterosexuality, and life in general. Nonetheless, we believe the method is useful because the thoughts and feelings of these preadolescents help us understand how they experience and react to peer pressure. Moreover, in one-on-one interviews, children and adults may reveal more about their thoughts and feelings than they would if others were present.

Contradictions and Equality Rhetoric

When we asked these students questions about gender or race, their responses indicated that most have assimilated both the feminist-inspired ideology that women and men are equal and the post-civil rights ideology that all races are equal. Nine out of twelve male students and seventeen of twenty-two female students (for whom we have appropriate data) professed some belief in gender equality. For example, Molly finished the phrase "If I were a boy" in a poem that read: "If I were a boy, / Nothing should be different, / Because all people are equal." For the same exercise, another student, Marney, wrote that "I think I would be treated mainly the same by parents, friends, teachers." Brady similarly argued that "all people should be treated the same," although he felt life would be "very freaky" if he were turned into a girl. Micah told us that girl power means that girls now have every right that men do. The kids appeared to believe that males and females either were equal in reality or ought to be.

Despite this equality rhetoric, there were serious inconsistencies in their responses. For example, when the kids answered questions about what would happen if they were turned into the opposite sex, most expressed a belief that gender stereotypes were based in biology, despite earlier declarations that "we are all the same." With these questions, we found that many kids were well aware of the consequences for not conforming to gender norms.

This contradiction between the rhetoric of equality and more experience-biased appraisals of gender inequality was further revealed when we asked the children to place cards with occupations written on them under the categories "men," "women," and "both." They were first asked to place their cards according to whether men or women are more likely to hold each job, and afterward according to how they think it *should* be. This activity showed us whether students felt

there was occupational segregation by sex and how they judged it. None of the boys and only five out of twenty-three girls thought that men and women were equally distributed among all occupations. Six of twelve boys and ten of twenty-two girls told us that all occupations *should* be distributed equally among men and women. The others, who believed gender segregation was appropriate, usually explained that men and women were different. In most cases, when asked how it should be versus how it really is, students put more occupations under the category of "both." Nurse, secretary, and librarian were commonly thought to be women's jobs, whereas police officer, firefighter, mechanic, and engineer were often seen as men's jobs. Sixteen out of thirty-four students expressed the belief that men and women were or should be "equal" and that girls and women should be able to do anything they want.

These children, even those consistently committed to equality in theory, however, often expressed contradictory views in other parts of the interview, displaying a belief in the essential differences between boys and girls or holding their peers to gendered expectations. In many cases, advances in ideology were not consistently guiding reported behavior.

Between Tomboy and Girly-Girl

We asked boys and girls to answer questions about what girly-girls and tomboys are like, how girls think they are similar to and different from other girls, and what boys thought would be different if they were "turned into a girl."

Nearly all the students could describe a typical girly-girl and a tomboy. Many boys and girls alike defined girly-girls as preoccupied with appearances, in contrast to tomboys. One female student, Kay, described girly-girls in these terms: "'Oh my gosh!' totally into stuff like that. Always having their hair, you know, down like that, you know, kind of prissy. Want to wear high-heeled shoes all the time. Laughing and flirting and stuff like that." Marney, who stated that she did not consider herself a girly-girl, responded that "they're afraid to get dirty, you're obsessed with your hair, you like to wear makeup a lot." Kay indicated that girly-girl meant being obsessed with boys or talking about boys. Although this description was less common than references to appearance in characterizing girly-girls, romance-centered behavior (e.g., being "boy-crazy" or obsessed with boys, flirting, talking about boys, or gossiping about relationships) was mentioned by four girls and two boys as characterizing "girly-girls." Several more mentioned such behavior when discussing "typical" girls in general.

Nearly 80 percent of those who responded provided what we interpret as a "negative" description of a girly-girl, and the rest gave neutral responses. Of the

nine males, five gave negative descriptions and four gave neutral descriptions of girly girls. A neutral response, for instance, might refer to girly-girls as wearing pink often, without indicating that wearing a lot of pink is objectionable.

There was not a single overtly positive definition of a girly-girl. No one told us, for instance, that girly-girls are kind, looked up to, or even desirable to boys. We did not count the suggestion that girly-girls are the most popular as being positive in itself, because such comments were often paired with expressions of disdain for the "popular" kids.

Common descriptions of girly-girls included fear of getting dirty, breaking a nail, or getting sweaty. Seven girls and two boys used the word "prissy." Samantha suggested that a girly-girl is "prissy," wears makeup everyday, and is obsessed with hair. She mimics such a person: "'Oh my gosh, it has to be perfect. I have to put hairspray in it.' Glitter, gel, whatever. Like, always running around screaming [high-pitched], 'Oh my God, a spider! Oh my gosh, my nail broke!' Just little things that are like your nail breaking. Crying over it or something. That's a girly-girl."

Girls were, overall, more censorious, but boys sometimes described girly-girls in a similarly contemptuous fashion. With a disgusted expression on his face, Jason told his interviewer that, "To me, it means makeup and a whole lot of other girlie perfumes and . . . lipstick and mascara and eye shadow and other makeup that they put on that I don't even want to mention."

At the same time, when researchers asked explicitly whether "being a girly-girl is a good or bad thing" the kids were divided. Karlin, for example, initially portrayed girly-girls in a contemptuous fashion, saying that they are girls who would say, "'Guys are better. I don't do sports. I might get my shoes wet.' Or like, 'I can't kick a ball. I try to look good but I don't have any specific talent.'" But when asked directly whether being a girly-girl is a bad or good thing, her response was that it depends on the person. If they are selfish, that is bad, but if this is just how they were brought up, then "it's fine."

Several kids indicated that being girly made a girl popular, whereas others (and sometimes even the same respondents) suggested that it was annoying, or that they themselves did not like these people. Mona talked about the "bad preps"—girls who dye their hair blonde, wear too much makeup, wear revealing clothes, and draw their eyebrows in after waxing them. She reported that she and her friends despise this group and frequently make jokes about them. But in other parts of the interview she associated girl preps with playing a lot of sports. Girly-girls were often defined in the abstract as girls who do not play sports, but in actual references to peers, being a girly-girl and playing sports were not always incompatible.

Although students tended to associate girly-girls with being popular and being more feminine, stereotypical girls were subject to substantial ridicule by girls and boys alike in these interviews. None of the female respondents identified themselves to the interviewer as exclusively girly-girl. And all three of the girls who did say they thought of themselves as at least part girly, also described themselves as partly or occasionally tomboyish (and none of these girls considered herself a "typical girl"). This reflects the negative connotations associated with being a girly-girl, which was usually defined contemptuously or with reference to activities and concerns generally seen as narcissistic and trivial (e.g., wearing too much makeup too often, afraid of breaking a nail, excessive shopping).

These disdainful descriptions of what it means to be a girly-girl tell us that too much emphasis on femininity is looked down upon at this age level. No matter where they fell on the girly-girl/tomboy continuum, the girls saw themselves as different from the category of the prototypical feminine girl, who was seen as narcissistic, vain, and silly. They did not want to be identified as that type of girl. But in the process of rejecting this stereotype for themselves, they sometimes conferred it upon others as the prototypical teenage girl.

The girls in our study also felt that girls should display *some* level of femininity, especially when it comes to looks. Several girls, black and white, indicated that being too much of a tomboy could be a bad thing. Karlin, for instance, chastised tomboys who fail to "recognize the fact that they're a girl." According to her, playing sports should not get in the way of "being a girl."

Kerri indicated that it is okay to be girlish if one is athletic as well. She asserted that "there are a lot" of girly-girls, although she did not personally *know* very many:

> Yeah, there are a lot. I don't know a lot of girly-girls. I know I don't mind wearing skirts and I don't mind wearing makeup but I'm not a girly-girl. And I know what a girly-girl is. It's when you're all obsessed with makeup and looking good and I mean all the girls I know play at least two sports and they own makeup, and they're, I mean, my room is blue and pink and yellow but you'd have to look around and see all my soccer pictures and all my basketball trophies. And I mean if you just looked in my room, didn't see any trophies, you'd think I was a really big girly-girl.

At least five kids indicated that being a tomboy was positive in some respects, but no one indicated that tomboys were considered the popular or privileged girls. One female middle schooler suggested a tomboy might have difficulty getting a boyfriend. In the interviews, being a tomboy was associated with being athletic, although girls could be athletic without being seen as a tomboy. It is also

noteworthy that only three girls identified themselves as tomboys but not at all girly, although this was more than the number who considered themselves "girly-girls."

Most girls clearly do not place themselves in either of these two extreme categories, although they often suggest that they have characteristics associated with both. These two extremes bracket the entire spectrum of gender meanings for girls, but do not represent the majority of identities. Some girls embraced the label of tomboy (often while simultaneously embracing aspects of bodily femininity) as a strategy to avoid negative associations with being female. For example, one girl told us "we've actually made up, like those ten girls, we've made up the tomboy club because we don't mind competing against the guys for stuff, and we, I mean I actually liked being called a tomboy because then I knew people didn't just look at me as a girl. That they could actually see me as doing something more than being just a ballet dancer."

Most girls do adopt some aspects of traditional femininity. They wear makeup or lip gloss, enjoy shopping for and dressing up in gendered clothes, or like talking about boys. This became apparent in the interviews where girls discussed how they were similar to other girls, what they liked to do, and how they spent their time. It was also apparent in some of the field notes written by interviewers, who noted details about how the students dressed and presented themselves.

The female middle schoolers criticized only extreme forms of this femininity, such as wearing lots of makeup everyday, dressing in too revealing a fashion, worrying about looking good all of the time, and especially having a "girly-girl" identity. Jamie, for example, said she is similar to other girls in that she likes clothes and guys, but says she is not girly like the ones who are "prim" and "afraid to get dirty, to get down and goof around."

When it comes to untangling the gender expectations that these middle schoolers hold and perceive, contradictions abound. In one part of her interview, Lola said that "there's just some traits that all girls have in common. . . . Ability to accessorize [laughs]. Just stuff. You can always tell who's a boy and who's a girl. It's different. Like boys like video games and girls like makeup. . . . Boys are rougher. Girls are more into sitting and talking. And boys are more into going outside and playing Frisbee or something." But she also asserted that girls would love to have their own football team. It is clear that girls perceive pressures both to be identifiably feminine and to take on some traditionally masculine characteristics like assertiveness, fearlessness, rationality, and independence in order to be taken seriously.

While girls face less restrictive norms for gender-appropriate behavior, there still seem to be limitations, especially in regard to ideals of beauty. Girls are still expected to demonstrate a type of femininity, although one that is no longer

threatened by participation in traditionally male-dominated activities. Our story about a girl who wants to start a football team elicited a few worries that she might be teased because she did not play well, but there was little concern that Jasmine would be teased for violating norms of femininity. As Malcom pointed out in her study of softball players, girls who play sports run the risk of being seen as or teased for being incompetent as athletes rather than for displaying behavior inappropriate for girls.[15]

The girls in this study felt a girl can ignore many gender boundaries (in fact playing sports is no longer even considered a gender boundary). But in their view, girls are still expected to display some markers of traditional femininity. Put another way, appropriate femininity does not require avoidance of traditionally masculine activities, but it is accomplished through attention to how the girl displays her body. Femininity has become very body-centered and many respondents simply equate femininity with "looks." But it is interesting that even on this dimension, girls tend to look down on and avoid extreme femininity. For example, several girls criticized pop stars for dressing in tight, revealing clothing, although they also saw this as a requirement for celebrity.

We only have very suggestive data in our sample on how gender norms varied by race. But in three interviews, white girls criticized black girls for overly emphasizing the sexualized aspects of femininity—dressing in tight, revealing clothing, wearing inappropriate makeup, and engaging in inappropriate bodily display. Kerri related the following story about a black peer:

> And the girls, we won't really make fun of her but we just "why? Why is she wearing that?" Because like if she combed her hair and put on some makeup and wore pants she'd be very pretty. But she doesn't. She has to wear the tightest skirts. She never combs her hair. She'll put on makeup but she doesn't put it on right. She'll put on like this dark blue and like gold mascara and she doesn't look right and she's trying, but she's not using the right stuff. So all of us got together one recess and we, not to be mean, but to say okay we could give her a makeover and this one girl, who could really draw. We said okay, we're gonna give her—if we could give her a makeover this is what we'd do. Some girl said okay I'd pick out all her makeup and I'd tweeze her eyebrows and I'd like shave her legs or something. And one girl said, I'd get her on Slimfast. And all this stuff. And like she drew a picture of what she'd look like if we all worked with her and she looked kind of looked a lot like me, but kinda, it looked like all the girls had given a part of themselves to her so that was really fun and we thought if she did all of those things she'd look like that.

We also have suggestive data that African-Americans girls sometimes try to adapt "white" beauty norms. Three black or biracial girls indicated that they

wished they had physical traits more often seen in Caucasian women. For example, Joleesa, an African-American sixth grader, wished she had long, soft, smooth hair and blue eyes. We do not have a large enough sample to have strong evidence of racialized femininity, but we do find suggestions that white and black girls value white markers of femininity, and that black girls are criticized by white girls if they exhibit more sexualized forms of femininity.

When boys were asked how they would be different if turned into a girl, several indicated they would act the way girly-girls are described. Four boys thought they would act "girly" in some way. Boys spoke of girls with stereotypical language. Tyrone drew a picture of a woman's makeup table and explained that "I drew a vanity, which is a mirror with bulbs around it, and it usually has makeup and perfume around it, and then I drew a little girl stretching since it's been a long day and she's about to go out to the movies with her friends . . . I drew the vanity because they like wearing tons of makeup." By referring to an exaggerated, abstract notion of femininity when asked to imagine themselves as a girl or to describe girls in general, boys are implicitly defining masculinity as the opposite of this girly-girl femininity. Girls as well as boys distance themselves from this feminized, stereotypical "other" when they try to construct valued images of themselves.

Policing Masculinity

Our respondents described preadolescent masculinity in very narrow and uniform ways. The most common response was that boys like sports (sometimes specific sports like football and basketball were emphasized). Other responses included competitiveness, hating losing to a girl, playing video games, general rowdiness, and being different from girls in that girls want to "really impress people and boys want to have their own way." When boys talked about their interests, they commonly emphasized sports, video games, and competing with male friends. But they almost never mentioned "liking" girls, flirting with girls, or talking about girls. It appears that at this age, romantic interests figure prominently among girls, but not among boys.

A boy who is perceived as too feminine is subject to much more ridicule than a girl who is seen as either overly masculine or overly feminine. If a boy tends to be quiet, shy, bookish, artistic, and/or nonassertive, his sexuality is called into question and he loses respect among other boys. We saw this in the way students made sense of our hypothetical story about Marcus, the boy who wants to be a cheerleader. We asked students whether Marcus should be allowed to join a cheerleading squad when he gets to high school, whether he would be teased by

others, and whether the student her/himself would remain friends with Marcus, even if he were teased.

Many pointed out that Marcus would be the target of substantial ridicule because not many boys are cheerleaders.[16] In Lorenzo's opinion, "yeah [Marcus should be allowed to join a cheerleading squad], but um, he's probably gonna get made fun of by like a lot of boys." Asked what the boys would say, Lorenzo responded, "Like um, they're like homosexual or something." Krista told us that "people think that a male cheerleader is always gay, and, I mean, people would make fun of him. Or if he does stuff that people only think girls should do . . ." Deirdre replied that the kids would call Marcus a sissy, and the boys especially would "call him gay." She also suggested that even if they had been friends, she would not stay "close friends" with him because "everyone [would be] calling him gay, and if I hang around him, they'd be like, ew you're gay too." Other questions also revealed the middle-schoolers' fear of peer disapproval. For instance, when we asked Samantha if she would still dance if she were turned into a boy, she responded "probably not" because she would be "made fun of."

Deviating from masculine norms inevitably led to teasing, according to student reports. While only two kids suggested that a tomboy might have her heterosexuality questioned, many suggested that a boy who liked girl-type activities would be called gay. Some of the terms the students applied to girlish boys were "wimps," "tomgirls," "weird," "geeks," "weak," and "punk." Because of the stigma associated with being considered feminine in any way, it is not surprising that some girls described themselves as tomboys, but not a single boy described himself in any way as "girly." A few female students, however, indicated that some of the girls would appreciate such a boy, even though other boys would make fun of him. The threat of being stigmatized as "gay" or a "faggot" plays a big part in policing and enforcing masculinity.

Policing Heterosexuality

Antigay sentiment is widespread among these youth, although there was a total confusion between sexual preference and gender behavior, which led to very low tolerance for gender nonconformity among boys. Usually we broached the topic of homosexuality toward the end of the interview and only with those students who seemed relatively mature or comfortable enough with the topic. Typically the researcher asked how the student would respond if a friend revealed to him/her that he or she was gay. They were also usually asked how their own life would change or how they would feel if they woke up one morning and found out they were gay.

In all, thirty-four students answered one or both of these questions (twenty-two girls and twelve boys). Most of these children expressed opposition to homosexuality in general, although white girls were more accepting of homosexuality than others. Most of the boys who discussed homosexuality in any way were clearly homophobic, although one boy seemed unsure and another indicated some acceptance of gays. Jason was adamant that "guys should go with girls and girls should go with guys." "It shouldn't be the same sex . . . that is eeww." Micah thought "it's nasty to be gay." When Dante was asked what would happen if he found out he were gay, he replied, "It would be extremely different and I would hate myself."

None of three nonwhite boys felt comfortable about homosexuality. The two African Americans, Marc and Tyrone, told interviewers that they thought being gay was wrong and "nasty." Lorenzo, a Latino American, did not condemn homosexuality, but neither did he indicate much tolerance for it.

In many instances, a feeling of disgust was cited as a rationale for judging gays, as in Jason's interview. This was especially common among boys, somewhat common among nonwhite girls, and the least common among white girls. Marc said, "I think they would be like, 'Stay away from me, I don't want you doing this and this,' and some people, when they go to the bathroom they would always be looking over their shoulder." Cynthia claimed that teachers might "pay close attention" to a gay student "just to make sure he doesn't do anything nasty around other kids and stuff."

Several of the respondents were horrified at the suggestion of being gay. Jason claimed he would shoot himself if he woke up gay, and Micah said "I would be suicidal. I know that's wrong, but I would." Deirdre responded that if she were gay "I would like girls, which would be nasty." And Kay would be too embarrassed even to go to school. Prejudice by heterosexuals against homosexuals appears to be very much internalized by most of the kids.

A substantial minority, however, expressed tolerant views. Katie felt that people should love who they want to love. When Jack, a seventh grader, was asked what life would be like if he were gay, he said nothing would really be different. He also claimed that he would remain friends with a gay boy, as long as the friend did not "like" him. But even the eleven tolerant youths expressed concern over the reactions of other people, especially peers, toward any indication of homosexuality. The fear of associating with gay peers was quite strong, even among the otherwise tolerant girls, who exhibited some sense of discomfort to the idea of a friend coming out as gay.

This confusion of sexuality and gender stereotypes feeds into the fear boys have about crossing gender boundaries. Responses to the hypothetical scenario about Marcus, the boy who wanted to be a cheerleader in high school, often

raised doubts about his sexuality, even though there was absolutely no reference to sexuality in the scenario. All these responses were volunteered by the kids themselves.

Nearly all of the children told the interviewers that Marcus would be teased. Forty-one percentage of boys and 43 percent of girls suggested that other students would call Marcus gay, but more girls voiced support for the hypothetical Marcus. None of the respondents believed that Marcus *must* be gay if he wants to be a cheerleader. Rather, responses focused on the idea that he would be called gay and would have to prove his heterosexuality.

There was a widely held conviction that Marcus' peers would verbally abuse him. Jason admitted he would directly taunt Marcus: "I'd go up to his face and say, 'You are a little fruitcake, do you know that?'" But most students seemed to want to protect Marcus from taunts and bullying, especially from *other boys*. Ten girls and three boys who discussed Marcus getting teased mentioned boys as the primary teasers. Some students recommended that Marcus should "keep it hush-hush" or even reconsider his decision, because of the negative peer reaction it would invite. Jack said "if I were him I would choose not to say anything about it or else everyone would make fun of me."

Most students acknowledged that if a boy wants to be a cheerleader in high school it does not necessarily mean he is gay, but 40 percent suggested their peers would operate on such an assumption. A few students thought that Marcus might not face much disapproval—that it would not be a big deal. But most kids told us that their peers severely tease male gender nonconformity. No one policed girls' sports behavior by insinuating girl athletes must be gay.

Homophobic Taunts and Enforcement of Masculinity

The Marcus scenario was not the only part of the interview that brought out the *gender nonconformity = gay* assumption for boys. When we asked students to give us a word to describe boys who are shy, quiet, maybe artistic or creative, and who like activities that girls usually do, four students asserted that such a boy is or would be called gay or some variant thereof. Jeffrey, for example, volunteered that there is no word for boys who act like girls, the way tomboy describes girls who act like boys, but he has heard such boys called "fruit." When we asked Marshall for a term to describe boys who like to do the kinds of activities girls usually do, he responded that "a lot of people call 'em gay." Similarly, without hesitation Deidre gave us the word "fag." Other responses to this particular question indicated that such a boy would be teased in some way, even if he were not called gay.

Just as kids interpret boys' gender nonconformity as evidence of homosexuality, the flip side is that they also consistently associate homosexuality with gender nonconformity. Middle-school students assume that someone who is gay will violate gender norms. One male student told us that if he were gay, he would no longer like sports. In general, the kids assumed that gay males are more feminine than straight members of their sex. Jeffrey thought that if he were gay he "might like to hang around with girls a little more. Not like flirting, but acting like a girl or around girls."

Such presumptions lend legitimacy to the regulation of male gender nonconformity through antigay remarks. The stigmatizing of Marcus was in sharp contrast to responses to the hypothetical scenario about Jasmine, the girl who wanted to start a girls' football club. None of the students suggested that Jasmine's sexuality would be suspect, although a few suggested she might be teased or thought "weird" by other students. It seems that gender nonconformity is less policed among girls than boys, and is much less likely to be presumed as a marker of sexuality for girls.

Kids fear being labeled gay by their peers, which makes this a powerful tool for policing gender. In general, when the kids were asked "what if you found out you were gay?," their first response was to discuss the reaction of their peers, rather than their parents or family members, providing further evidence that for preadolescents peers form a critical reference group. In fact, eighteen of twenty-one girls referred to peer disapproval when responding to hypothetical questions about being gay themselves or having a gay friend. Seven of nine boys did the same. Boys and girls consistently suggested that their peers would react negatively to them if they came out as gay. In several cases, respondents acknowledged that they might react negatively or would apply some type of sanction to a gay student.

Being called gay is evidently the worst insult and the most effective way to shame another student. When Cynthia spoke of a male friend of hers who is frequently bullied, she claimed that "most of the time he ignores it but if somebody ends up calling him 'gay' or something, he takes it really bad." Interestingly, Cynthia and others do not consider this friend to be particularly feminine, although they describe him as "scrawny" and "short." Rather, she believes that he is called gay because it is a dependable way for his attackers to insult him.

Branding nonconformists as gay in this middle-school context constitutes a primary form of regulation as well as harassment. When a boy is labeled as gay, it is not necessarily about his sexuality, but it is rather a surefire way to insult him. The gay stigma is not primarily used to tease someone as homosexual, but to deprive a boy of the status that comes with masculinity.[17]

Paradoxically, we have some very suggestive evidence that if a person actually does embrace a gay identity, he or she is freer to cross gender boundaries and to

enjoy activities usually limited to the other sex. Mallory and several of the other children told us that a male gay student they knew was taunted by peers for a while, but the bullying leveled off substantially with time. Jamie told us that she has a gay female friend who had some problems with other students, "but people kind of just got over it, and said, 'hey, so what?' " Jamie claimed that other people were initially standoffish with her gay female friend, but they forgot about it by the next year.

In some cases, when discussing other students who are openly gay or lesbian, a student would claim that the teasing was not that bad. Cynthia said that her gay male friend is called names by "like two or three" of the girls in her class, but the boys do not really make fun of him. She thought that is because although he's told all the girls, he probably has not told the boys. When asked if the boys would make fun of him if they knew, she replied: "No, I think he has told them but they probably really don't consider it something big."

In response to the story about Marcus the cheerleader, Mallory described her gay friend, Jo, as an exception to the gender rules. She said, "Now, I know for a fact that [Marcus would] be made fun of for that. Except Jo. Everybody knows Jo's going to do something like that, so nobody really cares if Jo did something like that. But if that boy is not Jo, he will probably get made fun of." When asked why people do not make fun of Jo, Mallory explained that he's friends with half of the seventh grade, even though there are *some* people who "hate him." Jo, as openly gay, seems accepted by most of his peers. Mallory indicated that Jo enjoys some girl-typed activities like dancing, but it is accepted because he is gay.

It is not possible to conclude from our data that openly gay students are not harassed precisely in ways similar to male gender nonconformists, but further research would do well to investigate the possibility. It is notable that all three examples of exempting gays and lesbians from sustained harassment in this study related to a specific person that the respondent knew, whereas most of the respondents who thought a gay person would be subject to significant harassment were dealing with an imaginary scenario. Since stereotypes about gay people being gender nonconformist were common among our respondents, it makes sense that gay peers are not harassed for gender nonconformity in the same ways that heterosexuals are. Openly gay kids, having already acknowledged they are gay, face different challenges than their peers who are anxious to avoid the taunt of being a "faggot" or gay.

The data clearly show that most middle-school children in our sample still hold stereotypical views about gay people. For boys, no distinction is made between same-sex attraction and gender nonconformity. The children expect that boys who break gender norms will be teased and called gay. But the children

in this study are quite diverse in their own opinions and many feel that although harassment would occur, it should not.

Discussion and Conclusion: Femininity on the Body, Masculinity As the Boy

Our findings confirm other studies about the narrow confines in which boys need to stay in order to avoid being teased by peers. What is perhaps more unexpected in our findings is that girls are now stigmatized for displaying some of the traditional markers of femininity. Girls look down on peers who are ultra-feminine, "wimpy," and afraid to get dirty or be competitive. The responses from girls in this study suggest that the way girls now "do gender" is restricted to "looks" and the body.

Girls have come to expect and take advantage of access to traditionally masculine arenas such as sports, and they display heightened expectations of academic success in all subjects, and are willing to compete with boys in those arenas. None of the girls discussed personally shying away from competition with boys, or worrying about their popularity if they did well in school, and no mention at all was made of fear of math and science. Girls in this study took for granted that they can be involved in different sports, and they rarely mentioned any constraints in their academic pursuits or their career plans.

The girls consistently expressed disdain for exaggerated notions of femininity and looked down on other girls who were seen as too passive, too prissy, or too vain. Girls who are good at sports and still exhibit a feminine bodily presentation are looked upon with favor. The traditional aspects of girlhood most related to subordination to boys are no longer revered or even accepted aspects of femininity. In a world where most mothers work for pay and all the girls expect to do so themselves, it makes sense that they've adopted the means to develop strong bodies and competitive minds.

In our view, the new concept "undoing gender" offered recently by Deutsch is the best framework for understanding contemporary girlhood.[18] These girls do not "do gender" the way generations before them did. They compete with other girls on the field and with boys in the classroom. They get dirty, and they expect to be taken seriously by teachers, parents, and boys.

While these girls have begun to "undo gender" as we knew it, they have not undone it completely. Their focus on femininity seems to have narrowed to concern and attention, even if sporadic, to their looks. For most girls, being feminine means wearing nice clothes, applying lip gloss, and paying attention to hairstyles.

While girls are allowed, and perhaps even encouraged, to "undo gender" in how they behave, they still face pressures to be attractive, to be good looking.

But the norms are contradictory. Most girls we questioned believe they should do gender with their body display. But if they concentrate too much on this aspect, they risk being looked down upon as overly feminine. They want to be seen as feminine, but not too much so.

On the other hand, boys gain no social approval by deviating from traditional definitions of masculinity. Any behavior remotely stereotyped as feminine is intensely policed by other boys and some girls. Being stigmatized as "gay" is the primary way masculinity is policed and enforced because it is a potent insult among young males. Being gay and being masculine are seen as contradictory, just as femininity and masculinity traditionally have been. The gay stigma among middle schoolers is really about deviating from gender expectations rather than about homosexuality, although it may draw upon insecurities about sexuality. It is a way of enforcing masculinity. When boys live up to those expectations, they not only establish themselves as masculine, but they also assert their superiority to girls. Boys who hesitate to participate in homophobic or gender policing activities open themselves up to teasing.

Despite the great success in boosting acceptance of gender equality and women's rights, the peer culture of these tween-agers remains incredibly resistant to any changes in defining masculinity for boys. While middle-school girls now are free to sometimes act like boys, as long as they make an effort, at least occasionally, to look feminine, the fear of being called "gay" quite effectively polices boy's gender behavior. Boys' lives seem hardly influenced by any feminist transformation except that they must now compete with girls as well as with each other, at least in the classroom.

For both girls and boys the truly feminine is looked down upon. For boys, this means that to be respected by other boys they must make continual efforts to act in masculine ways. Girls walk a different tightrope. They are strongly pressured to "do gender" with their bodies, although not so much so as to be seen as too girly. But they are free to cross gender borders in the other aspects of their lives.

Boys now have to compete with girls in nearly every realm of life, and they can no longer take for granted that because they are boys they are smarter or superior in any way to the girls they know. And yet their fear of teasing leaves boys more constrained by gender stereotypes than are girls. Perhaps the exaggerated gender difference is the last remnant of male privilege left to this generation of boys.

Boys need a "feminist revolution" of their own.

Appendix

Demographic Information for Middle Schoolers in the Study

Pseudonym	*Sex*	*Race*	*Grade*
Alison	Female	White	7
Audrey	Female	White	6
Brady	Male	White	6
Candace	Female	White	6
Cassie	Female	Black	6
Cynthia	Female	Biracial (black/white)	6
Dante	Male	White	6
Deb	Female	Asian-Indian	6
Deirdre	Female	Black	6
Eric	Male	White	6
Erica	Female	White	6
Eve	Female	White	6
Isabel	Female	Black	7
Jack	Male	White	7
Jackie	Female	Black	8
Jamie	Female	White	8
Jason	Male	White	7
Jeffrey	Male	White	7
Joleesa	Female	Black	6
Kamry	Female	White	8
Karlin	Female	White	8
Kay	Female	Black	7
Katie	Female	White	7
Kerri	Female	White	6
Kirsten	Female	White	8

Appendix (*continued*)

Demographic Information for Middle Schoolers in the Study

Pseudonym	*Sex*	*Race*	*Grade*
Krista	Female	White	8
Lana	Female	Biracial (black/white)	6
Lola	Female	Biracial (black/white)	6
Lorenzo	Male	Latino	6
Mallory	Female	White	7
Marc	Male	Black	6
Marney	Female	White	6
Marshall	Male	White	8
Max*	Male	White	6
Micah	Male	White	6
Molly	Female	White	6
Mona	Female	White	6
Nathan	Male	White	6
Reese	Male	White	7
Samantha	Female	White	6
Samir	Male	Asian-Indian	6
Shawn	Male	White	7
Tyrone	Male	Black	6
Wayne*	Male	White	7

*Due to missing data, not included in this study.

31

Orgasm in College Hookups and Relationships

Elizabeth A. Armstrong, Paula England, and Alison C. K. Fogarty

This report uses data from an online survey of 12,925 undergraduates at seventeen universities and qualitative in-depth interviews at two universities to describe college students' sexual experiences in hookups and relationships. We describe how rates of orgasm differ for men and women in hookups and relationships. We find a gender gap in orgasms across both hookups and relationships, with men experiencing more orgasms in both. The gender gap in orgasm is the lowest in relationships, in part because men are more likely to engage in cunnilingus—a practice strongly associated with women's orgasm—in relationships than in hookups. In contrast, women engage in fellatio at high rates across all contexts. The skewed nature of sexual reciprocity is in part a consequence of a new version of the old sexual double standard. In relationships, today's norms support women's right to sexual pleasure, whereas in hookups, especially first hookups, the double standard means that the man does not feel obligated to provide oral sex or to ensure his partner's sexual satisfaction.

Is the sex in college hookups good? How does hookup sex compare to relationship sex? How often do men and women have orgasms in hookups and in relationships? Is the sex in some situations good for men but not so good for women, or the other way around?

We describe college student sexual experiences in hookups and relationships, with a focus on gender differences. We define hookups as sexual events that occur outside of an exclusive relationship, often without a prearranged date, involving varying degrees of interest in a relationship. Hookups sometimes involve just making out, or they may involve oral sex or intercourse.[1]

This report uses data from an online survey of 12,925 undergraduates at seventeen universities and qualitative in-depth interviews at two universities. Students taking the online survey were asked fixed-response questions about their experiences with hooking up, dating, and relationships.[2] Statistics presented in this paper are from responses to the online survey, taken by students at the seventeen universities between 2005 and 2008. Quotations in the paper are from approximately fifty in-depth qualitative interviews conducted at Stanford and Indiana University between 2006 and 2008. In this article, we discuss only heterosexual hookups and relationships, leaving same-sex encounters for future research.

While most students hook up, few know what others are doing in their hookups. Thus, we begin with an overview of college student sexual behavior to provide background for a closer investigation of sexual pleasure in hookups and relationships. Using orgasm as an indicator of good sex, we then describe how rates of orgasm differ for men and women in hookups and relationships. We find a gender gap in orgasm across both hookups and relationships, with men experiencing more orgasm in both. This gender gap is not constant, however. It is largest in first hookups, smaller in repeat hookups with the same person, and the smallest in relationships. In this paper we delve into how variation in sexual reciprocity by context contributes to the varying size of the orgasm gap. To foreshadow some of our findings, women are more likely to receive oral sex in relationships than in hookups, and this is associated with women reaching orgasm. These findings suggest that both women and men have absorbed a notion that women are entitled to sexual pleasure in relationships. Women and men are, however, more ambivalent about the importance of women's sexual pleasure outside of relationships. This ambivalence, supported by a stubborn double standard that stigmatizes women who have sex too readily outside of relationships, lets men off the hook in terms of responsibility for sexually pleasuring hookup partners and makes it more difficult for women to actively pursue sexual satisfaction in hookups.

These empirical findings inform debates about the rise of the hookup culture. Sexual conservatives often argue that hooking up is damaging, particularly for women, counseling that it is better to limit sex to serious relationships (and in extreme versions of the argument, to marriage).[3] They see changes in gender and sexuality as having gone too far, and they advocate a return to more traditional arrangements. Their position is expressed in the "Take Back the Date" movement.[4] Like sexual conservatives, a number of feminist sociologists and activists have focused on the negative aspects of sexual culture on campus—particularly on sexual assault and sexual harassment.[5] In contrast to sexual conservatives, though, feminists tend to see gender and sexual change as having not gone far enough. This position is expressed in the annual "Take Back the Night" marches

organized on many campuses in protest of sexual violence. Our focus on sexual pleasure—and our finding that college women enjoy sex, albeit not as much as men, and not equally in all contexts—leads us to see the situation as less dire than these two groups. Most college students—both men and women—see women as entitled to sexual pleasure in relationships, and the reciprocity required to achieve it. This is a meaningful change from prior generations, where women were seen as entitled to sexual pleasure only within marriage.[6] That these norms of reciprocity and entitlement to pleasure have not fully diffused beyond relationships leads us to sympathize with both the conservative distaste for hookups—after all, sex is better in relationships, particularly for women—and with the feminist insistence on tackling sexual double standards. Hookup sex is not usually great for women. It could be a lot better. Further extension of egalitarian norms and practices would improve women's experience of hookup sex.

Sexual Activity in Hookups and Relationships

Seventy-four percent of respondents—both men and women—reported at least one hookup by their senior year in college. Of these, 40 percent had hooked up three times or less, 40 percent had hooked up between four and nine times, and 20 percent had hooked up ten or more times.

In addition to asking students about how many hookups they had overall, we also asked them for details about their most recent hookup, including a question on the number of times the student had previously hooked up with *this same partner.* From these questions, we learned that multiple hookups with the same person were common. About half of the hookups reported were first hookups with that partner. Eighteen percent were cases where the student had hooked up with this same person once or twice before, and in 33 percent of the cases the couple had hooked up at least three times before. Fully 16 percent of these hookups involved someone the student had hooked up with ten or more times. The media often refer to higher-order hookups as "friends with benefits" or "fuck buddies."[7] Students know and occasionally use these terms, but they are more likely to refer to them as "repeat," "regular," or "continuing" hookups, or to not label them at all.[8] When we report below on what happened in these different kinds of hookups, we'll use the term "repeat hookup" when the hookup was with someone the individual had hooked up with three or more times before.

The rise of hookups has not meant the demise of relationships among college students. By their senior year, 69 percent of heterosexual students reported that they had been in a relationship that lasted at least six months while they were in college.[9] In interviews, we learned that many more have had shorter relationships.

Our interviewees told us that, to them, relationships involved sexual exclusivity, spending time together, and frequently a talk to clarify that they had become girlfriend-boyfriend.[10] While college students still form relationships, the rise of the hookup has changed how relationships begin. Traditional dating has been largely replaced by hookups as the main pathway to relationships.[11]

The online survey asked students who had hooked up while in college to tell us about what happened on their most recent hookup. Students who had been in a relationship were asked to report on the most recent time they did something sexual more than kissing in that relationship. We classify events into four contexts: first hookups, second or third hookups, repeat hookups, and relationships. Figure 1 shows what happened sexually in these different contexts, categorized by the behavior that entailed going farthest, as students generally view it. For example, if a couple had oral sex and intercourse, it is classified as an intercourse event. Students did not go as far on first hookups as on higher-order hookups, and they went farther in relationships. In first hookups, 43 percent of students reported kissing and touching, but no genital contact (i.e., no stimulation of one partner's genitals with the other's hand, no oral sex, and no intercourse).[12] In contrast, the percent that only had non-genital activity was 30 percent among those who had hooked up one or two times before, 18 percent in repeat hookups,

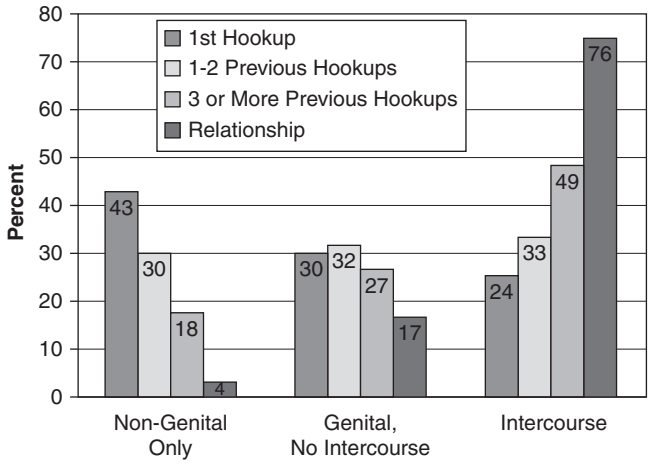

Figure 31.1 | Percent Engaging in Various Sexual Behaviors* in Four Sexual Contexts

*Respondents are classified in "Non-Genital Only" if they did not engage in oral sex, hand-genital stimulation, or intercourse; in "Genital, No Intercourse" if they did not engage in intercourse but engaged in oral sex or hand-genital stimulation (irrespective of who gave or who received it); in "Intercourse" if they had intercourse.

and 4 percent of those in relationships. The percent having intercourse was 24 percent on the first hookup, 33 percent when they had hooked up once or twice before, 49 percent in repeat hookups, and 76 percent of those in relationships.[13] In sum, most relationship events involve intercourse, while most hookups don't, but the more times people have hooked up before, they more likely they are to have intercourse.

We also asked students what sexual acts they had *ever* done. Eighty percent reported intercourse by senior year of college, so 20 percent graduated from college as virgins—a bit of information that some may find surprising. Of those who engaged in intercourse by their senior year, students reported a median of four partners and 67 percent reported having intercourse outside of a relationship.

Who Has Orgasms in Hookups and Relationships?

The survey asked students whether they had an orgasm on their most recent hookup and in their most recent relationship sexual event.[14] While orgasm is certainly not the only indicator of sexual pleasure, most who have experienced it find it to be extremely pleasurable.[15]

Figure 2 shows what percent of men and women had an orgasm in first hookups, higher-order hookups, and relationship sexual events. Both men and women experience orgasm more in repeat hookups than with a new hookup partner. And relationship sex is most likely to lead to orgasm for both men and women. This is partly a function of the fact that couples go farther sexually the more times they have hooked up, and they go the farthest in relationships. But this effect is not only driven by behavior. For both men and women, the same behaviors yield higher rates of orgasm in relationships than in hookups, and in higher-order hookups than in first hookups. Sex in relationships tends to be better in part because in any encounter one has a greater incentive to treat one's partner well if a repeat is likely.[16] Also, good sex takes practice, as, over time, partners learn what turns each other on. The importance of partner-specific sexual skills was mentioned by numerous men and women in the qualitative interviews. For example, a man, when discussing why he believed women would be more likely to orgasm in relationships, explained that, "Because a guy will already know how she likes it, where she likes it and how much she likes it." Similarly, a woman noted that in a relationship you are accustomed to communicating with your partner about everything, which means that "you're more open to talking about different things that you want out of the sex or if you want to experiment. You could explore more because you have knowledge about the other person. You trust the other person." Context matters for both men and women.

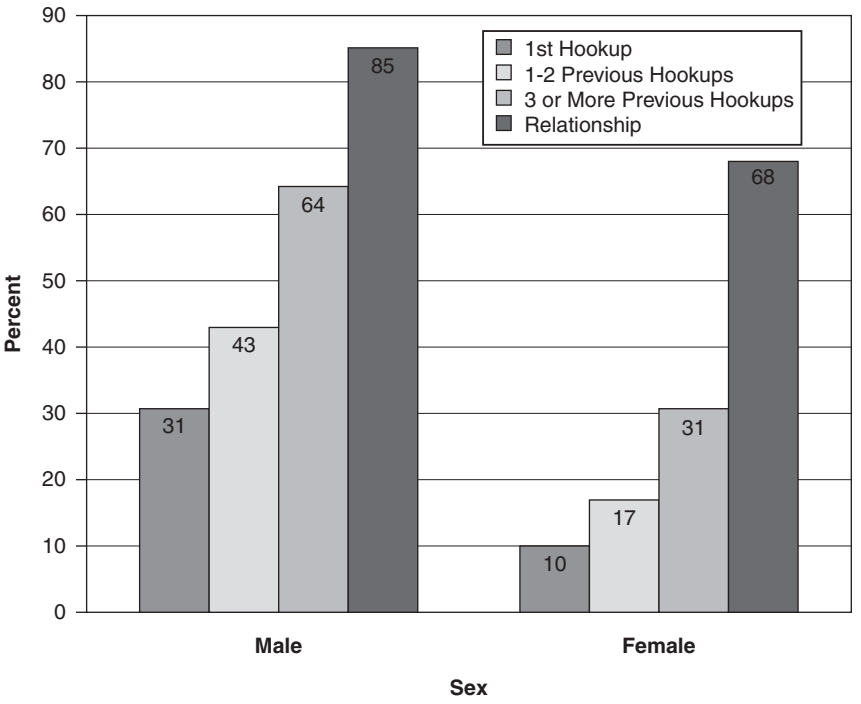

Figure 31.2 | Percent of Men and Women Having an Orgasm In Four Sexual Contexts

But, in an odd echo of the gender gap in pay, there is a gender gap in orgasm as well. This gap exists in all contexts, but it is less severe in repeat hookups than in first hookups, and least severe in relationships. If we take the percent of women having an orgasm as a ratio of the male percent, those ratios are .32 for first hookups, .39 if they've hooked up one to two previous times with this person, .49 on repeat hookups with the same person, and .79 in relationships. Comparing the two extremes, this means that women orgasm only 32 percent as often as men in first hookups, but 79 percent as often as men in relationships.

Why Is Sexual Pleasure More Equal in Relationships Than in Hookups?

Why is sexual pleasure more equal between men and women in relationships than in hookups, particularly first hookups? Some might find this a ridiculous question, viewing men's greater enjoyment of uncommitted sex as simply obvious.

Others might explain this difference by evolutionary psychology—arguing that women need commitment to enjoy sex because of a "hard-wired" need to secure male resources for any offspring produced.[17] Some might argue that gender socialization leads women to be more relationally oriented than men, in sex as well as other arenas.[18] Others might argue that partner-specific experience matters more for women than for men because women's orgasm is more difficult to achieve. As sociologists attuned to the role of cultural values, we suggest that one important factor is the sexual double standard, in which women who have or enjoy casual sex are judged more negatively than men who do so. These explanations are not mutually exclusive, but our data don't allow us to judge how important each is as a distant cause of the orgasm gap. We can, however, demonstrate more immediate, proximate causes of some of the gap: behaviors especially conducive to female orgasm are more likely to occur in repeat hookups and relationships. Below we document variation in rates of cunnilingus and women's genital self-simulation across contexts, and their role in boosting rates of orgasm.

What Men and Women Give: Oral Sex in Hookups and Relationships

Cunnilingus (the woman receiving oral sex) is more likely to produce a female orgasm than is fellatio (the man receiving oral sex). Additionally, many women need direct clitoral stimulation along with intercourse to reach orgasm. This point, sensationalized by *The Hite Report* in the 1970s, has since become well-documented empirically in sex research.[19]

Cunnilingus, effective as it is for women's orgasm, is less well-represented in college student sexual repertoires than fellatio. Figure 3 illustrates for four sexual contexts the percent of men and women receiving oral sex in sexual events without intercourse. If only one person received oral sex, it was more likely to be the man. But this disparity was shown less in repeat hookups and least in relationships. Men received oral sex roughly 80 percent of the time in all contexts (combining when men alone received oral sex and when both men and women mutually received it), while women received it (combining when women alone received oral sex and when both men and women mutually received it) 46 percent of the time in first hookups, 55 percent in second or third hookups, 59 percent in repeat hookups, and 68 percent in relationships.[20] Men gave oral sex to their female partners more in repeat hookups and especially in relationships. Women gave oral sex to their male partners in all contexts at higher rates than women received it in any context.

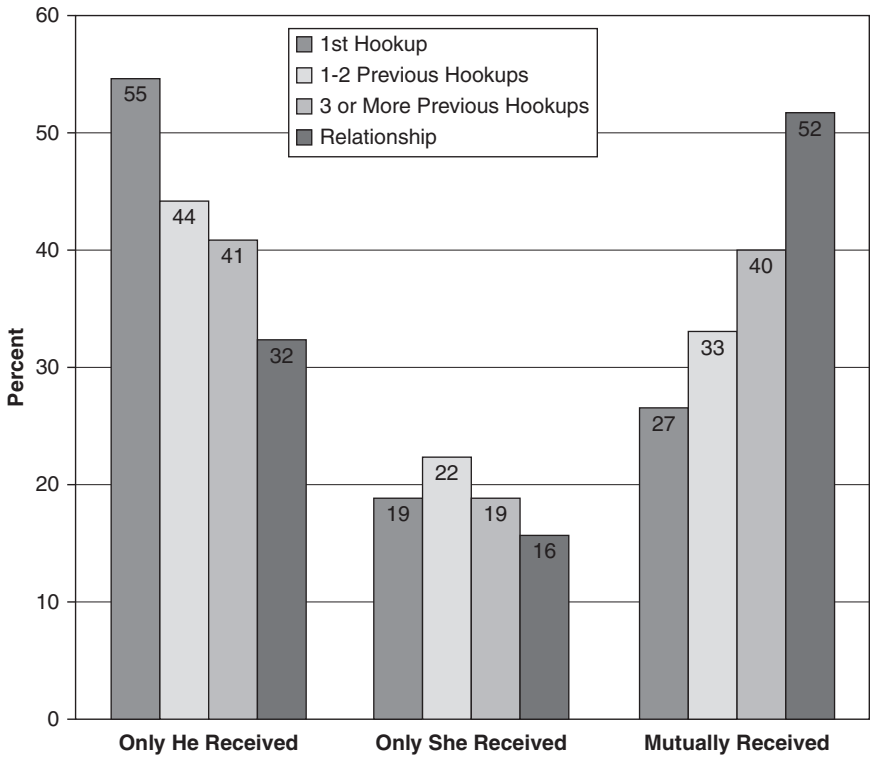

Figure 31.3 | Percent of Men and Women Receiving Oral Sex in Events Where At Least One Received Oral Sex and Intercourse Did Not Occur, in Four Sexual Contexts

What about when the couple had intercourse? Our survey showed that when they also had intercourse, men received oral sex in 77 percent of first hookups, 82 percent of second or third hookups, 88 percent of repeat hookups, and 91 percent of relationship events. Women, on the other hand, received oral sex between 60 percent and 68 percent of the time in hookups, but in 84 percent of relationship events. And, sure enough, women's orgasm rates reflect the difference. In events that included intercourse and oral sex for the woman, she was generally more likely to report an orgasm than when intercourse was not combined with oral sex.[21] In repeat hookups with intercourse, she had an orgasm 40 percent of the time if there was no oral sex but 55 percent of the time when intercourse was accompanied by oral sex. In relationships, orgasms in women increased from

55 percent when there was intercourse but no oral sex to 80 percent when oral sex was combined with intercourse. Oral sex is important for some women to have orgasms, so the fact that women are much more likely to receive it in repeat hookups and relationships is part of why they have orgasms more often in those contexts.[22]

These findings suggest that women treat hookup partners with sexual generosity—often giving oral sex even in first hookups. Men, on the other hand, appear to be comparatively sexually selfish in hookups, particularly first hookups, and more sexually generous as they become more committed. This pattern is built into gendered sexual scripts: Men feel entitled to fellatio on a first or second hookup and women obligated to provide it, while women do not similarly feel entitled to cunnilingus, nor do men feel obligated to give it.[23]

This brings us to a good news/bad news story about gender equality in sex. Our culture continues to have a double standard that judges women's and men's sexual practices differently. In the past, women were expected to be virgins before marriage, while men were not.[24] Women were evaluated negatively for premarital sex, and they were certainly not viewed as entitled to sexual satisfaction in premarital sexual relationships. Over the course of the past forty years or so, among most groups the stigma associated with premarital sex within relationships for women has almost entirely disappeared. The removal of this stigma has the added bonus of making it not just acceptable for women to have sex in premarital relationships, but acceptable for women to *enjoy* it. Men and women agree that it is normal for women to expect sexual satisfaction in relationships, to ask for what they need to get it, and to be disappointed, and perhaps even end relationships, if they do not get it. Relationships have become defined as an appropriate space for unmarried women to express sexual desire and to engage in sexual exploration. Men and women also agree that it is expected that men in a relationship attend to their partners' sexual needs as well as their own. This is the good news, and it accounts for the greater reciprocity of oral sex in relationships, as many men now care about women's pleasure in relationships.

The bad news is that sexual double standards have not disappeared. Instead, what we see now is a new double standard, in which women who seek sexual pleasure *outside* of committed relationships are judged more harshly than men who do. Men and women at both schools told us that women perceived as hooking up too much, or going too far on hookups, are called "sluts" by both men and women.[25] Along with ambivalence about women's participation in sex outside of relationships comes ambivalence about women's pleasure in these contexts. The survival of a sexual double standard may be an important reason that men tend to treat hookup and relationship partners differently—in short, some men think that that it is acceptable to be sexually selfish with hookup partners, especially

first-time partners. Men's lack of respect for women who will have sex outside of a relationship seems to translate into a sense that hookup partners are not owed the same level of sexual reciprocity as girlfriends—both in terms of what sex acts are engaged in (e.g., giving her oral sex) and in the care and attention to her sexual pleasure.

In interviews, men were up-front about expressing different levels of concern for hookup and relationship partners. For example, one man, after explaining that, with his girlfriend, "definitely oral is really important [for her to orgasm], you can do it for pretty much, as long as needed," told us that in a hookup, "I don't give a shit." Another noted that, "I mean like if you're just like hooking up with someone, I guess it's more of a selfish thing." A third man explained that:

> Now that I'm in a relationship, I think [her orgasm is] actually pretty important. More important than [in a] hookup. Because you have more invested in that person. You know, when you have sex, it's more a reciprocal thing. When it's a hookup you feel less investment. You still want [her to orgasm] in that, sort of, "I'm a guy who's the greatest lover in the world and I want to, you should orgasm."

This man suggested that his interest in a hookup partner having an orgasm was primarily selfish, as her pleasure reflected on his sexual performance and sense of masculinity. A number of others noted that in hookups her orgasm just did not matter. In contrast, men's comments revealed universal endorsement of the notion of women's entitlement to sexual pleasure in relationships. For example, one man explained, with pride, that:

> [In my relationship] she comes every time and that's because I know what she likes and I make sure she does. And if I have to go down on her for a longer period of time, I'll do that. I've a pretty good idea of what she likes and it's been partly through trial and error, partly through explicit instruction. She definitely likes for me to go down on her and usually it goes both ways before we have sex.

This passage suggests—and this is reflected throughout the interviews—that the importance of oral sex to women's orgasm is well-understood by college men.

Some women complained about the lack of mutuality in oral sex, particularly in early hookups. One woman said, "When I . . . meet somebody and I'm gonna have a random hookup . . . from what I have seen, they're not even trying to, you know, make it a mutual thing." Another complained, "He did that thing where . . . they put their hand on the top of your head . . . and I hate that! . . . Especially 'cause there was no effort made to, like, return that favor." A third

woman, complained of a recent encounter, "I just was with some stupid guy at a frat party and we were in his room and I gave head. And I was kind of waiting and he fell asleep. And I was like, 'Fuck this,' and I just left. It's degrading." This woman did not consider hooking up to be degrading. What she felt was degrading was the one-sided nature of the encounter. Some women reported learning to turn the tables. For example, one assertive woman said, "(I)n my first relationship . . . it was very one way . . . and that just didn't do much for me in terms of making me feel good about myself . . . so . . . I hate it when a guy is like take your head and try and push it down, because I then just switch it around to make them go down first usually. And some guys say no and then I just say no if they say no."

Women provided descriptions of sexually attentive boyfriends, confirming men's self-reports. For example, in describing her boyfriend, one woman told us that:

> I know that he wants to make me happy. I know that he wants me to orgasm. I know that, and like just me knowing that we are connected and like we're going for the same thing and that like he cares.

While women did not describe perfect gender equality in their sexual relationships, in general students reported that their relationships were characterized by much greater mutuality than their hookups.[26]

Women's Agency: Genital Self-Stimulation and Entitlement to Pleasure

It is not just men whose sexual practices may be affected by the new version of the sexual double standard. The double standard may also lead women to feel ambivalent about enjoying hookup sex, or not entitled to pleasure within it. While we typically think of the double standard as involving how men and women are differently judged for *participating* in sex, double standards also often involve gendered notions about appropriate degrees of *enthusiasm, pleasure, or initiative.* In interviews with adolescent girls, Deborah Tolman found that the expectation that it is girls' job to play the role of the "gatekeeper" interfered with girls' experience of bodily desire because they had to monitor and suppress their own physical responses in order to keep the sexual activity from going "too far."[27]

We found both quantitative and qualitative evidence that women feel less entitled to pleasure in hookup contexts than in relationships. In the survey data, the practice of women stimulating their own genitals with a hand as part of partnered sex, much as one would in masturbation, proved to be particularly interesting.

Engaging in this practice clearly shows one's interest in one's *own* pleasure, and reveals to a sex partner one's familiarity and competence with masturbatory technique. We asked students if they had done this and learned that only 3 percent of women did this in a first hookup, 5 percent in a hookup with a partner hooked up with one to two times previously, 9 percent in a repeat hookup, and 24 percent in a relationship. In events where the partners had intercourse, it was also true that women were least likely to self-stimulate in first hookups and most likely in relationships. Like oral sex, self-stimulation helps women to orgasm. We found that among women having intercourse and receiving oral sex, there was still a big boost to orgasm from the addition of self-stimulation—a difference of 37 percent versus 63 percent having orgasm in first hookups, and a difference of 80 percent versus 92 percent in relationships (see Figure 4). In every context, the addition of self-stimulation made a difference to orgasm. But women were more likely to feel comfortable enough to self-stimulate in repeat hookups, and most likely in relationships. Women's reticence about self-stimulation in hookups is another part of the reason why women orgasm less in these contexts.

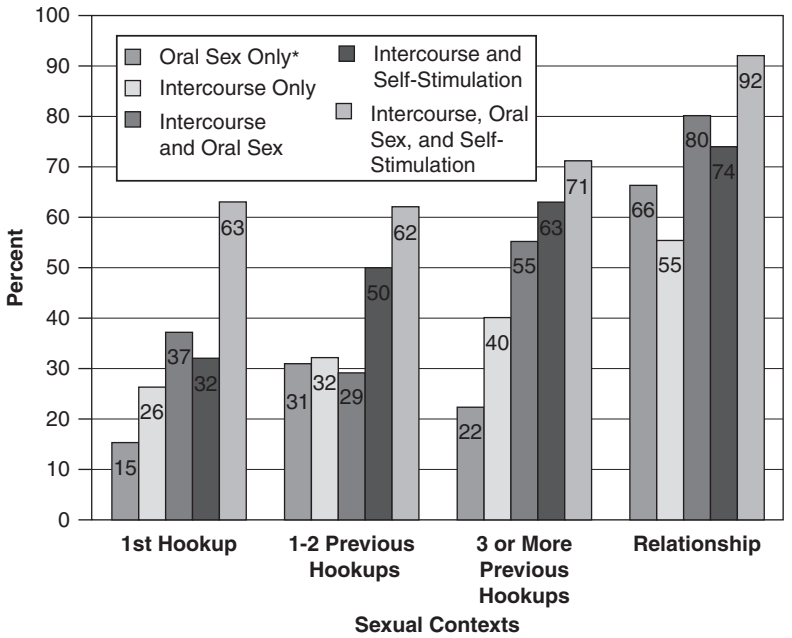

Figure 31.4 | Percent of Women Having an Orgasm in Four Sexual Contexts, by Occurrence of Selected Sexual Behaviors

*Oral sex refers to receiving oral sex.

Evidence that women feel more entitled to sexual pleasure in relationships was also present in interviews with women. In interviews, this attitude was reflected more in general discussions of rights and obligations. For example, one woman explained that, for her, "being able to communicate" about what she wanted and needed was important for good sex, but, she added, "I feel like when it's just a hookup, I just feel like I almost like don't have the right. Or not that I don't have the right but it's just not comfortable enough to be like, 'You know, hey, this isn't doing [it] for me.'" In contrast, a number of women stated their sense of entitlement to good sex within a relationship:

> I think that I'm assertive enough of a person to know what it takes for me to orgasm and like be able to communicate that. I probably would try to work it out, try to give him more practice, more lessons, before I would ultimately break off the relationship. But I I'm gonna say this very hesitatingly, I probably would end the relationship after having tried many, many things to fix it so that it's sexually pleasurable.

While she was willing to work hard with a boyfriend to improve sex to make sure she had orgasms, she viewed lack of success in this department as grounds to end the relationship. This sense of entitlement to sexual satisfaction was less evident in women's discussions of hookup sex—although there was variation on this issue. A number of women noted that they had gotten better over time about insisting on getting their needs met in hookups.

One woman, implicitly contrasting relationships with hookups, pointed to the more egalitarian nature of relationship sex:

> I think also just because in a relationship, there's much more expected as far as like equality wise, like give and take sexually. If you're gonna be in a relationship, it's expected, like more equality. You can be more fun when you're in a relationship and you're really comfortable with someone. You can explore more, be more fun and goofy and stuff like that which I think is always fun too.

Her reference to exploring in a relationship hints at the way that relationships, by creating a zone in which sex is viewed as acceptable for women, give women license to relax (e.g., be "goofy") and experiment. One woman noted that she could imagine the conditions for good sex to be present outside of a relationship:

> But for me, I feel that to have good sex there's a few qualities that need to be present. Like the desirability and that confidence in being able to ask for what you want or what you don't want. And if you can find that outside of a relationship, I think that's

> good. But I feel that [it] would be a lot more difficult to find those qualities with someone that you're not in a relationship with.

And some women did find the conditions necessary for good sex outside of relationships. The more times couples hooked up, the greater the degree of comfort and familiarity, and, consequently, the higher the rates of orgasm.

It is important, however, to emphasize that differences in rates of orgasm in hookups and relationships are not driven *solely* by the behaviors we were able to measure, such as whether the woman received oral sex or engaged in self-stimulation. We suspect that a sense of entitlement led to other behavioral changes by women in repeat hookups and relationships that our survey didn't measure—such as initiating changes in position. But as Figure 4 shows, at every level of sexual activity, relationship sex yields orgasm for women at higher rates than hookup sex (and repeat hookups at higher rates than first hookups). This pattern is true for men as well as for women, although both context and behavior seem to matter more for women than for men. Women's rates of orgasm become nearly universal and almost converge with men's (92 percent compared with men's 96 percent) only in one situation—in relationships when couples engaged in intercourse and the women received oral sex and engaged in self-stimulation. This convergence suggests that a gender gap in orgasm is not inevitable, but it is largely a consequence of the social organization of sexuality.

Overall, our findings suggest that women's orgasm is strongly affected by how comfortable women are to seek their own sexual pleasure, how motivated men are to provide stimulation of the sort that a particular woman finds pleasurable, and the extent to which either partner engages in behaviors that provide plentiful clitoral stimulation for women. We strongly suspect that the sexual double standard is an important factor behind why women feel less entitled to sexual pleasure in hookups. The sexual double standard also permits men not to care about their partner's pleasure in hookups. Women would orgasm more in hookups if their sexual satisfaction were considered to be as important as that of their male partners.[28]

Conclusion

As measured by orgasm, relationship sex is better than hookup sex for both men and women, but especially for women. Similarly, sex is better in repeat hookups than in first hookups, particularly for women. The gender gap in orgasm is the lowest in relationships, in part because men are more likely to engage in cunnilingus—a practice strongly associated with women's orgasm—in relationships

than in hookups. In contrast, women engage in fellatio at high rates across all contexts. The skewed nature of sexual reciprocity is in part a consequence of a new version of the old sexual double standard. In relationships, today's norms support women's right to sexual pleasure, whereas in hookups, especially first hookups, the double standard means that the man does not feel obligated to provide oral sex or to ensure his partner's sexual satisfaction. Women's behavior varies across these contexts, too. In early hookups, women may feel they have to focus on limiting how far things go because of concerns about negative judgments if they go too far. Many don't feel comfortable enough to focus on their own pleasure through self-stimulation of their genitals, or to communicate what they want. Our argument is that in relationships, women are more free of the effects of the double standard, and this is a good part of why there is less of an orgasm gap between men and women who are in relationships.

If we think the current hookup culture doesn't foster gender equality or good sex for all women, what would be better? According to sexual conservatives, the sexual revolution has led men to have better access to sex, but it has also led women to be exploited by men who don't respect the women they have sex with and don't concern themselves with women's pleasure. In this view, women would be better off refusing to hook up, and instead holding out for being in relationships before they have sex.

In one sense our research supports this strategy; if college women want good sex without stigma, relationships make sense. This may help explain why college women report a stronger desire for relationships than college men.[29] Men, who are less stigmatized for having sex outside of relationships, may prefer hookups because they provide sex with orgasms, while not limiting their options to hook up with other people. Thus, one way to view gender inequality in college sex is as a gender struggle over hookups versus relationships as contexts for having sex. From this perspective, women try to form relationships while men try to avoid them. Some research suggests that women participate in lower-quality hookup sex because they can't get men to commit to relationships and in hopes that a series of hookups will turn into a relationship.[30] If this is the main reason why so much of the sex college women engage in does not lead to orgasm, perhaps a campaign to move all sex back into relationships could be seen as a move toward gender equality.

But moving college sex back into relationships would have some drawbacks. First, not all women want relationships with their hookup partners. We found that, although more women than men reported an interest in a relationship with their most recent hookup partner, fewer than half of the women reported any such interest. At the same time, after a hookup, women reported high levels of enjoyment (even without orgasm) and low levels of regret.[31] These findings are

inconsistent with the view that college women would prefer relationships as a context for all of their sexual activity. Second, focusing exclusively on getting sex back into relationships would not improve the treatment of those women chose to hook up. The woman who was annoyed with her partner who fell asleep after getting fellatio did not want a relationship with this man—she just wanted him to be considerate enough to return the favor. And, third, while relationships are better contexts for sex than hookups, relationships involve a lot more than sex. Sometimes relationships lead women to withdraw from college or scale back on their career ambitions; even worse, they sometimes involve physical or emotional abuse.[32] In these cases, relationships are not good options for women.

Our research suggests a second, complementary response to the poor quality of hookup sex for women. In addition to creating conditions that facilitate college relationships, we advocate addressing factors that degrade the quality of hookup sex for women—sexual double standards and lack of reciprocity. A challenge to the contemporary sexual double standard would mean defending the position that young women and men are equally entitled to sexual activity, sexual pleasure, and sexual respect in hookups as well as relationships. To achieve this, the attitudes and practices of both men and women need to be confronted. Men should be challenged to treat even first hookup partners as generously as the women they hook up with treat them, and with the respect and consideration that they treat their girlfriends. (They might find that if they did so, more women would want to hook up with them and that the hookups would be more fun!) Women should grow into adulthood with a sense of entitlement to sex and sexual pleasure. For women, a first condition is understanding their own sexual response (e.g., learning how to masturbate). A second condition is the confidence to ask for what they want *in all contexts*. This means assertiveness to say "no" as well as to say "yes."[33] If this seems utopian at present, this is evidence of how far we have to go to achieve gender equality in premarital sexual relations.

32

Falling Back on Plan B: The Children of the Gender Revolution Face Uncharted Territory

Kathleen Gerson

Young adults today grew up with mothers who joined the workplace and parents whose relationships often departed from traditional marriage. Now facing their own choices, what do the women and men of this new generation hope and plan to do in their own lives? In contrast to popular images of twenty- and thirty-somethings returning to tradition, this chapter demonstrates that most young people want to create a lasting marriage (or a "marriage-like" relationship) and to find a personal balance between home and work. Most women and men are more alike than different in their aspirations, with both hoping to blend the traditional value of lifelong commitment with the modern value of flexible, egalitarian sharing. Yet, these children of the gender revolution are also developing strategies to prepare for "second-best" options. Fearful that they will not find the right partner to help them integrate work with family caretaking, most women see work as essential to their survival. Worried about time-greedy workplaces, most men hope to avoid the costs that equal sharing might exact on their careers. The differing fallback positions of "self-reliant" women and "neo-traditional" men may point to a growing gender divide, but they do not reflect this generation's highest aspirations.

Young adults today grew up with mothers who broke barriers in the workplace and parents who forged innovative alternatives to traditional marriage. These "children of the gender revolution" now face a world that is far different from that of their parents or grandparents. While massive changes in work and family arrangements have expanded their options, these changes also pose

new challenges to crafting a marriage, rearing children, and building a career. Members of this new generation walk a fine line between their desire to achieve egalitarian, sharing relationships that can meld with satisfying work, and succumbing to the realities of gender conflict, fragile relationships, and uncertain job prospects. The choices they make will shape work and family life for decades to come.

Social forecasters have reached starkly different conclusions about what these choices will be. Some proclaim that the recent upturn in "opt-out" mothers foreshadows a wider return to tradition among younger women.[1] Others believe the rising number of single adults foretells a deepening "decline of commitment" that is threatening family life and the social fabric.[2] While there is little doubt that tumultuous changes have shaped the lives of a new generation, there is great disagreement about how. Does the diversification of families into two-earner, single-parent, and cohabiting forms represent a waning of family life or the growth of more flexible relationships? Will this new generation integrate family and work in new ways, or will older patterns inexorably pull them back?

To find out how members of the first generation to grow up in diversifying families look back on their childhoods and forward to their own futures, I conducted in-depth, life history interviews with a carefully selected group of young people between eighteen and thirty-two. These young women and men experienced the full range of changes that have taken place in family life, and most lived in some form of "nontraditional" arrangement at some point in their childhood.[3] My interviews reveal a generation that does not conform to prevailing media stereotypes, whether they depict declining families or a return to strict gender divisions in caretaking and breadwinning.

In contrast to popular images of twenty- and thirty-somethings who wish to return to tradition or reject family life altogether, the young women and men I interviewed are more focused on *how well* their parents met the challenges of providing economic and emotional support than on *what form* their families took. Now facing their own choices, women and men share a set of lofty aspirations. Despite their varied family experiences, most hope to blend the traditional value of a lifelong relationship with the modern value of flexibly sharing work, child care, and domestic chores. In the best of all possible worlds, the majority would like to create a lasting marriage (or a "marriage-like" relationship) that allows them to balance home and work in a flexible, egalitarian way.

Yet, young people are also developing strategies to prepare for "second best" options in a world where time-demanding workplaces, a lack of child care, and fragile relationships may place their ideals out of reach. Concerned about the difficulty of finding a reliable and egalitarian partner to help them integrate work with family caretaking, most women see work as essential to their own and their

children's survival, whether or not they marry. Worried about time-greedy workplaces, most men feel they must place work first and will need to count on a partner at home. As they prepare for second-best options, the differing fallback positions of "self-reliant" women and "neo-traditional" men may point to a new gender divide. But this divide does not reflect a new generation's highest aspirations for blending lifelong commitment and flexible, egalitarian sharing in their relationships.

Growing Up in Changing Families

Even though theorists and social commentators continue to debate the merits of various family forms, my interviewees did not focus on their family's "structure."[4] Instead, I found large variation among children who grew up in apparently similar family types. Those who grew up in families with a homemaking mother and breadwinning father were divided in their assessments of this family structure. While a little more than half thought this was the best arrangement, close to half reached a different conclusion. When being a homemaker and out of the workforce appeared to undermine a mother's satisfaction, disturb the household's harmony, or threaten its economic security, the children concluded that it would have been better if their mothers had pursued a sustained commitment to work.

Many of those who grew up in a single-parent home also expressed ambivalence about their parents' breakups. Slightly more than half wished their parents had stayed together, but close to half believed that a breakup, while not ideal, was better than continuing to live in a conflict-ridden or silently unhappy home.[5] The longer-term consequences of a breakup shaped the lessons children drew. If their parents got back on their feet and created better lives, children developed surprisingly positive outlooks on the decision to separate.

Those who grew up in a dual-earner home were the least ambivalent about their parents' arrangements. More than three-fourths believed that having two work-committed parents provided increased economic resources and also promoted marriages that seemed more egalitarian and satisfying.[6] If the pressures of working long hours or coping with blocked opportunities and family-unfriendly workplaces took their toll, however, some children concluded that having overburdened, time-stressed caretakers offset these advantages.

In short, growing up in this era of diverse families led children to focus more on how well—or poorly—parents (and other caretakers) were able to meet the twin challenges of providing economic and emotional support mother than on

its form. Even more important, children experienced family life as a dynamic process that changed over time. Since family life is best seen as a film, not a snapshot, the key to understanding young people's views lies in charting the diverse paths their families took.

Family Paths and Gender Flexibility

Families can take different paths from seemingly common starting points, and similar types of families can travel toward different destinations. When young adults reflect on their families, they focus on how their homes either came to provide stability and support or failed to do so. About a third of my interviewees reported growing up in a stable home, while a quarter concluded that their families grew more supportive as time passed. In contrast, just under one in ten reported living in a chronically insecure home, while a bit more than a third felt that family support eroded as they grew up. Why, then, do some children look back on families that became more supportive and secure, while others experienced a decline in their family's support?

Parents' strategies for organizing breadwinning and caretaking hold the key to understanding a family's pathway.[7] Flexible strategies, which allowed mothers, fathers, and other caretakers to transcend rigid gender boundaries, helped families prevail in the face of unexpected economic and interpersonal crises. Inflexible responses, in contrast, left families ill-equipped to cope with eroding supports for a strict division in mothers' and fathers' responsibilities.

Rising Family Fortunes

The sources of expanding support differed by family situation, but all reflected a flexible response to unexpected difficulties. Sometimes marriages became more equal as demoralized mothers went to work and pushed for change or helped overburdened fathers. Josh, for example, reported that his mother's decision to go to work gave her the courage to insist that his father tackle his drug addiction:[8]

> My parents fought almost constantly. Then my mom got a job. They separated about five, six, seven months. Even though I was upset, I thought it was for the best. That's when (my dad) got into some kind of program and my mom took him back. That changed the whole family dynamic. We got extremely close. A whole new relationship developed with my father.

Chris recalled how his mother's job allowed his father to quit a dead-end job and train for a more satisfying career:

> Between 7th and 8th grade, my dad had a business which didn't work. It was a dead-end thing, and he came home frustrated, so my mom got him to go to school. It was hard financially, but it was good because he was actually enjoying what he was doing. He really flourished. A lot of people say, "Wow, your mom is the breadwinner, and that's strange." It's not. It is a very joint thing.

Parental breakups that relieved domestic conflict or led to the departure of an unstable parent also helped caretaking parents get back on their feet. Connie recounted how her mother was able to create a more secure home after separating from an alcoholic husband and finding a job that offered a steady income and a source of personal esteem:

> My father just sat in the corner and once in a while got angry at us, but [my mom]—I don't know if it was him or the money, but she didn't stand up for herself as much as I think she should. The tension with my dad never eased, and my mom had gotten sick with multiple bleeding ulcers. That was her real turning point. It was building inside of her to leave, 'cause she'd got a job and started to realize she had her own money . . . [She] became a much happier person. And because she was better, I was better. I had a weight taken off of me.

More stable and egalitarian remarriages could also give children the economic and emotional support they had not previously received. Having never known her biological father, Shauna recalled how her stepfather became a devoted caretaker and the "real" father she always wanted:

> At first, I was feeling it was a bad change because I wanted my mom to myself. Then my mom said, "Why don't you call him daddy?" The next thing I was saying "Daddy!" I remember the look on his face and his saying "She called me daddy!" I was so happy. After that, he's always been my dad, and there's never been any question about it. . . . [He] would get home before my mom, so he would cook the dinner and clean. My dad spoiled me for any other man, because this is the model I had.

When Isabella's parents divorced, her grandfather became a treasured caretaker:

> It's not like I didn't have a father, because my grandfather was always there. He was there to take me to after-school clubs and pick me up. I was sheltered—he had to

take me to the library, wait till I finished all my work, take me home. I call him dad. Nobody could do better.

And when Antonio's single mother lost her job, his grandparents provided essential income that kept the family afloat:

My mom and grandparents were the type of people that even if we didn't have [money], we was gonna get it. Their ideal is, "I want to give you all the things I couldn't have when I was young." My grandparents and my mother thought like that, so no matter how much in poverty we were living, I was getting everything I wanted.

Despite their obvious differences, the common ingredient in these narratives is the ability of parents and other caretakers to reorganize child rearing and breadwinning in a more flexible, less gender-divided way. Mothers going to work, fathers becoming more involved in child rearing, and others joining in the work of family life—all of these strategies helped families overcome unexpected difficulties and create more economically secure, emotionally stable homes. Growing flexibility in how parents met the challenges of earning needed income and caring for children nourished parental morale, increased a home's financial security, and provided inspiring models of adult resilience. While children acknowledged the costs, they valued these second chances and gleaned lessons from watching parents find ways to create a better life. Looking back, they could conclude that "all's well that end's well."

Declining Family Fortunes

For some children, home life followed a downward slope. Here, too, the key to their experiences lay in the work and caretaking strategies of those entrusted with their care, but here gender inflexibility in the face of domestic difficulties left children with less support than they had once taken for granted. Faced with a father's abandonment or a stay-at-home mother's growing frustration, children described how their parents' resistance to more flexible strategies for apportioning paid and domestic work left them struggling to meet children's economic and emotional needs. Over time, deteriorating marriages, declining parental morale, and financial insecurity shattered a once rosy picture of family stability and contentment.

When parents became stuck in a rigid division of labor, with unhappy mothers and fathers ill-equipped to support the household, traditional marriages could

deteriorate. Sarah explains how her mother became increasingly depressed and "over-involved" after relinquishing a promising career to devote all of her time to child rearing:

> When my sister was born, [my mom's] job had started up, career-wise, so she wasn't happy [but] she felt she had to be home. She had a lot of conflicts about work and home and opted to be really committed to family, but also resented it. . . . She was the supermom, but just seemed really depressed a lot of time . . . [It came] with an edge to it—"in return, I want you to be devoted to me." If we did something separate from her, that was a major problem. So I was making distance because I felt I had to protect myself from this invasion. . . . She thought she was doing something good to sacrifice for us . . . but it would have been better if my mother was happier working.

Megan recalls her father's mounting frustration as his income stagnated and he endured the complaints of a wife who expected to him to provide a "better lifestyle":

> My mother was always dissatisfied. She wanted my father to be more ambitious, and he wasn't an ambitious man. As long as he was supporting the family, it didn't matter if it was a bigger house or a bigger car. Forty years of being married to a woman saying, "Why don't we have more money?"—I think that does something to your self-esteem.

Unresolved power struggles in dual-earner marriages could also cause problems, as wives felt the weight of "doing it all" and fathers resisted egalitarian sharing. Juggling paid and domestic work left Justin's mother exhausted, while a high-pressured job running a restaurant left his father with no time to attend nightly dinners or even Little League games. Justin describes the strain his parents experienced and its effect on him:

> I was slightly disappointed that I could not see my father more—because I understood but also because it depends on the mood he's in. And it got worse as work [went] downhill . . . [So] I can't model my relationship on my parents. My mother wasn't very happy. There was a lot of strain on her.

Harmful breakups, where fathers abandoned their children and mothers could not find new ways to support the family or create an identity beyond wife and mother, also eroded family support. Nina remembers how her father's disappearance, combined with her mother's reluctance to seek a job and create a

more independent life, triggered the descent from a comfortable middle-class existence to one of abiding poverty:

> My mother ended up going on welfare. We went from a nice place to living in a really cruddy building. And she's still in the same apartment. To this day, my sister will not speak to my father because of what he's done to us.

Children (and their parents) sometimes lost the support of other caretakers. Shortly after Jasmine's father left to live with another woman and her mother fell into a deep depression, she suffered the loss of a "third parent" when her beloved grandmother died. Her grandmother's loss left her feeling especially bereft after her father's departure:

> It was so great when my parents were together any my grandmother was alive, so when she died, it was really hard. I lost [the money], and I lost her just being there. We were going through a real trauma in my whole family, so when [my father] left, it was like another death. I don't think it would have been any better if they'd stayed together, but my grandmother being alive would have been much more of a difference.

The events that propelled families on a downward track—including rising financial instability, declining parental involvement and morale, and a dearth of other supportive caretakers—share a common element. Whether parents faced marital impasses or difficult breakups, resistance to more flexible gender arrangements left them unable to sustain an emotionally or economically secure home. Their children concluded that all did *not* end well.

In sum, sustained parental support and economic security were more important to my informants than the form their families took. Since any family type holds potential pitfalls if parents do not or cannot prevail over the difficulties that arise, conventional categories that see families as static "forms" cannot account for the ways that families change as children grow to adulthood. Instead, young women and men from diverse family backgrounds recounted how parents and other family members who transcended gender boundaries and developed flexible strategies for breadwinning and caretaking were better able to cope with marital crises, economic insecurities, and other unanticipated challenges.

A range of social trends—including the erosion of single-earner paychecks, the fragility of modern marriages, and the expanding options and pressures for women to work—require varied and versatile ways of earning and caring. These institutional shifts make gender flexibility increasingly desirable and even essential. Flexible approaches to work and parenting help families

adapt, while inflexible ones leave them ill-prepared to cope with new economic and social realities.

Converging Ideals, Diverging Fallbacks

How do young adults use the lessons of growing up in changing families to formulate their own plans for the future? Women and men from diverse family backgrounds share a set of lofty aspirations. Whether or not their parents stayed together, more than nine out of ten hope to rear children in the context of a satisfying lifelong bond. Far from rejecting the value of commitment, almost everyone wants to create a lasting marriage or "marriage-like" partnership. This does not, however, reflect a desire for a traditional relationship. Most also aspire to build a committed bond where both paid work and family caretaking are shared. Three-fourths of those who grew up in dual-earner homes want their spouse to share breadwinning and caretaking, but so do more that two-thirds of those from traditional homes, and close to nine-tenths of those with single parents. While four-fifths of women want an egalitarian relationship, so do two-thirds of men. In short, most share an ideal that stresses the value of a lasting, flexible, and egalitarian partnership with considerable room for personal autonomy. Amy, an Asian American with two working parents, thus explains that:

> I want a fifty-fifty relationship, where we both have the potential of doing everything—both of us working and dealing with kids. With regard to career, if neither has flexibility, then one of us will have to sacrifice for one period, and the other for another.

And Wayne, an African American raised by a single mother, expresses the essentially same hopes when he says that:

> I don't want the '50s type of marriage, where I come home and she's cooking. I want her to have a career of her own. I want to be able to set my goals, and she can do what she wants, too.

While most of my interviewees hope to strike a flexible breadwinning and caretaking balance with an egalitarian partner, they are also skeptical about their chances of achieving this ideal. Women and men both worry that work demands, a lack of child-rearing supports, and the fragility of modern relationships will undermine their aspirations to forge an enduring, egalitarian partnership. In the face of barriers to equality, most have concluded that they have little choice but

to prepare for options that may fall substantially short of their ideals. Despite their shared aspirations, however, men and women are facing different institutional obstacles and cultural pressures, which are prompting divergent fallback strategies. If they cannot find a supportive partner, most women prefer self-reliance over economic dependence within a traditional marriage. Most men, if they cannot strike an equal balance between work and parenting, prefer a neo-traditional arrangement that allows them to put work first and rely on a partner for the lion's share of caregiving. In the event that Plan A proves unreachable, women and men are thus pursuing a different Plan B as insurance against their "worst case" fears. These divergent fallback strategies point toward the emergence of a new gender divide between young women, most of whom see a need for self-reliance, and young men, who are more inclined to retain a modified version of traditional expectations.

Women's Plan B

Torn between high hopes for combining work and family and worries about sustaining a lasting and satisfying partnership, young women are navigating uncertain waters. While some are falling back on domesticity, most prefer to find a more independent base than traditional marriage provides. In contrast to the media-driven message that young women are turning away from work and career in favor of domestic pursuits, the majority of my interviewees are determined to seek financial and emotional self-reliance, whether or not they also forge a committed relationship. Regardless of class, race, or ethnicity, most are reluctant to surrender their autonomy in a traditional marriage. When the bonds of marriage are so fragile, relying on a husband for economic security seems foolhardy. And if a relationship deteriorates, economic dependence on a man leaves few means of escape. Danisha, an African American who grew up in an inner-city, working-class neighborhood, and Jennifer, who was raised in a middle-class, predominantly white suburb, agree. Danisha proclaims that:

> Let's say that my marriage doesn't work. Just in case, I want to establish myself, because I don't ever want to end up, like, "What am I going to do?" I want to be able to do what I have to do and still be okay.

Jennifer agrees:

> I will have to have a job and some kind of stability before considering marriage. Too many of my mother's friends went for that—"Let him provide everything"—and they're stuck in a very unhappy relationship, but can't leave because they can't

> provide for themselves or the children they now have. So it's either welfare or putting up with somebody else's c–p.

Hoping to avoid being trapped in an unhappy marriage or left by an unreliable partner without a way to survive, almost three-fourths of women plan to build a non-negotiable base of self-reliance and an independent identity in the world of paid work.[9] But they do not view this strategy as incompatible with the search for a life partner. Instead, it reflects their determination to set a high standard for a worthy relationship. Economic self-reliance and personal independence make it possible to resist "settling" for anything less than a satisfying, mutually supportive bond.

Women from all backgrounds have concluded that work provides indispensable economic, social, and emotional resources. They have drawn lessons about the rewards of self-reliance and the perils of domesticity from their mothers, other women, and their own experiences growing up. When the bonds of marriage are fragile, relying on a husband for economic security seems foolhardy. They are thus seeking alternatives to traditional marriage by establishing a firm tie to paid work, by redesigning motherhood to better fit their work aspirations, and by looking to kin and friends as a support network to enlarge and, if needed, substitute, for an intimate relationship. These strategies do not preclude finding a life partner, but they reflect a determination to set a high standard for choosing one. Maria, who grew up in a two-parent home in a predominantly white, working-class suburb, declares:

> I want to have this person to share [my] life with—[someone] that you're there for as much as they're there for you. But I can't settle.

And Rachel, whose Latino parents separated when she was young, shares this view:

> I'm not afraid of being alone, but I am afraid of being with somebody's who's a jerk. I want to get married and have children, but it has to be under the right circumstances, with the right person.

Maria and Rachel also agree that if a worthy relationship ultimately proves out of reach, then remaining single need not mean social disconnection. Kin and friends provide a support network that enlarges and, if needed, even substitutes for an intimate relationship. Maria explains:

> If I don't find [a relationship], then I cannot live in sorrow. It's not the only thing that's ultimately important. If I didn't have my family, if I didn't have a career, if

> I didn't have friends, I would be equally unhappy. [A relationship] is just one slice of the pie.

And Rachel concurs:

> I can spend the rest of my life on my own, and as long as I have my sisters and my friends, I'm okay.

By blending support from friends and kin with financial self-sufficiency, these young women are pursuing a strategy of autonomy rather than placing their own fate or their children's fate in the hands of a traditional relationship. Whether or not this strategy ultimately leads to marriage, it appears to offer the safest and most responsible way to prepare for the uncertainties of relationships and the barriers to men's equal sharing.

Men's Plan B

Young men face a different dilemma than women: Torn between women's pressures for an egalitarian partnership and their own desire to succeed—or at least survive—in time-demanding workplaces, they are more inclined to fall back on a modified traditionalism that contrasts vividly with women's search for self-reliance. While they do not want or expect to return to a 1950s model of fathers as the only breadwinner, most men prefer a modified traditionalism that recognizes a mother's right (and need) to work, but puts his own career first. Although Andrew grew up in a consistently two-income home, he distinguished between a woman's "choice" to work and a man's "responsibility" to support his family:

> I would like to have it be equal—just from what I was exposed to and what attracts me—but I don't have a set definition for what that would be like. I would be fine if both of us were working, but if she thought, "At this point in my life, I don't want to work," then it would be fine.

Because equality may prove to be too costly to their careers, seven out of ten men are pursuing a strategy that positions them as the main breadwinner, even if it allows for two working spouses. When push comes to shove, and the demands of work collide with the needs of children, this approach allows men to resist equal caretaking, even in a two-earner context. Like women, men from a range of family, class, and ethnic backgrounds fall back on neo-traditionalism. They favor retaining a clear boundary between a breadwinning father and a caretaking mother, even when she holds a paid job. This neo-traditional strategy stresses

women's primary status as mothers and defines equality as a woman's "choice" to add work onto mothering.

By making room for two earners, this strategy offers the financial cushion of a second income, acknowledges women's desire for a life beyond the home, and allows for more involved fatherhood. But this vision, which still claims separate spheres of responsibility for women and men, does not challenge a man's position as the primary earner or undermine the claim that his work prospects should come first. Although James's mother became too mentally ill to care for her children or herself, Josh plans to leave the lion's share of caretaking to his wife:

> All things being equal, it [caretaking] should be shared. It may sound sexist, but if somebody's going to be the breadwinner, it's going to be me. First of all, I make a better salary, and I feel the need to work, and I just think the child really needs the mother more than the father at a young age.

Men are thus more likely to favor a fallback arrangement that retains the gender boundary between breadwinning and caretaking, even when mothers hold paid jobs. From young men's perspective, this modified but still gendered household offers women the chance to earn income and establish an identity at the workplace without imposing the costs of equal parenting on men. Granting a mother's "right" to work supports women's claims for independence, but it does not undermine men's claim that their work prospects should come first. Acknowledging men's responsibilities at home provides for more involved fatherhood, but it does not envision domestic equality. And making room for two earners provides a buffer against the difficulties of living on one income, but it does not challenge men's position as the primary earner. Modified traditionalism thus appears to be a good compromise when the career costs of equality remain so high.[10] New economic insecurities, coupled with women's growing desire for equality, are creating dilemmas for men, even if they take a different form than the ones confronting women. Ultimately, however, men's desire to protect work prerogatives collides with women's growing desire for equality and need for independence.

Across the Gender Divide

In contrast to the popular images of a generation that feels neglected by working mothers, unsettled by parental breakups, and wary of equality, these life stories show strong support for working mothers, a greater concern with the quality of a relationship, and a shared desire to create lasting, flexible, and egalitarian partnerships. The good news is that most young women and men had largely positive

experiences with mothers who worked and parents who strove for flexibility and equality. Those who grew up with a caring support network and sufficient economic security, whether in a single or a two-parent household, did well. Young women and men both recounted how gender flexibility in breadwinning and caretaking helped their parents (and other caretakers) overcome such increasingly prevalent family crises as the loss of a father's income or the decline of a mother's morale. By letting go of rigid patterns that once narrowly defined women's and men's "proper" places in the family and the wider world, all kinds of families were able to overcome unexpected challenges and create more financially stable and emotionally supportive homes. And most, even among those who grew up in less flexible families, hope to build on the gains of their parents' generation by seeking equality and flexibility in their own lives.

The bad news, however, is that most young adults remain skeptical about their chances of achieving their ideals. Amid their shared desire to transcend gender boundaries and achieve flexibility in their own lives, young women and men harbor strong concerns that their aspirations will prove impossible to reach. Faced with the many barriers to egalitarian relationships and fearful that they will not find the right partner to help them integrate work with family caretaking, they are also preparing for options that may fall substantially short of their ideals. Reversing the argument that women are returning to tradition, however, these divergent fallback strategies suggest that a new divide is emerging between "self-reliant" women, who see work, an independent income, and emotional autonomy as essential to their survival, and "neo-traditional" men, who grant women's "choice" to work but also feel the need and pressure to be a primary breadwinner.

While women are developing more innovative strategies than are men, the underlying story is one of a resilient, but realistic generation that has changed far more than the institutions it has inherited. Whether they grew up in a flexible home or one with more rigid definitions of women's and men's proper places, their hard-won lessons about the need for new, more egalitarian options for building relationships and caring for children are outpacing their ability to implement these aspirations.

Yet, young men and women still hope to reach across the divide that separates them. Aware that traditional job ladders and traditional marriages are both waning, they are seeking more flexible ways to build careers, care for families, and integrate the two.[11] Convinced that the traditional career, defined by orderly steps up an organizational chart, is a relic of the past, most hope to craft a "personal career" that is not bound by a single employer or work organization. Most men as well as women are trying to redefine the "ideal worker" to accommodate the ebb and flow of family life, even if that means sacrificing some income for

a more balanced life.[12] They hope to create a shared "work-family" career that interweaves breadwinning and caretaking.

Growing up in changing families and facing uncertainty in their own lives has left this generation weary of rigid, narrowly framed "family values" that moralize about their personal choices or those of others. They are searching for a morality without moralism that balances an ethic of tolerance and inclusiveness with the core values of behaving responsibly and caring for others. The clash between self-reliant women and neo-traditional men may signal a new divide, but it stems from intensifying work-family dilemmas, not from a decline of laudable values.

Since new social realities are forcing young adults to seek new ways to combine love and work, the best hope for bridging new gender divides lies in creating social policies that will allow twenty-first century Americans to pursue the flexible, egalitarian gender strategies they want rather than forcing them to fall back on less desirable—and ultimately less workable—options. Whether the goal is equal opportunity or a healthy family landscape, the best family values can only be achieved by creating the social supports for gender flexibility in our communities, homes, and workplaces.

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Men's Changing Contribution to Family Work

Oriel Sullivan

While women still do most of the family work (including household tasks and child care), the balance of both quantitative and attitudinal evidence over the past forty years shows a slow but significant increase in men's contributions. In this chapter, I present some of this evidence and argue that it is the combination of these different kinds of evidence that provides the most convincing case for change. In order to continue to promote change, we must understand the processes involved both at the level of the couple (through analyzing women's efforts to negotiate change in the home) and at the institutional level (through an analysis of institutional obstacles to, and facilitations of, change).

Introduction

For twenty years, research studies concluded that men's contribution to family work barely changed at a time when women were increasingly joining the workforce. The most common argument was that even though women were working longer hours on the job and cutting back on their own housework, men were not making up for women's lost hours of domestic work. But newer research has shown that men are doing significantly more, both of domestic work and, particularly, of child care. Using large-scale data and a longer perspective, it is possible to show a slow but significant change in the direction of a more equal division, with the result that more couples are sharing more tasks. While women still continue to do more family work than their male partners, convergence has been significant, with the result that the total amount of work contributed by

men and women in two-parent dual-earner families—including paid work as well as unpaid family work—is now virtually identical.[1]

In addition, there have been slow but significant changes observed over the same period in gender ideologies, as measured by attitudes to gender equality and the significance of men's domestic work performance. For example, according to national opinion polls, Americans have become slightly more conservative about marriage and divorce than they were in the 1970s and 1980s, but the belief in gender equality within families continues to gain acceptance among both men and women. A 2007 national opinion poll conducted by the Pew Research Center provides recent evidence of the increasing importance of this gender equality ideal for Americans. Sixty-two percent of respondents ranked "sharing household tasks" as very important for a successful marriage, up from 47 percent in a similar poll from 1990. The Pew Center notes that sharing household tasks was the only item showing a sharp increase from 1990–2007, taking over the number three position from the item on the importance of children for a successful marriage.[2]

In light of these various kinds of evidence, I argue that the bulk of the past literature in this area has not taken a sufficiently long view of change. Where change has been acknowledged, it has often been accompanied by the claim that the amount of change has not been meaningful. But should we have expected to see a revolutionary change since the 1960s? The question is one of emphasis: Should we see the glass as half empty (by focusing on the fact that women still perform the bulk of domestic labor and child care) or half full (by focusing on the evidence for progressive change in men's contributions)? I want to understand and promote the processes of change. Instead of concentrating on the failure to achieve absolute parity in hourly contributions, we should acknowledge the importance of a slow change that may in the end lead to significantly greater gender equality. Through an active recognition that change is occurring, albeit slowly, we can begin to develop the theoretical frameworks and the empirical tools to recognize how it happens and how it can be promoted.[3]

In the first part of this chapter, I present some of the diverse evidence for change, ranging from changes in attitudes toward gender equality to changes in actual gender practices in the domestic sphere. I address some changes in attitudes to gender equality, and changes in images of masculinity, in particular in relation to fatherhood. Such changes are indicative of shifts both in gender ideologies and practices. While evidence for change in attitudes in itself does not necessarily mean that change is occurring in the performance of family work (that is, it is not *sufficient* evidence for such change), we might well consider it a *necessary* condition for meaningful change. My general argument is that it is the combination of diverse kinds of evidence that provides the most compelling

argument for change. Thus, I turn to the quantitative empirical evidence for change in the time spent by men and women on various kinds of unpaid family work over the period from the 1960s to the 1990s.

Evidence for Change: The Changing Social and Political Environment

The association between attitudes to gender equality and the division of family work is by now well established from research based on large-scale data. In general, those men and women whose attitudes to gender equality are more positive ("liberal" or "progressive" in other formulations) tend to share domestic work more equally.[4] With respect to change in attitudes over time, the majority of research has found that there has been a movement toward a rejection of normatively defined "gender expectations" in the home. This has taken the form of a greater acceptance of nonfamilial roles for women, particularly among younger women with higher levels of education, and a rather less clear movement toward acceptance of more familial work for men. Scott and her coauthors have provided cross-national comparisons of men's and women's attitudes from several countries in Europe on three types of gender-related beliefs and attitudes: the consequences of women working for pay, gender ideology, and the importance of paid work.[5] They found different patterns of change emerging across different countries, and they speculate as to how these differences may be related to (1) patterns of female employment, (2) the consciousness-raising effects of the women's movement, and (3) the relative emphasis on individual autonomy. Their overall conclusion is that despite inter-country and cross-time variations "traditional gender roles" are increasingly rejected, although there is evidence that the pace of change slowed in the 1990s.[6] They also note that "women have been much more prepared than men to reject traditional gender role attitudes" but, significantly for the argument about change, they also report that within-cohort changes have been more rapid recently among men. This implies a faster process of change in which individuals of the same age group ("cohort") display changing attitudes over time, as opposed to changes occurring because younger cohorts have more egalitarian attitudes than older ones.

The significance of changes in attitudes among men toward gender equality is that this finding contradicts the argument that men are taking on more household responsibilities simply as a practical requirement as their partners take on paid jobs. Further evidence of men's changing attitudes comes from the recent growth of research on changing symbolic representations of masculinity.[7]

Writers on masculinity have found changing images of masculinity and fatherhood and real changes in gender practice, particularly in relation to masculine caring behavior.[8]

When images of men change in the media, we see the symbolic representation of the possibilty of "the new father." This new father, who bonds deeply with and accordingly cares for his children, according to Knijn, becomes part of male gender identification.[9] Hochschild argues for the existence of a wide diversity of choices of fathering styles, however, rather than one simplistic media image of the new father.[10] The point is taken further by Smart and Neale when they refer to the image of the new father as being composed of different and often contradictory elements.[11] The question is: To what extent can the emergence of new, diverse, and shifting images and ideals of fatherhood and masculinity be linked to empirical changes in practice?

At the turn of the twenty-first century, there is considerable evidence for changes in paternal behavior—in particular, evidence for a substantial increase in paternal involvement in child care.[12] Moreover, there is now also more general agreement in support of Coltrane's claim that "the move is towards uncoupling gender from caring."[13] A growing body of research focuses on "involved fathers" or even "equal caretakers"—fathers who participate to greater degrees in caring for children, as opposed to only filling the traditional breadwinner role. Typically, "involved fathers" do not make a distinction between mothering and fathering in caring.[14] A number of authors have directly addressed the theoretical reasons for such changes in the meaning and practice of fatherhood. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim argued that the social forces of late modernity generate increasing individualization, autonomy, and the weakening of family ties. The parent-child bond, however, is an enduring element in the family despite high rates of marital dissolution.[15] Other authors have placed more emphasis on issues of personal identity,[16] arguing that increases in involved fatherhood are: "in line with the growing awareness of, or belief in, personal identity as a reflexive identity."[17] Men are more likely to see themselves as choosing fatherhood, and how to do it, than simply following traditional life-course norms.

To summarize, the overall picture suggests shifts in attitudes and representations of masculinity occurring both within and between successive generations, and somewhat slower changes in practice, particularly in fatherhood. Such changes in attitudes and symbolic representations support the case for a change in the environment in which men and women make their choices. And, as I have already suggested, it is the *co-incidence* of changes in this wider context with the growing empirical evidence for changes in gender practices in the home that is our strongest argument for change in the direction of gender equality. These

changes in family life deserve our serious attention. I now turn to the quantitative evidence for change in men and women's contributions to family work.

Evidence for Change: The Quantitative Data

The longitudinal multinational quantitative empirical evidence for change is based on nationally representative data sets, and stretches in time from the 1960s to the 1990s. The importance of the quantitative evidence is about consistency: consistent measures across time can actually measure change.

There are several sources of quantitative evidence for long-term changes over time in the allocation of family work, of which time-use diary studies are by now perhaps the main source. In such diaries, people record their activities every ten or fifteen minutes throughout the day, which yields more accurate results than simply asking people how much time they spend in a particular activity per day. Researchers have analyzed time-use diaries and found growing evidence for change,[18] confirming that *both within and across* countries there have been changes in the amount of time that men and women spend in housework and child care and that these changes are in the direction of greater equity.

At the start of the twenty-first century, the average full-time employed American married man with children has increased his contribution to child care by four hours a week since the 1970s, and his contribution to other family work by two hours a week. Overall, he now does six hours a week of child care and ten hours a week of other family work. By comparison, the average full- or part-time employed American married woman with children is employed for fewer hours per week on average than her male counterpart, but she does eleven hours of child care (an increase of seven hours from the 1970s) and nineteen hours of other family work (a *decrease* of three hours from the 1970s). So, over thirty years, she has increased her total time devoted to family work and child care by four hours (all of it in child care), while the average full-time employed married man has increased his total by six hours (four hours in child care and two hours in other family work).[19] The outcome of these changes is that the percentage of family work and child care done by men in families in which both partners are employed has increased from something over 20 percent in the 1970s to nearly a third at the start of the twenty-first century. Men's relative contributions are even greater in those families where both partners are employed on a full-time basis. Here the contribution of the man has increased from just under 30 percent in 1975 to 37 percent by the start of the twenty-first century.[20]

Similar trends are evident across other Western countries. Using data from twenty industrialized countries over the period 1965–2003, Hook showed an overall cross-country increase in men's contribution to family work (i.e., including housework, child care, and shopping) from less than 20 percent to almost 35 percent.[21] Sullivan and Gershuny showed how this increase varied according to the *type* of family work for six countries of Europe and North America over a similar time period. For routine housework (cooking, cleaning, and clothes care), the time full-time employed women with children aged five to fifteen living with them spent in these activities decreased (by just under one hour per day), while the time full-time employed men with children of the same age spent went up (by around twenty minutes per day). This was reflected in an increase in these men's share of the routine housework from roughly 15 percent to 25 percent of the overall total. With respect to child care, women increased their time commitments and, to a lesser degree, so did men (this finding held for all employment statuses and ages of children). Both women and men also reported spending significantly more time doing another category of family work: shopping and travel (including driving children). The overall effect is of a trend toward convergence in the distribution of activities for men and women over time.[22] So change is by now widely reported—but the question remains, are such changes meaningful in magnitude?

It is true that the overall increase in men's contribution to core domestic work may not seem that impressive if we calculate the change over three decades (only twenty minutes more daily after more than thirty years). In addition, it is still reasonable to emphasize the ongoing discrepancy between the overall amount of time that women and men spend in domestic work tasks. But some authors continue to argue that the main effect involved in any change is that of women's reduction in hours spent doing housework. The upward trend for men as well as the downward trend for women in routine housework tasks is consistent in direction across different countries and statistically significant when controlling for other relevant variables. The fact that the trends for men and women move in opposite directions also supports the change to greater gender equality in the performance of domestic tasks. And although statistical significance in itself does not translate directly to substantive importance, these trends are not only statistically robust but also consistent, both internally (i.e., over time and space), and externally (in relation to other evidence for change).

How to Explain Change

Until now, I have focused on evidence for changes in men's contributions to family work. It is crucial to understand the processes that have been involved in such

changes, in order both to attempt to understand circumstances that have enabled change and to continue to promote it. The question is, then, how might we go about explaining change?

The model that I suggest starting with emphasizes the importance of daily interaction between partners, for the couple relationship constitutes the arena for gender relations and practice within the domestic sphere. There is a message here for all of us, for through this focus on daily interaction it is possible to conceive of women's everyday struggles as a part of social processes of change. Individuals bring their own resources. These resources involve their absolute and relative levels of income, their level of education, the status of their job, and their skills at negotiation or in the management of emotions.[23] In addition, all interaction necessarily occurs within a wider structural and symbolic social context. Negotiation about household labor is embedded within wider structures of diminishing patriarchy and individualism within late modern capitalism, as well as within a local context of (changing) gender ideologies.

Within this context, individuals "do gender" in the domestic sphere. The "doing gender" perspective emphasizes processes of "situated behavior," in which gender is continuously being actively constructed in interaction.[24] According to this approach, for an individual woman or man the "accomplishment" of gender involves behaving in a way that is "accountable" to expectations of appropriate gender behavior. Thus, in general, men perform normatively masculine-defined tasks and women perform normatively feminine-defined tasks in order to be accepted as "good" men and women. But since they are social constructions, the normative guidelines that regulate appropriate gender behavior are contingent on the situation, and vary from time to time and from place to place. As such, the idea of "doing gender" in daily interaction clearly provides potential for the *production* of new gender relations, and therefore for the possibility of change.

One framework for conceptualizing such change is provided by the idea of "gender consciousness." Gerson and Peiss describe gender consciousness as the extent of consciousness or awareness of gender issues.[25] This ranges from a generalized vague awareness of gender at one end of the continuum to a full consciousness of the rights that are associated with specific genders at the other. The development of this consciousness partly arises from the recognition of rights based on information from the wider society. The rise of feminism, for example, provided new conditions for the development of gender consciousness. Critically for my argument, however, social interaction also has an influence on the recognition of, and generation of, these rights. This means that the active bargaining and negotiation that women and men engage in on a daily basis can help to develop gender consciousness by acknowledging rights (and responsibilities) in social interaction. According to Thompson, gender consciousness thus constitutes

a central component of women's attempts at change.[26] The key to understanding changes in the family roles of women and men is to integrate different levels of analysis—from changing attitudes, to couple's negotiations, to observing images in the media. The model I advance is an integrative approach, which treats gender as a structure that combines individual, interactional, and institutional dimensions.[27] Thus, "actors shape the gender structure they inherit."[28] My argument is that, in order to better understand the processes of change that are occurring, we need to make connections between the wider social and political environment that affects both the public and the private spheres, and the interactions and negotiations that individuals engage in on a day-to-day basis, with the focus on gender relations and practices in the domestic sphere. It is critical to identify changes at the level of the ideologies and images that structure gendered interactions. In addition, we see how attitudes toward equality in the family have shifted across, and even within, generations. How these attitudes are shaped, and how they translate into (inter)action, is far less well researched. Empirical observations of changes in practice within the home, as measured by the time spent on different domestic tasks, are also by now well documented. But again, far less is known about the processes that have led to these changes. At this level, the key lies in the detailed analysis of processes of change as they occur in day-to-day intimate interaction. We must pay attention not just to observations of changes in practice, but also to the resources, processes, negotiations, and struggles that have led to changes, as described by the actors themselves.

Conclusion

I have presented an argument that change has happened in the division of family work. I have shown that (slow) change is ongoing by reference to the large-scale empirical documentation of who does what at home, and with evidence from changes in attitudes and symbolic representations of masculinity. It is the combination of evidence that provides a convincing argument.

Yet, we should not be complacent about these changes or their continuation. It is clear that changes toward gender equality have been struggled for, fought over, and hard-won over decades, not only in the public and political arena, but also during innumerable daily contestations and negotiations both in the home and outside of it. Change is *not* inevitable. Under the right conditions of changing gender ideologies and consciousness, we see the possibility for effecting change. One goal of feminist research has been women's empowerment, and by focusing on it daily as a potentially transformative process it is possible to conceive of women's everyday struggles with their male partners as part of social

change. According to such a perspective, individual actors are also active agents of change, even if the process may not be a rapid or an easy one. My argument is a return to the call of early second-wave feminism that "the personal is political." We should resist the fatalistic assertion that men and women come from different planets, and are thus doomed to permanent miscommunication. Every small struggle to redefine boundaries, to open up the "marital conversation," to negotiate change in domestic gender practices can contribute in the end to gender equality in the home and outside of it.

34

Briefing Paper: Men's Changing Contribution to Housework and Child Care

Oriel Sullivan and Scott Coltrane

For thirty years, researchers studying the changes in family dynamics since the rise of the women's movement have concluded that, despite gains in the world of education, work, and politics, women face a "stalled revolution" at home. According to many studies, men's family work has barely budged in response to women's increased employment. The typical punch line of many news stories has been that, even though women are working longer hours on the job and cutting back their own housework, men are not picking up the slack.

Our research suggests that these studies were based on unrealistic hopes for instant transformation. They underestimated the amount of change going on behind the scenes and the growing willingness of men to adapt to their wives' new behaviors and values. In fact, more couples are sharing family tasks than ever before, and the movement toward sharing has been especially significant for full-time dual-earner couples.

Most previous literature on the division of family work began with the naive assumption that the massive gender rearrangements that began in the late 1960s would, unlike any other major social transformation in history, have instantaneous results. Researchers did not take a sufficiently long view of change over time. Our ongoing studies of couple relationships reveal instead that change has been continuous and significant, not merely in younger couples who begin their relationship with more flexible ideas about gender, but also in older couples where the wife has worked long enough to change her husband's values and behaviors.[1] We believe that the transformation of marriage that has occurred in

the comparatively short period of forty years is too great a break from the past to be dismissed as a slow and grudging evolution that has not fundamentally changed family dynamics. Men and women may not be fully equal yet, but the rules of the game have been profoundly and irreversibly changed.[2]

Key Evidence of Convergence in Work-Family Balancing by Men and Women

- In the USA, men's absolute and proportionate contributions to household tasks increased substantially over the past three decades, substantially lessening the burden on women. National cross-time series of time-use diary studies show that from the 1960s to the twenty-first century, men's contribution to housework doubled, increasing from about 15 percent to over 30 percent of the total.[3] By the early twenty-first century, the average full-time or part-time employed American married woman with children was doing two hours less housework than in 1965.
- The most dramatic increase in men's contributions has been to child care. Between 1965 and 2003, men tripled the amount of time they spent in child care.[4] Fathers in two-parent households now spend more time with co-resident children than at any time since large-scale longitudinally comparable data were collected.[5] In this period, women also increased their time spent in child care and interaction with children, doubling the time over the period from 1965 to 2003. This mutual increase in child care appears to be related to higher standards for both mothers and fathers about spending time with children.
- These trends are occurring in much of the Western industrial world, suggesting a worldwide movement toward men and women sharing the responsibilities of both work life and family life. Data from twenty industrialized countries over the period 1965–2003 reveal an overall cross-country increase in men's proportional contribution to family work (including housework, child care, and shopping), from less than one-fifth in 1965 to more than a third by 2003.[6]
- Furthermore, an analysis of couple's relative contribution to housework in Britain found a steady growth from the 1960s to the 1990s in the percentage of families where the man contributed *more* time to family work (including housework, shopping, and child care) than the woman. This trend was particularly marked among full-time employed couples.[7]

- There is, overall, a striking convergence of work-family patterns for American men and women. While the total hours of work (including both paid and family work) done by men and women have remained roughly equal since the 1960s—in particular for parents—there has been a growing convergence in the hours that both women and men spend in the broad categories of paid work, family work, and leisure.[8] Women's paid work time has significantly increased, while that of men has decreased. Correspondingly, women's time devoted to housework has decreased, while the time men spend in family work of all kinds has increased.

Will Men's Contributions Continue to Increase?

We believe that increases in men's involvement in family work are part of a continuing rather than a stalled revolution, and are likely to continue as more women join the labor force. Men share more family work if their female partners are employed more hours, earn more money, and have spent more years being educated.

In addition, whatever a man's original resistance to sharing, we have found that men's contributions to family work increase over time: The longer their female partners have been in paid employment, the more family work men are likely to do.[9]

All these trends are likely to continue for the foreseeable future. According to national opinion polls, belief in gender equality within families continues to gain acceptance among both men and women. And with greater belief in gender equality and more equal sharing of tasks comes the possibility of more equal and open negotiation about who does what in families.[10] This should have positive outcomes for the families involved, since research shows that when men do more of the housework, women's perceptions of fairness and marital satisfaction rise and the couple experiences less marital conflict.[11] Supporting the general association between sharing housework and healthier marriages, Cooke found that couples in the USA who have more equal divisions of labor are less likely to divorce than couples where one partner specializes in breadwinning and the other partner specializes in family work.[12]

Conclusion: Not a Call for Complacency!

American couples have made remarkable progress in working out mutually satisfying arrangements to share the responsibilities of breadwinning and family

care. And polls continue to show increasing approval of such arrangements. So the revolution in gender aspirations and behaviors has not stalled. But progress in getting employers to accommodate workers' desires has been less encouraging, as high earners are forced to work ever longer hours, while less affluent earners face wage or benefit cuts and layoffs that often force them to work more than one job. Aside from winning paid parental leave laws in Washington and California (with similar bills being considered in Illinois, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and New York), families have made little headway in getting the kind of family friendly policies that are taken for granted in most other advanced industrial countries. Even as American couples' beliefs and desires about gender equity have grown to be among the highest in the world, America's work policies and social support systems for working parents are among the lowest.[13]

All in all, the "stalled revolution" in America is not taking place in families but in the highest circles of our economic and political elites.

In the News

CHORES FOR TWO? MEN ARE PITCHING IN WITH DOMESTIC DUTIES MORE THAN EVER BEFORE

Christian Science Monitor, April 29, 2008

Marilyn Gardner

When domestic chores beckon—when there are dinners to cook, dishes to wash, diapers to change, and dust bunnies to chase—who's doing the work?

Increasingly the answer is: men. After decades of collective sighs from women that husbands and fathers aren't doing their part on the home front, old stereotypes are crumbling. More men are sharing housework and child care, and doing it not grudgingly but willingly, according to a largely optimistic study released by the Council on Contemporary Families at the University of Illinois, Chicago.

"Men and women may not be fully equal yet, but the rules of the game have been profoundly and irreversibly changed," says Scott Coltrane, a sociologist at the University of California, Riverside, and coauthor of the study. This is true not only for younger couples who begin their relationship with more flexible ideas about gender, but also for older couples where the wife has worked long enough to change her husband's values and behavior. The longer a wife is employed, the more housework her husband does.

Since the 1960s, men's contribution to housework has doubled, increasing from about 15 percent to more than 30 percent of the total, the study reports. "Women are still doing twice as much as men, but it's very much more a partnership these days," Professor Coltrane says. Between 1965 and 2003, men also tripled the amount of time they spent caring for children.

"As far as housework and chores go, my husband and I have a simple philosophy: If we see that something needs to be done, do it," says Silvana Clark, an author and professional speaker in Bellingham, Wash. "He's changed diapers, put bows in our daughter's hair for dance recitals, and scrubbed toilets. Plus he's a great cook."

The couple's equal-opportunity approach to domesticity extends outside the house as well. "I mow the lawn when I have time or take the cars in for an oil change," Mrs. Clark says. In their 31 years of marriage, she can't remember fighting over chores. "It seems common courtesy; it shouldn't be a problem."

Housework used to be a topic of dissension for Donna Maria Coles Johnson and her husband, Darryl, of Charlotte, N.C. After she explained that the house would run more smoothly if they both committed to certain chores, "We were able to sit down and come up with some processes," she says. Now they take turns cleaning up the kitchen after dinner and putting their two children to bed.

Mrs. Johnson also believes in training the next generation to help. "Our 6-year-old daughter sweeps, and our 4-year-old son takes out the recyclables," she says. "Both of the kids clean up the family room."

Another study of more than 17,000 people in 28 countries finds that married men do less housework than live-in boyfriends. "Marriage as an institution seems to have a traditionalizing effect on couples, even couples who see men and women as equal," says Shannon Davis, a sociologist at George Mason University in Fairfax, Va., and coauthor of the study.

Allison Peltz of Cleveland, who shares an apartment with her boyfriend, says he does most of the cleaning: "He's very into vacuuming, dusting, and keeping all things neat and tidy. A lot of my friends who are married or living together have husbands or boyfriends who also do a lot of the cleaning."

David Gonnerman of Northfield, Minn., divides the chores fairly equally with his wife, Kasia. Both like to cook, although she does most of it. He does the dishes and most of the laundry. He pays the bills and shuttles their two sons to activities.

But some couples still struggle. Belinda Rachman, a divorce attorney in Carlsbad, Calif., calls housework one of the few unresolved areas in her own marriage of more than 20 years.

"Neither of us wants to clean," she says. "We end up doing a big clean when we know we are going to have visitors but pretty much letting things go to pot the rest of the time."

Despite progress, nobody pretends the domestic revolution is over yet. Even when men do their fair share, women often still find themselves playing the role of household CEO. "I am the one who monitors what needs to be done and sees that it happens," says Mary Ellen Amtower of Highland, Md.

Different standards also present challenges. Paul Davis of Orlando, Fla., shares the housework but acknowledges that his wife does "a substantial bit more" than he does, in part because of his demanding workload. He adds, "My wife is quite the perfectionist, which means that even when I do household chores she may complain about how I did it and thereafter do it herself."

Then there is the tricky little matter of couples' perceptions of who does what. In a survey on changing gender roles by the Harrison Group, a large number of men say they share responsibility for certain day-to-day tasks. Their wives counter that the responsibility falls solely on them.

Whatever the reality, one thing is certain: Dust cloths, vacuums, washers, and cleaning supplies show no sign of becoming obsolete, giving couples plenty of opportunity to decide who will use them. As Clark says, "We feel we both live in this house, so we both need to work together on chores."

35

Briefing Paper: A "Stalled" Revolution or a Still Unfolding One?

Molly Monahan Lang and Barbara J. Risman

After over thirty-five years of continuous change toward more egalitarian gender attitudes and behaviors, recent signs of a slowdown have led some observers to suggest that the gender revolution is coming to an end. Evidence for this claim includes a slight dip in women's labor force participation, a rise in support for traditional gender attitudes among adults, and an increase in the age of sexual initiation among the young. In the past year, the Council on Contemporary Families has received many enquiries from the press and general public about whether the transformation of men's and women's roles has now run its course.

In a review of this question prepared for the Tenth Anniversary Conference of the Council, we conclude that these short-term countertrends do not amount to a revival of traditional family roles and beliefs. Instead, we show that the evidence overwhelmingly shows an ongoing shift toward what we call "gender convergence," an ever-increasing similarity in how men and women live and what they want from their lives.

Women's Employment

In 1960, only 40 percent of women aged twenty-five to fifty-four years old were in the labor force. By 2000, 70 percent of women that age were employed. For married women with children aged six through seventeen, employment rates grew from 40 percent in 1960 to a peak of almost 80 percent by the new millennium.

Sixty percent of married women with children under school age now work for pay, compared with less than 20 percent in 1960. Mothers are still more likely than fathers to work part-time rather than full-time, but they are less likely to do so than they were in the past. Wives work for pay 80 percent of the hours their husbands work for pay, a huge increase since the 1960s.

During the same period, men's rates of labor force participation showed a downward trend, from just above 90 percent in 1970 to just above 80 percent in 2005. The combination of a general upward trend in women's employment and a downward trend in men's has led toward a convergence in labor force participation.

Between 2000 and 2004, there was a small dip in women's employment rates, which fell from just above 70 percent in 2000 to just below 70 percent in 2004. But, as economist Heather Boushey points out, the rate of employment fell for all workers between 2000 and 2004—not just mothers, but also childless women, fathers, and childless men. This was due more to the weak economy than to mothers' opting out of employment.

Men's Participation in Housework and Child Care

Despite the sometimes gloomy newspaper articles about men's resistance to sharing household chores, research on families shows that, over time, each generation of men has taken on a greater share of the work involved in running a home. While men's family work has not changed nearly as much as has women's labor force participation, there is clear evidence that married men are more involved in child care and housework than in past eras.

Significantly, younger fathers spend more time with their children than older fathers do. When the Families and Work Institute compared the workday hours that Gen-X and baby boomer fathers spent caring for and doing things with their children in 2002, they found that Gen-X fathers spent more than an additional hour every day than did baby boom generation dads. After controlling for the possible effect of the children's age, the same difference remained. The baby boom generation of men was the first that had to deal with a new kind of family life, where women demanded more equality at home and at work. Generation X men may not talk as much about changing family roles as the baby boomers, but in practice they are breaking new ground in co-parenting their children.

In housework as well as child care, the tendency has been toward convergence, despite some holdovers from the past. Research by Robinson and Godbey shows that men spent more than four hours per week longer each week doing housework and child care in 1985 than they did in 1965. During the same period, women decreased their time doing such work by over nine hours per week. Some

people have claimed the revolution in gender behavior "stalled" in the 1980s. But between 1985 and 2000, fathers continued to increase their time doing housework and child care, while mothers continued to decrease their time doing housework. Women still do more household labor than men, but they have been doing less in every generation and every decade. In addition, men are much more likely than in the past to tell pollsters that they desire fewer hours in the labor force and more time for their family.

Sexual Behavior

Some behaviors among the young have also prompted speculation about a resurgence of "traditional" values. Since the beginning of the 1990s, for example, all the social problems related to teen sexuality have plummeted. Rates of teen pregnancy and STDs have fallen. Age of first intercourse has actually risen. Some have interpreted this as an indication of a return to traditional sexual mores among today's young people. But a closer look reveals a different interpretation. Research by Risman and Schwartz indicates that it is actually young men who have increased their age at first intercourse. During the early sexual revolution, high school girls became more like boys, as premarital sex became more common at younger ages. In the 1990s, boys and girls became even more alike, but it was boys that were changing to behave somewhat more like girls. Risman and Schwartz suggest that, as girls became more sexually active, boys became more likely to begin their sexual lives with a girlfriend, rather than a young woman they perceived to be a "bad girl," good only for a one-night stand. Relationship sex is more likely to be safe sex, and this change may help account for the decrease in STDs and premarital pregnancy.

Attitudes toward Equality

It is not just behaviors but also women's and men's attitudes that are changing. Women consistently hold more egalitarian attitudes than do men, but the general trend has been upwards for both sexes. Research shows that since the 1970s Americans have become increasingly more accepting of women's contributions to family decisions, women's paid employment, and sharing child care with others. According to General Social Survey data, Americans' gender attitudes became steadily more egalitarian from the late 1970s to 1995.

From 1998 to 2002, there was a dip in egalitarian attitudes, but they have resumed their upward march since then, especially in people's support for

mothers' employment and men's sharing of housework. This return to a rise in egalitarian attitudes in the early twenty-first century makes us skeptical of arguments that women are somehow becoming more "traditional," especially since young people continue to hold more egalitarian attitudes than older people, including baby boomers.

Conclusion

A disproportionate amount of attention has been given to a few pieces of data suggesting that women are abandoning the effort for equality. As we show here, the bulk of the evidence indicates a decades-long trend of convergence between women and men in their behaviors and in their gender attitudes. Yes, men and women continue to exhibit some differences in these respects. And among low-income groups, where economic stress and job insecurity make family life less stable, there are fewer signs of convergence. Unemployed single men, in particular, have been less likely to adopt egalitarian attitudes or to be involved in caregiving work. Without success at breadwinning, they are less likely to marry or cohabit over long periods of time, and without stable partnerships with women, much less likely to share child rearing. Overall, however, the trend is toward greater convergence in men's and women's values and behavior, in and out of the home.

Is this good for families? We think so. The children of employed parents have more time with their parents than did the average child twenty-five years ago. Among married couples with children, mothers are spending the same amount of time doing things with and taking care of their children on days when they are working today as they did twenty-five years ago—more than three hours a day—despite the increase in their paid work hours. Meanwhile, fathers' time with children has increased dramatically, from under two hours to nearly three. Women's sustained levels of attention to their children, when complemented by the growing amount of time spent by spouses or partners with the children, means that children in families headed by two parents are actually receiving more combined attention from their parents today than children did twenty-five years ago—six hours per weekday in 2002 versus five hours in 1977.

As researchers and practitioners, members of the Council on Contemporary Families are sensitive to variations and differences in people's attitudes and behaviors. Many more women than men continue to take time from paid work to raise children, and a significant minority of men and women continue to believe that it is natural for men to specialize in breadwinning and women to specialize in homemaking. But a long-range perspective shows that American women

continue to show an interest in having greater autonomy in their lives, while men are increasingly interested in taking on tasks historically seen as "women's work," such as spending time with their children. The data show that the trend toward gender convergence is real, and it is not going to go away. America's economic and political institutions, along with our research agendas and practical interventions with families, all need to reflect this. It would be a disservice to the families we study and with whom we work to continue to operate on the misguided assumption that there will be any revival of the 1950s male breadwinner family, or that such a revival is desired by most American men and women.

In the News

SIGNS OF DÉTENTE IN THE BATTLE BETWEEN VENUS AND MARS

New York Times, May 31, 2007

Patricia Cohen

Like bickering relatives at the end of a long holiday dinner, women have been arguing about whether the gender revolution is over and more mothers are choosing to leave work and stay home with the children.

Now experts who shared their latest research at a conference this month say that far from reverting to more traditional sex roles, women and men are becoming more alike in their attitudes toward balancing life at home and at work.

The gender revolution is not over, they say, it has just developed into "gender convergence."

"The conventional wisdom is that 'men are from Mars and women are from Venus,' " said Molly Monahan Lang, a sociologist at Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania. "On the contrary, we are from one small world that is getting smaller."

In one of the most comprehensive reviews of current research on families and work, Dr. Monahan Lang and Barbara J. Risman, chairwoman of the sociology department at the University of Illinois in Chicago, analyzed findings from studies based on national census data, in-depth interviews, and dozens of surveys for a conference organized by the Council on Contemporary Families, a nonpartisan group of researchers and clinicians.

What they found were more similarities than differences in men and women. "The evidence overwhelmingly shows an ongoing shift toward what we call 'gender convergence,' an ever-increasing similarity in how men and women live and what they want from their lives," Dr. Monahan Lang and Dr. Risman write.

Several other social scientists at the conference who are doing independent research have come to similar conclusions. Ellen Galinsky, president of the Family and Work Institute, said many more men were reporting feeling tension between family and work life, even if their wives stayed home. And in a report about parents at Fortune 100 companies published in December, Rosalind Chait Barnett, the director of the Community, Families and Work Program at Brandeis University, found that when it came to concern over how their children spent their time after school, fathers and mothers were virtually the same.

Of course, most people recognize that mothers are working more and doing less housework, and men are working less and doing more housework and child care

than a generation ago—albeit still significantly less than women. But what much of the recent research has tried to tease out is more information on attitudes and desires.

And so far, the evidence points toward men and women having increasingly similar goals. When Teresa Aguayo and Frederick Moehn had their third child, Mr. Moehn took a six-month sabbatical from teaching music at Stony Brook University to care for the baby.

Now, the 1-year-old has a nanny, the 3-year-old is in day care and the 5-year-old is in preschool. Child care costs more than Ms. Aguayo, 34, makes as the program coordinator for the Brazilian studies program at Columbia University, but she said: "We figured it would be much harder to get back in the job market after caring for a child. I knew I wanted to go back to work, and I love my job."

Convergence shows up more in younger parents, said Kathleen Gerson, author of "Hard Choices: How Women Decide About Work, Career, and Motherhood." After conducting 120 in-depth interviews with men and women ages 18 to 32, Dr. Gerson found that Generation X fathers spent more time with their children than did baby boomer fathers, and that both sexes aspired to the same ideal: "a balance between work and family."

What would they do if they could not achieve that balance? The women, at least, said that rather than stay home with the children, they were intent on establishing "a solid economic base," Dr. Gerson said. (For men, the fall-back position is to have their wives stay home while they win the bread.)

Still, given the passions that surround this issue, the conclusions are just as likely to stir up the debate as to settle it. In recent months, women have variously argued in books and elsewhere that mothers want to work for personal fulfillment; need to work for economic security; want to raise children full time; or want all of these things at different times. Scholars, meanwhile, complain that the public discussion has been distorted by a fascination with a tiny sliver of high-income earners.

When it comes down to it, discussions about the so-called mommy wars really encompass two separate arguments: one about interpreting work-force statistics, the other about values. And how one decides the first is often determined by the second.

One prominent dispute over figures, for example, involves the slight decline in women's employment—less than 2 percent—since 2000 after four decades of steady climb. Paula England, a sociologist at Stanford University, maintains the tiny up-and-down blips are not that important.

"If you really look at the big picture, it's completely trivial," Dr. England said.

"Some resurgence of traditional values," may partly explain the slowed increase in women's employment in the 1990s, she said. But she and others argue that it is

also likely that "there is a limit to how much women's employment can continue to increase unless business, the state or men take up the slack," by offering paid parental leave or flexible working times.

Similarly, Dr. Monahan Lang and Dr. Risman concede that many more women than men take time off to take care of their children. But those differences are minor, they say, compared with the large historical leaps in the number of women working.

"I think there is little doubt that men and women have become more similar over time, and that gender expectations are less rigid than they used to be," Dr. Monahan Lang said. "The controversy is really about whether to view these changes as positive or negative."

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Briefing Paper: Moms and Jobs

Trends in Mothers' Employment and Which Mothers Stay Home

David Cotter, Paula England, and Joan Hermsen

The Findings in Brief

The employment of wives and mothers rose dramatically from 1960 to about 1990, and thereafter has leveled off. There was a small dip from 2000 to 2004, but employment rates had inched back to 2000 levels by 2006, the latest figures available. Contrary to recent press accounts, there has not been an "opt-out" revolution. Rather than a strong downward trend, there has been a flattening out of the trend line, so that mothers' employment has stabilized, with a majority employed. This strong upward thrust followed by a flattening of the trend holds for most groups of women.

Well-educated women are especially likely to be employed, despite the fact that they generally have well-educated, and thus high-earning, husbands. Surprisingly, the percentage of married moms staying home doesn't go up consistently as husbands' earnings go up. In fact, it is women with the poorest husbands (in the bottom quarter of male earnings) who are most likely to stay home, followed by women with the very richest husbands (those in the top 5 percent of male earners).

What's the Trend in Women's Employment?

Recent media reports have talked about an "opt-out revolution," reporting on a real but very small downturn in women's employment rates since 2000.[1] These media reports have been misleading in two ways, as Figure 1 shows.

- They ignore the dramatic upsurge in mothers' employment in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s.
- They focus on a small downturn since 2000, but a fairer characterization of mothers' employment in the years since 1990 is that it has leveled off.

Figure 1 shows trends in employment for all women and men aged twenty-five to fifty-four between 1962 and 2006. (All figures in this Briefing Paper refer to whether women were in the labor force (which means employed or actively looking for work) any time in the last year, and refer exclusively to individuals between ages twenty-five and fifty-four. The data come from the U.S. government's Current Population Survey for each year.

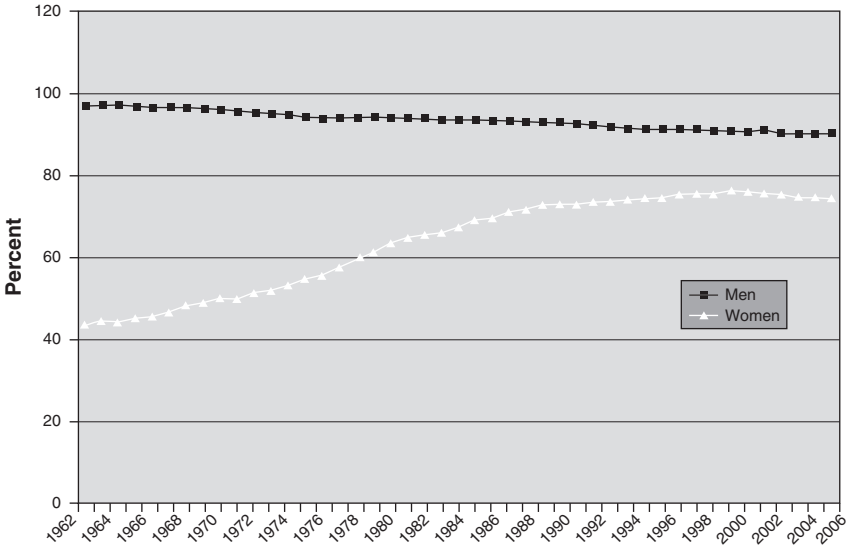

Figure 36.1 | Percent of Men and Women in the Labor Force in the Last Year, 1965–2000 (for Individuals 26–54 Years of Age)

What's the trend for women with children? As shown in Figure 2, there is an increase followed by a leveling off in the rate of change—a plateau. Moms with children under age five are most likely to stay home, but they are much less likely to do so than in the past. There was a tiny dip in their employment between 2000 and 2004, but it then inched back up to the 2000 level in 2006 (Figure 2).

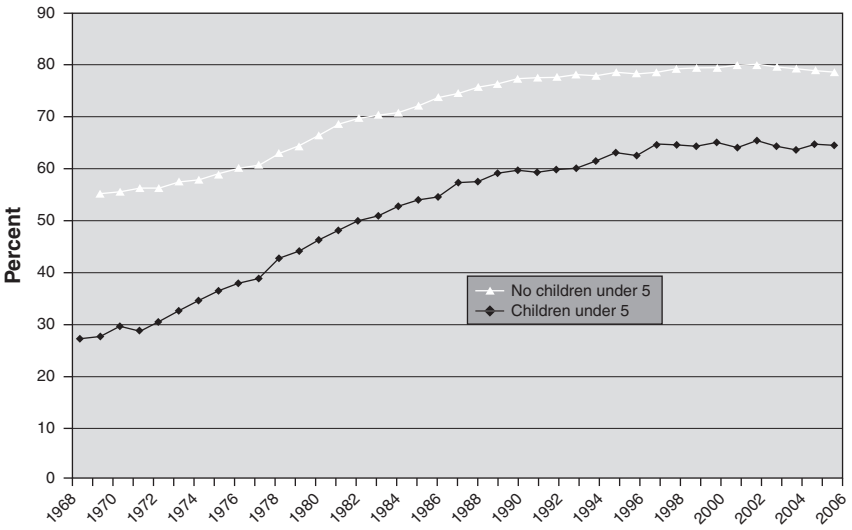

Figure 36.2 | Percent of Mothers in the Labor Force in the Last Year, 1968–2006, by Age of Their Children (for Mothers 25–54 Years of Age)

In 1970, only 30 percent of mothers of children under age five had been employed in the last year. But then huge increases ensued—from 30 percent in 1970 to 46 percent in 1980 and to 60 percent in 1990. The next decade saw just a small increase—from 60 percent in 1990 to 65 percent in 2000, a much slower rate of increase than previously. Moms' participation in paid labor then dropped a bit to 64 percent by 2004, but inched back to 65 percent by 2006. Up or down, the changes since 2000 have been tiny. As with women overall, the big picture is a dramatic increase followed by a leveling off in the rate of change—a plateau.

Moms with no preschoolers are more likely to be working for pay than are those with preschoolers (Figure 2). But the workforce participation rates of mothers with older children also leveled off in the late 1990s, after a substantial increase over the last several decades. The percent of these mothers employed was 56 percent in 1970, 67 percent in 1980, and 77 percent in 1990. After these big increases, the rate has hovered right around 79 percent or 80 percent from 2000 to 2006. Again, the picture is of dramatic increase in employment rates to 1990, followed by a leveling off.

This is hardly an "opt-out revolution." Sixty-five percent of mothers with preschoolers and 79 percent of mothers with older children were employed at least part of the time in 2006.

Why Did the Trend in Women's Employment Rates Go Up then Level Off?

What caused the big increase in women's employment in the 60s, 70s, and 80s? Many factors contributed. Women began having smaller families. The increase in the proportion of mothers who were single made more women absolutely need a job. The fall in men's real wages since 1980 increased the need for two earners even in married couple families. Probably even more important were increases in women's education, better job opportunities for women, and the "equal opportunity" ideology of the women's movement. All these things increased women's access to interesting and well-paying jobs, raising the cost of having a woman quit work and give up that extra income. All this contributed to the dramatic upsurge in women's employment.[2]

Why did the trend level off? Social scientists really aren't sure. One possibility is that women's employment, which has gotten much closer to men's, can't move all the way to parity with men's unless men take on a more equal share of child rearing, and unless employers or the state adopt policies making it easier for parents to combine work and family. Men have increased the time they spend caring for children and doing housework, but nowhere near enough to offset women's increased employment.[3] And the United States lags way behind other countries in family leave, child-care provision, and other policies that make it easier for people to be parents and workers.[4] Perhaps a cultural backlash to the women's movement is a factor as well.[5]

What does the future hold? We do not know if the trend in moms' employment will turn up again, go down a bit more, or stay stable. It is too early to tell. But it seems extremely unlikely that it will go down signficantly. What is clear is that, as in most affluent nations, women's employment in the Unites States is at high levels, with about 80 percent of all American mothers and 64 percent of women with preschoolers in the workforce in 2006.

Education Encourages Women's Employment

Which moms are working for pay and which are working as full-time homemakers? Moms are much more likely to be working for pay if they have more education. Figure 3 shows the labor force participation rates based on level of education for mothers with preschoolers. Figure 4 it shows these rates for mothers with only older kids.

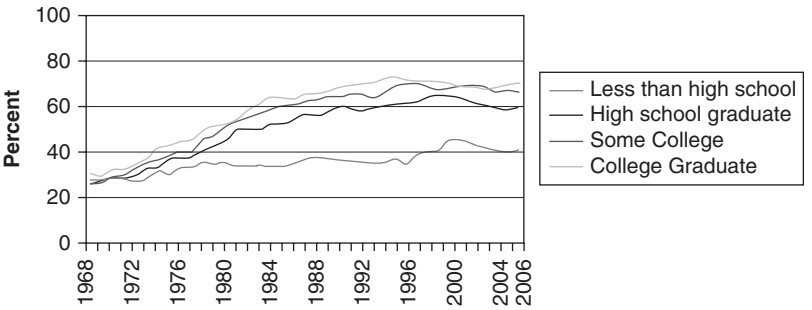

Figure 36.3 | Labor Force Participation Rates for Mothers with Children under Age 5, 1968–2006 (Includes Mothers Age 25–54)

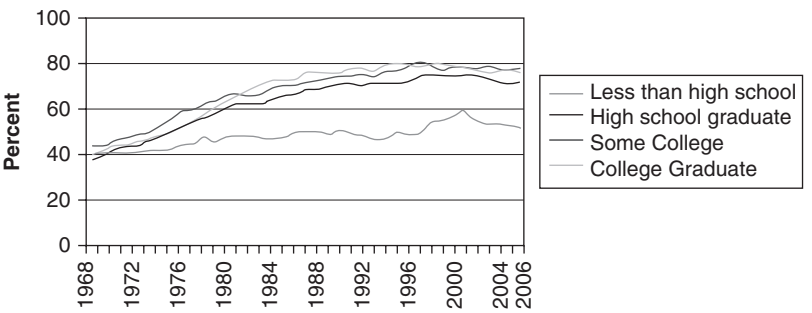

Figure 36.4 | Labor Force Participation Rates for Mothers with No Child under Age 5, 1968–2006 (Includes Mothers Age 25–54)

In 2006, among mothers with no preschoolers at home, Figure 4 shows that 77 percent of mothers with a college degree were employed, 71 percent of those who had only finished high school, and 51 percent of those who hadn't finished high school. The percentages are lower for moms with kids under five, but they show an even stronger relationship between education and employment. The employment gap between the most and least educated moms was smaller in the 1970s than it has been since 1980.

Why do more educated moms work for pay at higher rates than less educated moms? In one sense it isn't surprising that well-educated moms are working; after all, many of them got that education to pursue the career they are in. Education improves access to well-paying and interesting jobs that make employment more worthwhile. Women with low education may not be able to make enough to pay for the child care required when they go to work. But what makes the higher employment of well-educated women a challenge to conventional wisdom is that they tend to be married to well-educated and high-earning men.[6]

Husbands' Earnings and Married Mothers' Employment

The conventional wisdom is that married women with kids stay home when the family can afford for them to, and work for pay mainly when the family needs the money. If this were the main factor, we'd expect that the higher their husbands' income, the lower women's employment. But Figure 5 shows that the conventional wisdom is wrong.

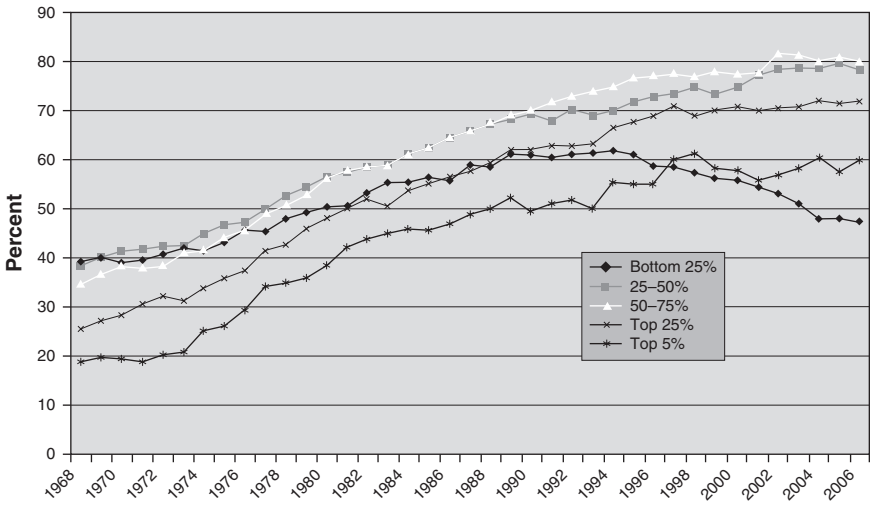

Figure 36.5 | Married Mothers' Labor Force Participation by Husband's Earnings, 1966–2006 (Includes Married Mothers Age 23–54)

As Figure 5 shows, the largest group of stay-at-home mothers is found among wives whose husbands are in the *lowest* 25 percent of the male earnings distribution. (Cut-off points for each quartile and the top 5 percent were established separately for each year, using the earnings distribution of married men with children for that year.) The next largest group of stay-at-home mothers is found among women married to men who are in the highest 5 percent of the income distribution. Oddly enough, then, the two groups of married moms with the lowest employment rates are those with both the poorest and the richest husbands!

If we look at what Figure 5 shows for the most recent year, 2006, less than half (48 percent) of mothers with husbands in the bottom quarter of the male earnings distribution were employed. Among married moms whose husbands had the very highest 5 percent of earnings, 60 percent were employed. These two groups probably have different reasons for their relatively low employment

rates. Moms with the highest-earning husbands have little economic need to be employed. Moms with the poorest husbands have great economic need for a job, but they often have low education and earning potential themselves, so they may not be able to earn enough above child-care costs to make a job pay.

The highest employment rates were among mothers whose husbands had earnings toward the middle of the pack—between the 25th percentile and the 75th percentile. Approximately 80 percent of mothers married to husbands in these groups were employed in 2006.

So contrary to the idea that men's earnings predict whether their wives will stay home, the poorest men are most likely to have stay-at-home wives, the very richest men are the next most likely, and the men earning middle-range earnings are the least likely. These findings complicate our analysis of why families make the decisions they do and what social support systems they need.

Appendix

Below are additional figures (Figures 6–10) showing more detail on which groups of women are in the workforce, and trends in these patterns.

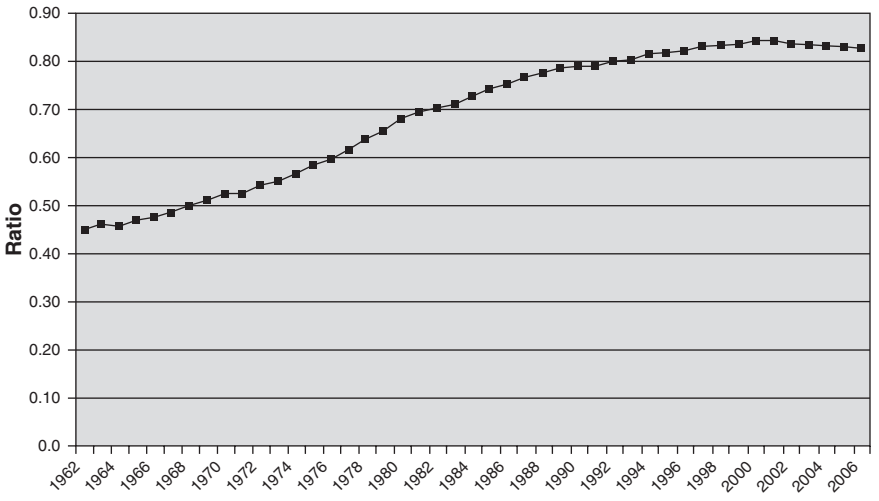

Figure 36.6 | Ratio of Women's to Men's Labor Force Participation in the Last Year, 1962–2006 (Includes Individuals 25–54 Years of Age)

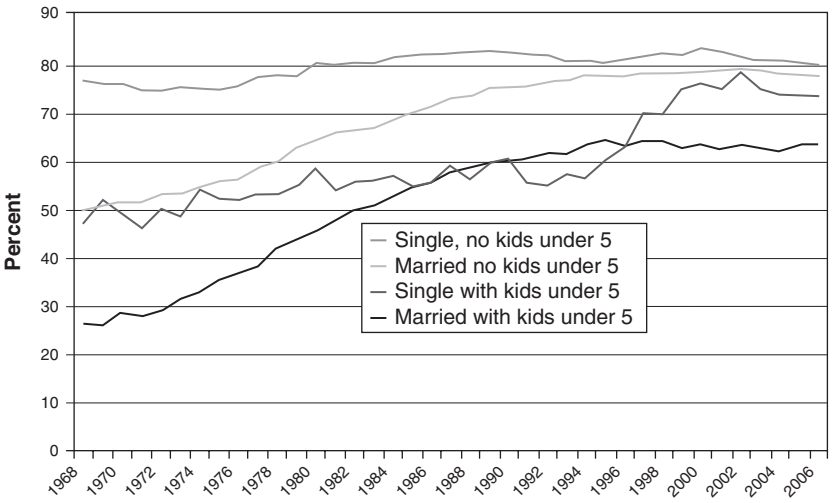

Figure 36.7 | Percent of Mothers in the Labor Force, by Marital Status, 1968–2006 (Includes Mothers 25–54 Years of Age)

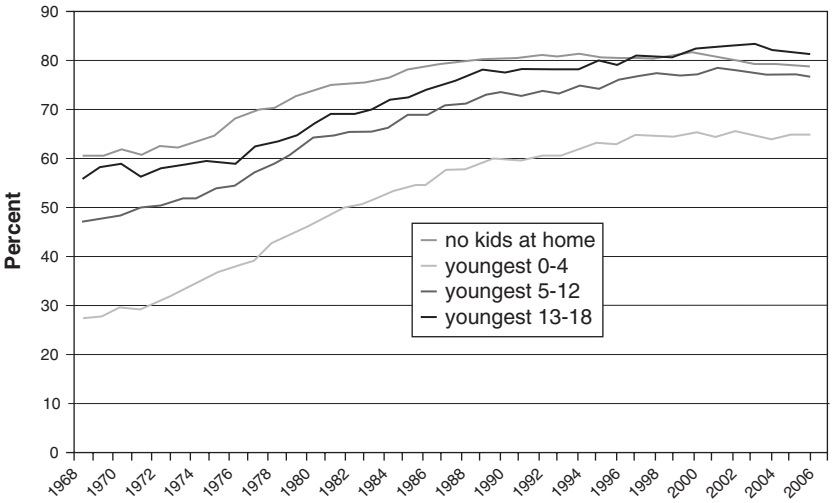

Figure 36.8 | Percent of Women In the Labor Force by Age of Youngest Child, 1968–2006 (Includes Women 25–54 Years of age)

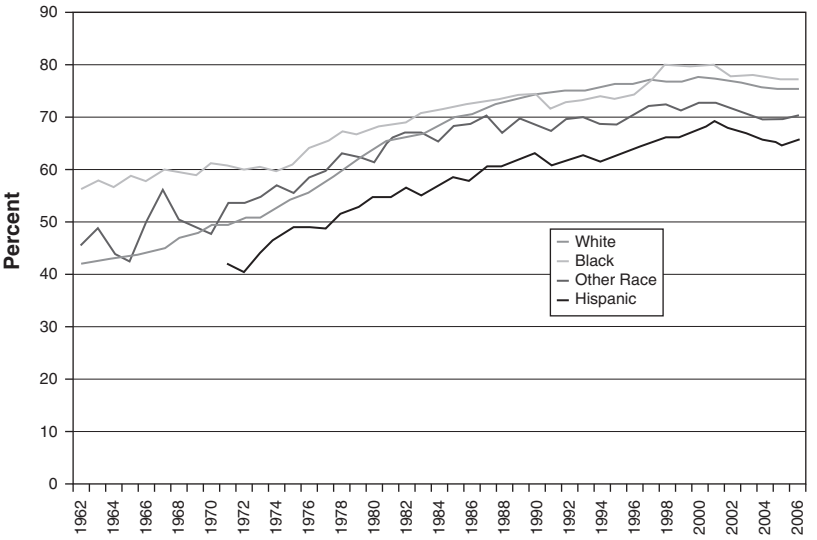

Figure 36.9 | Percent of Women in the Labor Force, by Race/Ethnic Group, 1962–2006 (Includes Women 25–54 Years of Age)

Figure 36.10 | Ratio of Women to Men in the Labor Force by Race/Ethnic Group, 1962–2006 (Includes Individuals 25–54 Years of Age)

In the News

WORKING MOMS MORE THE NORM THAN EXCEPTION

Palo Alto Online, May 14, 2007

Don Kazak

A study by a Stanford University researcher and her colleagues has debunked the belief that mothers with college educations are opting out of working once they begin to raise families.

Instead, those mothers are continuing to work at high numbers.

Well-educated women continue to work even if their husbands have high-paying jobs that could support the family, the study found.

During the last 15 years, the largest group of stay-at-home moms has been those from the poorest families, according to Paula England, professor of sociology. The second-largest group of such moms has been those married to men in the top 5 percent income distribution.

For other mothers, working has been the norm. In 2006, 65 percent of mothers with preschool children worked at least part time and 79 percent of mothers with school-aged children worked.

Those numbers increased greatly since 1970, when only 30 percent of mothers of preschool children worked and only 56 percent of mothers with school-aged children worked.

"This is hardly an opt-out revolution" of mothers deciding to stay home once they have children, England said.

England conducted her research with David Cotter, a sociologist at Union College in Schenectady, N.Y., and Joan Hermsen, a sociologist at the University of Missouri-Columbia.

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Briefing Paper: Women's Money Matters

Earnings and Housework in Dual-Earner Families

Sanjiv Gupta

Many researchers have found that women who contribute earnings to the family have more bargaining power in marriage than women who do not earn wages. And contrary to claims of a "stalled revolution" in gender roles, husbands have significantly increased their participation in household chores and child care over the past thirty years. The proportion of couples who divide housework equally, though still small, seems to be growing. But how far have we proceeded toward real equality? Are men and women willing to accept a relationship where the wife contributes as much or more of the household income as her husband, or does that threaten their traditional notions of masculine and feminine identity? And do husbands feel equally responsible with their wives for making sure the household work gets done?

In the past, researchers have noted that although employed wives do less housework than full-time housewives, a peculiar counter-tendency kicks in as wives approach equality in earning with their husbands or actually earn more. On average, in households where women earn as much or more than their husbands, they actually do *more* housework, or their husbands do less. This has been interpreted as reflecting the continuing attachment of men and women to traditional gender identities. Women are seen as engaging in "gender display"—trying to demonstrate that despite their atypical earnings outside the home they are not in violation of traditional gender roles inside the home. Men are seen as engaging in "compensatory" behavior. In refusing to do housework, they are shoring up their masculine identity at home to compensate for their failure to be the main

breadwinner. The implication is that when women improve their relative wages in comparison to their husbands, they may find themselves paying for that violation of gender roles by an increase in their share of housework—a discouraging prospect for women who aspire to careers.

I have found that these earlier studies, which suggest that men and women are strongly attached to preserving traditional gender roles, were based on the mistaken assumption that the factor most strongly affecting women's housework was how much money a wife earns compared to her husband. Instead, I find, it is the absolute amount of a woman's own earnings that best predicts the time she will spend on housework. The more she earns, the less time she spends on routine housework. It does not matter how much money she makes compared to her husband, or what her husband earns.

Focusing on the ratio of wives' to husbands' earnings distorts our understanding of household dynamics because, on average, the married women most likely to have high earnings compared to their husbands are married to low-earning men and are themselves relatively low earners. So if it is their low earnings that account for their inability to shed housework, rather than their relative earnings, this means that the discouraging findings of earlier research do not necessarily apply to higher-earning couples where the wife makes as much or more than the husband.

Among married women working full time around the year, every additional $7,500 in their earnings corresponds to one less hour spent on routine chores per week, controlling for other relevant factors. Women with the highest 10 percent of earnings spent 9 fewer hours on housework per week, on average, than the women with the lowest 10 percent of earnings. That is equivalent to one and a quarter fewer hours per day. In a multivariate model controlling for other relevant differences among women, this economic gap in their housework works out to about 30 minutes per day. The difference is directly a result of the woman's own earnings, not how much she makes relative to her husband. (A similar pattern is observed when cohabiting heterosexual women are included in the calculations.)

The median annual labor market earnings of women in the United States rose from about $9,800 in 1965 to more than $16,000 in 1995 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1998). Over the same period, married women's time spent weekly on routine chores declined from 30.4 to 15.8 hours (Bianchi et al., 2000). The findings reported here suggest a link between these trends.

My findings highlight the importance of class differences among women in their performance of housework. Not only do women with higher earnings do less housework than women with low earnings, but the gap between how much housework high-earning women do and how much their husbands do is much narrower. Women with the lowest earnings do nearly 16 hours more housework

each week than their husbands, whereas the gender gap in housework for women with the highest earnings is less than 5 hours per week. This difference is due almost entirely to the difference in time spent doing housework by women with the lowest earnings compared with women with the highest earnings, not to any substantial difference in the time spent on housework by their husbands.

The good news here is that neither men nor women are so committed to "traditional" gender roles that they feel a need to "compensate" by doing gender-stereotyped housework behavior if the husband and wife have nontraditional occupational or income profiles. It appears that married working women are exercising their economic autonomy to reduce the burden of the well-known "gender gap" in the performance of housework. This implies a greater degree of agency and flexibility in women's housework behavior than much earlier research generally supposed. Much of the research to date has focused on the inequity and intractability of the division of housework in heterosexual households. The new study implies that women can use their own money to make the division somewhat more balanced.

The bad news is that these findings emphasize the continued gender segregation of unpaid household labor. Not only do women spend more time on everyday housework than do their husbands, they also appear to draw only upon their own earnings to cut down on it, not their husbands'. Married women do not appear to benefit greatly from their husbands' earnings when it comes to housework. In a multivariate model that includes both their earnings and their husbands', only their own earnings have a significant relationship to their time spent doing housework. This is surprising given that the daily work of providing nutrition, clean clothing, and a sanitary environment benefits everyone in a household. It suggests that both men and women still tend to feel that it is the woman's responsibility to organize such chores, though she may use her own money to farm them out. Thus, despite profound changes in the nature of marriage over the past thirty years, the study calls into question the idea that marriage is as yet an arrangement in which spouses share their resources for the maximum benefit of each partner or the household as a whole.

The data for this study come from the second wave of the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH), conducted in the period 1992–1994. The final analytic sample consists of 914 married women between the ages of eighteen and sixty-five and working full time, year-round.

In the News

WEALTHIER WOMEN DO LESS HOUSEWORK

Daily Collegian, November 20, 2007

Stella Cernak

As the figures on a woman's paycheck climb, the time she spends doing housework dwindles, according to a study conducted by University of Massachusetts associate professor of sociology Sanjiv Gupta.

Gupta's study emphasizes that the amount of housework that women with full-time jobs do in a family where both husband and wife are working is unaffected by her spouse's income. He points out that focusing on the ratio of earnings between husbands and wives acts as a roadblock to understanding household dynamics.

"Up to this point, people have thought that the important thing was how much money a woman makes compared to her husband. But the only thing that matters is how much money she earns," said Gupta in a Reuters interview.

Gupta's studies are based on information obtained from 918 women and data on double-income families in the United States in 1992 through 1994, and in 2000. His research reveals that for every $7,500 a woman earns annually, she performed one less hour of housework per week. Women making $10,000 or less per year spend nearly one hour more on housework each day than women making $40,000 or more, according to the National Survey of Families and Households.

His study also recognizes that the median annual labor market earnings of U.S. women rose from about $9,800 in 1965 to more than $16,000 in 1995, according to the U.S. Bureau of the Census. At the same time, the hours married women spent on weekly routine chores plummeted from 30.4 to 15.8.

Gupta's findings, recently published in the *Journal of Marriage and Family*, suggest that women can use their income to make the time they spend on household duties more balanced with their spouse.

However, the article also points out that equality still does not exist when dividing household duties between husbands and wives. Other researchers in the *Journal* support this claim, linking the reason for this gap in equality to slowly fading stereotypes and gender roles people learn at a young age.

For instance, in one study from 2005, it is pointed out that if a woman's mother took on the majority of domestic work, she will likely feel the need to take on a similar role in her marriage.

This study also suggests that men take on less domestic work to pick up the slack for their working wives than women do in a similar situation. Husbands increase their domestic work by around 2 hours per week when wives enter full-time jobs,

while wives reduce their domestic work by four to eight hours per week. Husbands eventually do increase their domestic work over time, but this change is inconsistent. These gaps are believed to often lead to spousal conflict.

Gupta's article does not focus much on spousal differences in domestic work but instead concentrates on the differences between women and housework, particularly women with different incomes. He points out that the difference in time spent on domestic work between women making more money ($40,000 or greater) with women making the least amount of money ($10,000 or less) is just as great as the average difference in time spent doing housework between men and women.

"In general, especially among women who have more egalitarian-type ideas, the more equitable division of labor gives a better outcome of equality and satisfaction," said Gupta. "It's not that straightforward and there is no bottom line. Someone who does more housework isn't necessarily less happy than someone who does less housework."

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Briefing Paper: "Traditional" Marriages Now Less Stable Than Ones Where Couples Share Work and Household Chores

Lynn Prince Cooke

Let's face it: The road to happily-ever-after is pitted with potholes. Children, finances, and in-laws can all put stress on a marriage. But what about who cleans the floor? This matters, too. A survey released this week by the Pew Research Center shows that most Americans now regard sharing household chores as more vital to a good marriage than such traditional measures of marital success as having children. This does not mean couples are neglecting their kids. Indeed, both moms and dads are now spending more time with their children than in 1965, the heyday of the female homemaker.

But just having kids is no longer sufficient for a marriage to last. As detailed in one study recently published in the *American Journal of Sociology*, and in my ongoing research about the relationship between housework and divorce, I find American couples that share employment and housework are less likely to divorce than couples where the husband does all the earning while the wife does all the cleaning. These findings starkly contrast with the claims of some that to turn back high rates of divorce, we should return to the male breadwinner family idealized during the 1950s and 60s in such television programs as *Father Knows Best* and *Leave It to Beaver.*

One reason some people urge a return to male breadwinner marriages is that wives' employment is associated with greater risk of divorce. Among U.S. couples, however, I find this increase in divorce risk when the wife is employed is more than offset when a husband takes on an equitable share of the housework. So it

is not women's employment that directly leads to divorce, but only the strain of her employment when she must still perform the housework alone as well. Using data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics to follow couples marrying for the first time between 1985 and 1995, I found that couples where the wife earns about 40 percent of the income while the husband does about 40 percent of the housework have the lowest risk of divorce—considerably lower than the divorce risk in families where the husband earns all of the income and the wife does all of the housework. We have not yet realized perfect equality, however. The divorce risk begins to rise again when a wife starts earning as much or more than her husband and he does more of the housework. But this risk does not exceed that of male breadwinner marriages until the woman earns more than 80 percent of the couple's income. This means neither "Mr. Mom" nor "Father Knows Best" is a stable family scenario for American couples today.

Surprisingly, although either extreme is rare, "Mr. Mom" is more common now than "Father Knows Best." Less than 1 percent of the couples I studied reported the husband earns all of the money while the wife does all of the housework. In contrast, almost 3 percent of couples claimed that the husband does all the housework while the wife earns all the money. The vast majority of couples share responsibility for the family's financial security as well as the household maintenance. Indeed, a research paper issued this May by the Council on Contemporary Families reveals that each generation of men is doing more domestic work and child care than the previous one. So couples appear to understand what many pundits do not. In today's world, it is give-and-take that makes marriage work. Returning to the days when marital tasks were divided and gendered would do the opposite of what proponents of "traditional" marriage believe; it would ring the death knell for modern American marriages.

In the News

MATRIMONIAL BLISS LIES IN THE MOP BUCKET AND BROOM

Seattle P-I, July 10, 2007

Paul Nyhan

The secret to a happy marriage isn't love, honor and respect; it's mop, vacuum and scrub, according to the Council on Contemporary Families.

It turns out parents who share the housework burden are less likely to divorce than parents who cede all the earning power to dad and all the cleaning power to mom, council research associate Lynn Prince Cooke wrote last week.

"Returning to the days when marital tasks were divided and gendered would do the opposite of what proponents of 'traditional' marriage believe; it would ring the death knell for modern American marriages," Cooke, a United Kingdom-based sociologist, wrote in a research brief.

In fact, young adults said dividing household chores was more important for a successful marriage than having kids, sharing religious beliefs or making enough money in a July 1 Pew Research Center survey cited by Cooke.

While the divorce rate rises when Mom works in the United States, the risk "is more than offset" when Dad does his fair share of cleaning and scrubbing around the house, wrote Cooke, who teaches at the University of Kent in Canterbury, England.

When Mom earns as much or more than Dad, and he does more of the housework, the divorce rate rises again.

"But this risk does not exceed that of male breadwinner marriages until the woman earns more than 80 percent of the couple's income," Cooke wrote in a research brief.

Cooke even suggests the ideal marriage:

"I found that couples where the wife earns about 40 percent of the income while the husband does about 40 percent of the housework have the lowest risk of divorce," she said.

"This means neither 'Mr. Mom' nor 'Father Knows Best' is a stable family scenario for the American couple today," Cooke wrote.

(Uh oh, what about the flip side, speaking hypothetically of course, when Mom earns 60 percent, or maybe more . . . ?)

Of course, Mom and Dad have to agree on what constitutes housework. I still don't get dusting, and I refuse to make the bed because we're just going to mess it up 15 hours later.

Cooke also offered further proof that family roles are blurring and evolving. She found less than 1 percent of couples where Hubby brought home all of the money and Mommy did all of the housework. Yet in her research 3 percent of couples were defined by a woman making all of the money and a man taking care of all the household chores.

39

Domestic Violence in Heterosexual Relationships

Rhea V. Almeida

Domestic violence is perhaps one of the most studied fields, and yet its study remains controversial in terms of scholarship, protection for victims, and accountability for perpetrators. This chapter addresses the historic polarization of policy and practice for victims and perpetrators, and it presents a new paradigm for helping families to heal. Steeped within principles of social justice, the author describes her model, the Cultural Context Model, which addresses the complexity of this twenty-first century social dilemma, offering challenging notions of change to entire families and communities.

Imagine being a poverty-stricken, battered women working with a mistrained therapist who expects that positive change will come simply from engaging in conversation. The battered woman knows that these conversations will not change her life because they do not include any consequences or incentives for her batterer to change.

This chapter presents information about domestic violence, and it offers a new and cutting-edge clinical approach, grounded in feminist social-justice theory, to help families in which domestic violence has occurred become healthy and functioning.

The chapter begins by defining domestic violence. It then situates the context of domestic violence in American families today within gendered norms that support male domination. The main body of this chapter is the presentation of a model I have developed for working with couples in which domestic violence occurs.

Definition of Domestic Violence

The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence defines domestic violence as the "willful intimidation, assault, battery, sexual assault, or other abusive behavior perpetrated by an intimate partner against another." We expand this definition to include "the patterned and repeated use of coercive and controlling behavior to limit, direct, and shape a partner's thoughts, feelings, and actions."[1]

Tactics of domestic violence include

- physical abuse,
- emotional abuse,
- economic abuse,
- threats and intimidation,
- isolation and entrapment (including job relocation and language barriers),
- sexual abuse and exploitation, and
- control and abuse of children.

Factors on a broader societal level may shape violence at home, as seen by the fact that economically compromised families are at greater risk for domestic violence, as are undocumented immigrant women due to the threat of deportation. We use the pronoun "he" when referring to batterers because the majority of heterosexual violence is perpetrated by men against women.

Domestic violence continues to be a crushing problem for families, although over the past decade things have gotten considerably better. The Bureau of Justice Statistics reports that rates of family violence in this country have dropped by more than half since 1993.[2] Much of this decline is due to the efforts of people quietly working in the field, including social workers, staff at women's crisis centers, police forces, and prosecutors. The passage of the Violence Against Women Act in 1994, and amendments to it in 1998 and 2006, also played a part. But all of these efforts are part of a larger story. A web of positive, mutually reinforcing social trends has led to this decline in family violence.

In a compelling article, Deborah Weissman lays out the relationship between the economic system and domestic violence.[3] The movement against domestic violence, grounded in the U.S. civil rights movement, began as a struggle for the rights of women as victims. Unfortunately it has evolved into a movement whose main strategies are tied to the law enforcement system, which is avoided by many who need help. Weissman concedes that the legal approach has some merit, but that by its very nature the legal system is individualistic and downplays the social

and historical context for patterns of behavior and ignores the role of economics, globalization, and the numerous victims of domestic violence who cannot or will not participate in the criminal justice system. That is why we need a paradigm shift in how we approach all the factors contributing to domestic violence in the twenty-first century.

The boundary that separates families from the larger world is bigger in our imaginations than in reality. In the real world, human beings live, learn, and change communally. We learn to understand ourselves and relate to others through experiences within our homes, schools, neighborhoods, workplaces, communities of faith, and organizations. Our perspectives are built from what we see on television, hear on the radio, read, and absorb from authority figures like child-care providers, teachers, employers, and community leaders. Families, communities, and the societies we live in recreate one another in an endless cycle.

In creating a different paradigm, my intention was to provide social workers, family therapists, counseling psychologists, students, and practitioners with a way to inject social-justice values into everyday clinical practice. This model for social-justice practice, which I call the Cultural Context Model, places the connection between family and society at the center of therapeutic thinking and intervention strategies. All too often, the world in which families have to function encourages values and actions that undermine health and sanity.

Because there is a dynamic interplay between families and the broader context in which they function, professional helpers have to expand their focus to look beyond the individual and beyond relationships forged by blood and household connections. Practitioners in the twenty-first century need to help clients construct couple partnerships and families governed by just values. But they must also help to build communities that sustain these values.

Although most family therapists, and therapists in general, often claim to apply a systemic perspective, the patriarchal ordering of the world keeps them from utilizing the work of sociopolitical theorists.[4] The concept of intersectionality, the idea that personal and political identities are shaped by broader societal forces, is rarely considered in the therapeutic context. This results in a one-dimensional method that focuses solely on the abuse and ignores all the aspects of one's resilience that are key to healing.

Gender Lays the Foundation for Domestic Violence

Domestic violence can be described as gender norms taken to their extreme. The patriarchal definition of family as a private domain governed by men has

long perpetuated unequal power relationships between the genders, as well as a separation between community and home life.[5] Accordingly, most societies have tolerated husbands' oppression of their wives as a normal pattern. "What goes on behind closed doors is private" and "a man's home is his castle." Less than 100 years ago, a man would be criminally prosecuted for beating a stranger, but he could legally beat his wife.[6]

While violence occurs at all stages of the life cycle, the most vulnerable are teens, pregnant women, and the elderly. I recommend using the teenage wheel at the end of this chapter to assess for levels of violence among teens.

The intersection of gender, race, and class conspire to silence victims so that many crimes committed within the home evade public scrutiny. Men of all colors still hold power over women and children when there is no community oversight. But because racism disproportionately relegates people of color to the lower socioeconomic strata, and because masculinity is often defined in terms of a man's earning power, men of color and men of lower socioeconomic classes disproportionately suffer in their self-definition as adequate males.[7] When men in economically depressed communities feel severely challenged about their masculinity, this places women and children at higher risk of abuse.[8]

Historically, in most cultures men have promoted group solidarity by devaluing women. "Being men" involves verbally objectifying or degrading women (e.g., pornography), bragging about sexual exploits, and defining "feminine" characteristics as antithetical to being male.[9] Devaluing women sometimes escalates into activities such as gang rape ("wilding," and men on the "down low"), or men/boys going to brothels together. These acts join sexuality and violence with domination of females.

While this article focuses on heterosexual violence, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transsexual (GLBT) violence can rise to the same level, which ultimately raises many questions about the binary definitions of gender that elude the main discourse on intimate violence.

Women as Cultural Purveyors of Patriarchy

Women uphold patriarchal practices and structures in many ways. A white mother from a fundamentalist church might justify violence toward her children, arguing that it is done calmly and teaches respect. An Asian Indian woman might argue that in her culture it is important to support the dowry system, keep her daughter-in-law in check, ignore a father-in-law's sexual harassment of his daughter-in-law, and accept a son's violence toward his wife.[10] Practices such as

dowries, foot-binding, genital mutilation, and Western medicalization of women's bodies are all examples of patriarchal practices that women accept and pass on as part of the "culture."

The acceptance of abusive mothers-in-law and women who physically discipline their children also needs to be challenged.[11]

Overview of the Cultural Context Model

Feminist scholarship greatly advanced the therapeutic field by opening pathways to address inequities linked to sexism. But the inequities of racism, homophobia, and culture were left out of the discourse. Most practice methods do not address how power, privilege,[12] and oppression interconnect and intersect. What was missing was a social-justice approach that would weave all these threads into therapeutic practice.

The model I describe transforms therapeutic convention to include the pursuit of justice at every level, using the following tools and techniques:

- Initiating clients' critical awareness of diversity and power.
- Emphasizing how "normal" hierarchies of power, privilege, and oppression perpetuate suffering.
- Experientially demonstrating the link between fairness and relational healing.
- Expanding the therapeutic encounter to include a community with critical consciousness rather than focusing just on one family at a time.
- Defining *empowerment* in collective rather than individual terms.
- Encouraging social action as a means for empowering communities, families, and self.
- Providing *accountability* for all participants, including therapists.
- Creating a basis for developing authentic relationships and diverse communities.
- Helping people think about ways to connect past, present, and future legacies within the matrix of critical consciousness, empowerment, and accountability. (At the end of this chapter we provide tools that offer language and structure to bring these ideas into therapeutic practice).
- Applying these tools and techniques—which boil down to critical consciousness, empowerment, and accountability—are crucial in any social-justice approach and lead to a radically different kind of practice.

Critical Consciousness

The first element of this approach is "critical consciousness," which refers to awareness of the political and economic foundations that underlie relationship patterns. The Cultural Context Model (CCM) works to develop critical consciousness as a catalyst and a map for positive change. To develop critical consciousness among clients and staff, we employ social education through the use of film, dialogue, and inquiry.[13]

The groundbreaking Brazilian educator Paulo Freire originated the term "critical consciousness" to describe how his literacy students came to understand the impact of social class dynamics on their own life circumstances.[14] As we develop critical consciousness, we stop accepting current reality as "the unquestioned and unchangeable nature of things." Instead, we see options for change. For example, those who view men as genetically programmed for aggression also accept war and domestic violence as the natural order of things. But those who view men's aggression as a learned tactic of domination see possibilities for peace on all societal levels.

Empowerment

Liberation theorists and feminists assert that the personal is political. Social injustices—poverty, racism, colonialism, sexism, homophobia, discrimination against the physically disabled—permeate personal lives. Unless we break down the broader social dimensions in the course of the therapeutic process, we become complicit with practices of domination.

Social-justice-based empowerment promotes "power with" rather than "power over." An Asian Indian woman would be encouraged to pursue an education not solely to be marketable as a bride, but to fulfill a lifelong dream while also contributing financially to her family. An orthodox Jewish man would gain empowerment by acknowledging that he has harmed his family through violence, that he accepts responsibility for his acts, and that he will make things right for them. He, and those on the receiving end of his previous violence, are empowered through this action to bring justice to the situation.

Accountability

Accountability begins with accepting responsibility for one's actions and for the impact those actions have on others. But real accountability goes beyond blame

and guilt. It requires action that makes amends for the wrongs done and demonstrates empathic concern for others by making changes that enhance the quality of life for all involved parties.

Conventional practice calls for perpetrators of domestic violence to attend a fifty-two-week social education program in a group setting. Most of the curriculum focuses on power and control along gender lines. There is no examination of family legacies or community relationships that might illuminate areas for future focus. Most importantly, the criminal justice system—rather than other informal systems of influence—exacts retribution and determines the punishment.

But with the Critical Consciousness Movement, accountability comes about with the help of sponsors and others in the therapeutic community. Sponsors are men and women who have themselves taken part in this therapeutic endeavor and who then link up with new clients to raise critical consciousness, support empowerment, and ensure accountability.[15]

At the end of the process, an abuser writes a document that acknowledges the details of the harm caused to the victim, and outlines reparations that offer some element of justice.

Culture Circles

Culture circles, another term borrowed from Freire, are heterogeneous helping communities that are made up of members of families seeking treatment, helpers from the community who volunteer to work with the families, and a team of therapists. In Freire's view, collective discussions within culture circles prompt critical reflection and dialogue about the life circumstances of the participants. Freire believed that individuals could develop a "critical consciousness of their own being in the world" through reflective dialogue combined with social action.

In the Cultural Context Model, culture circles promote healing by developing critical consciousness and resistance to societal norms that maintain hierarchies of power, privilege, and oppression. During culture circle sessions, victims talk about and read from documents that describe the harm they have experienced. Community members and sponsors are present on a regular basis and encourage the victims to give voice to their experiences while embracing their new or recovered goals. The perpetrators of violence also speak and read their own testimonies about the harm they brought to their loved ones. Many months are spent on these letters/documents, during which time ideas for making reparation are forged.

Employing a Social-Justice Model to Domestic Violence Intervention

A social-justice model examines all the problems that compromise the safety and health of families and communities (including domestic violence), from a perspective that takes power, privilege, and oppression into account. A social-justice perspective transforms the assessment questions that guide intervention. It takes a question like "what kind of individual pathologies cause abuse to occur?," and reframes it by asking "how do those who exert power and privilege over others abuse that power and privilege?"

The mainstream domestic violence movement has made enormous gains in legally securing protection for battered women and changing the social climate in favor of rights for battered women. Most states now mandate that perpetrators of domestic violence go through treatment programs, and there are certified specialists who offer these services in partnership with battered women's organizations. But victims and perpetrators from socially marginalized communities, as well as undocumented immigrants and those who do not hold green cards, are more likely to avoid the criminal justice system. While it is true that many women of color and immigrant women are served by this system, many more are not.[16]

The social-justice perspective, working outside the criminal justice system, approaches batterer intervention from a different trajectory. Men who have used violence and are court-mandated to seek treatment are not separated from other men seeking services. Court-mandated people and people who voluntarily seek treatment have much to learn from one another. In the course of therapy, men who have used violence may develop friendships with men who do not support abusiveness. They often get better at parenting their children, negotiating school and medical systems, evaluating the way they manage finances (including the support of dependents), examining their understanding of love, and focusing on the value of housework and other after-work activities. Just as importantly, they learn to expand their range of emotional expressiveness.[17]

When men who have not used violence against their intimates find themselves next to men who have, it is easier for them to confront similarities in their own thinking, as well as the choices they have made regarding violence. Sponsors have an enormously powerful role in probing what makes for masculinity, and sorting out choices that lead to domination versus those that create equity in relationships.

When men who have not committed acts of physical violence discuss their patterns with men who have taken control to the extreme, they find it easier to

see where their own actions lie along the continuum of power and control (see the power and control wheels at the end of this chapter). Violence is no longer an abstraction involving "others," but is a reality demonstrated by the actions of real men, sitting in the very same room, men who seem unremarkable, approachable, and undeniably human.

Couples on society's margins face additional burdens that affect women as victims and men as perpetrators:

1. **Economic:** Men and women of color are often relegated to low-paying positions offering few benefits and limited upward mobility. They are frequently the last to be hired and the first to be fired. As a result, men and women of color are less likely to speak out in support of fair labor practices for fear of losing their jobs or jeopardizing their chances for promotion. Immigrants are especially vulnerable.
2. **Sexual:** Historically, women and men of color have been objectified sexually. Men have been portrayed as animals possessing mythical and "nonhuman" sexual prowess. Women have been portrayed as "exotic" and sexually insatiable. Both stereotypes are exploited and objectified in pornography.
3. **Perceptions of Family:** Children of color are more readily perceived as delinquent and are devalued on the basis of their appearance or speech patterns. They are overrepresented in detention and other disciplinary situations, and in child abuse investigations.
4. **Physical and Psychological:** A man of color is far more likely to experience instances of police brutality and harassment. Men of color are more likely to be singled out for investigation at police road checks. Latino men are stopped as often as African-American men, and since September 11, 2001, men perceived as Arab or South Asian have also been racially targeted.
5. **Emotional Isolation:** The homes and family lives of women and men of color are frequently subject to intrusions by police, welfare workers, school personnel, and other public institutions. The dearth of positive role models and the negative representations of persons of color in the media all serve to reinforce the notion that white culture is the ideal to which other cultures must aspire.

All of these factors intensify violence in the home and should be examined and confronted. Accountability, however, must not romanticize these hardships. The goal must be to establish safety and caring in intimate life.

Thoughts for the Future of Therapy in Regard to Domestic Violence

The field of mental health is often compartmentalized, with the result that individuals, families, and communities are defined and organized along the lines of their presenting problems. Public awareness of domestic violence has focused on women as victims being battered by men, with the goal being to stress equity and nonviolence. But if the focus of responsibility were placed on men talking to men about the moral compass of domestic violence, the public narrative would be very different.

When we bring men who have engaged in domestic violence into contact with others who are seeking help, we begin to redraw the lines of a therapeutic community. The CCM model has done just that in those few centers around the country that have adopted this perspective,

Therapists and mental health providers from all areas of training routinely miss cases of domestic violence. Referring to the power and control wheels that appear at the end of this chapter can help in this regard. For example, when we use the control wheel, we might say to the individual: "Misuse of power within relationships takes many different forms. I'm going to ask you to take a look, one at a time, at the description in each section of the pie in this power and control wheel. Let me know if you (or your partner) have done or experienced any of the things mentioned, or anything similar to what's mentioned."

Many of the gendered descriptions in these categories apply to most couples, while the ones that manifest extreme coercion and violence are associated with those who have histories of domestic violence.

We still live in a patriarchal system that accepts rather than challenges traditional male roles that reinforce the misuse of power and privilege. But when a therapeutic context posits that perpetrators of violence and those who misuse power and privilege can and must change their behavior, the result is a paradigm of change.

Appendix: Goals of Assessment and Tools for Dismantling Violence

When violence is described, we thoroughly assess for danger and lethality using the following checklist:

- Determine the nature, frequency, severity, and consequences of aggression.
- Obtain a detailed behavioral description of the sequence of events in context.

- Understand the intended function of the violence and its impact.
- Evaluate the degree of fear and intimidation.
- Expand your inquiry to explore broader patterns of control and domination.
- Ensure that confidentiality is managed to prioritize safety. (Information will not be shared with the pe rpetrator unless the victim consents while in a safe context.)

Wheels for Assessing Misuse and Abuse of Power in Multiple Contexts

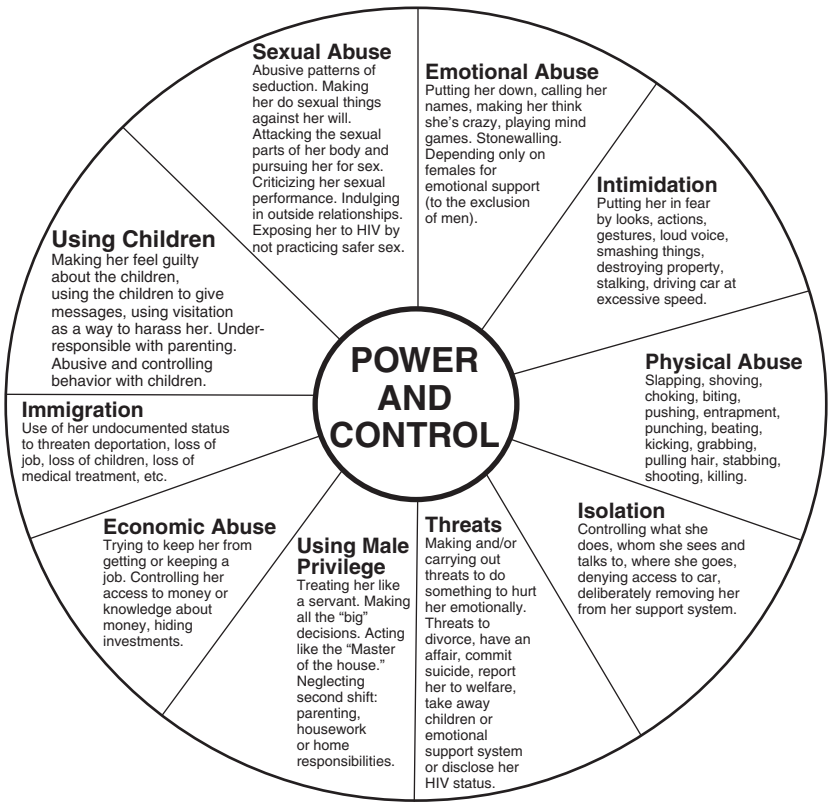

Figure 39.1 | Private Context: The Misuse and Abuse of Power within Heterosexual Relationships

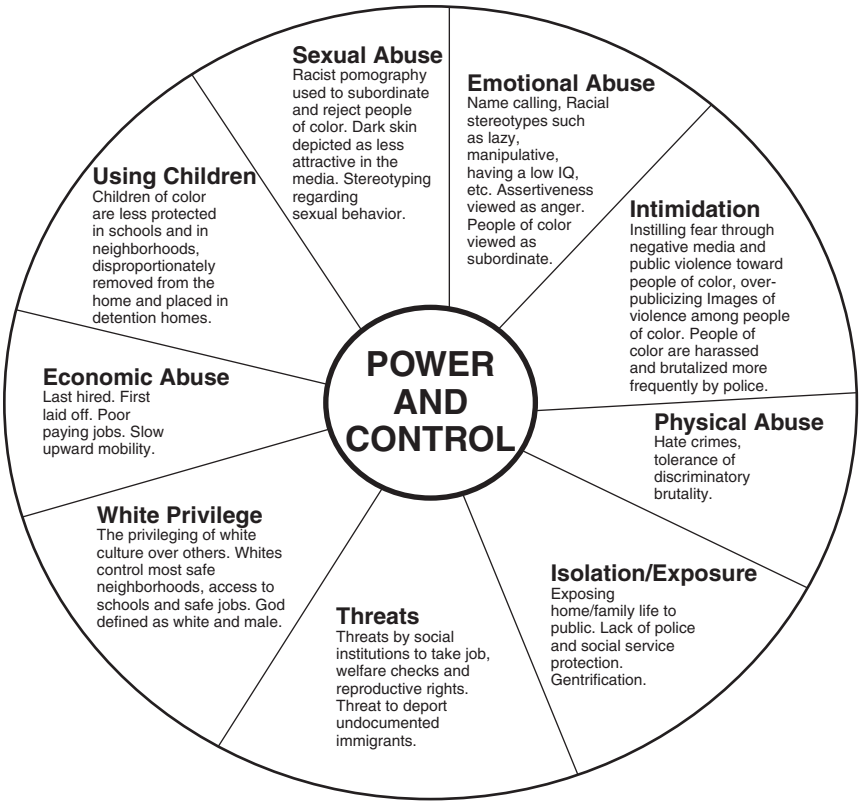

Figure 39.2 | Public Context: The Misuse and Abuse of Power Toward People of Color

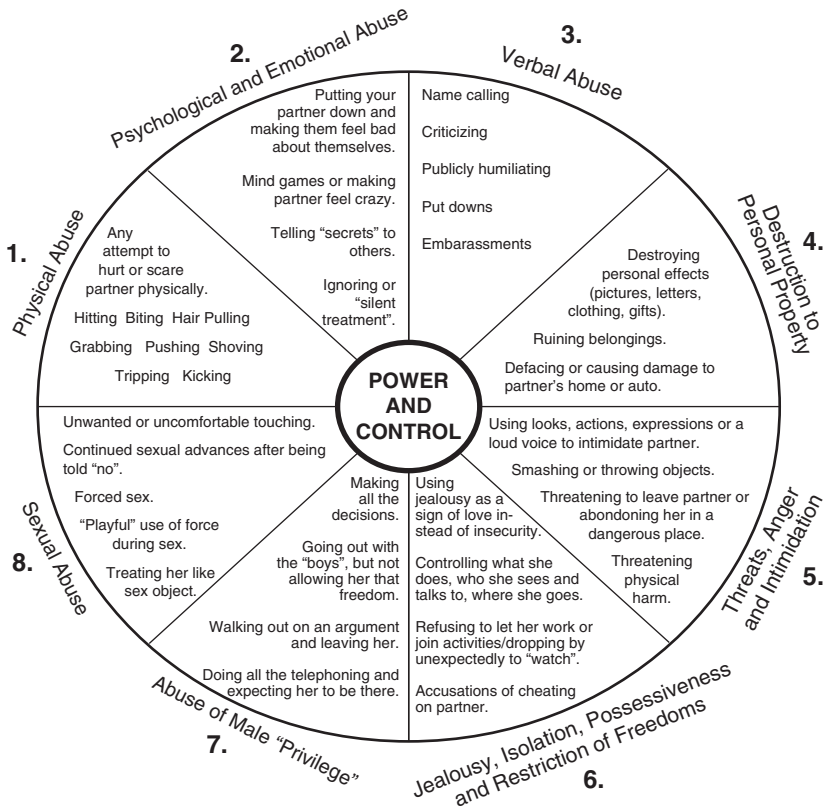

Figure 39.3 | Teenage Power and Control in Dating
How do I love thee, Let me count the ways . . .

For Review

1. Risman and Seale discuss the ways in which tween-age boys use sexual identity to police one another's masculinity. How do you think this influences the ways young men approach hooking up as described by Armstrong, England, and Fogarty? Are there elements of the "ideal girlhood package" that have developed in adulthood in the young women Armstrong, England, and Fogarty discuss?

2. There are several articles and Briefing Papers about equality in contemporary marriage. In reading Cooke, Sullivan, Lang and Risman, and Gupta, how do you see marriage "equality" being defined? What is the evidence for the argument that equality is increasingly being achieved within modern marriages? What counter-evidence can you find? Which arguments do you find most persuasive and why?

3. How might you use Almeida's "critical consciousness" to think about the ways in which the women and men Gerson studied developed their life plans? What suggestions do you think Almeida would make to couples trying to balance both paid work and caretaking responsibilities?

4. The articles in this section focus on different stages of the life cycle—from young adults to married couples. When you look at the unfinished gender revolution over the life cycle, do you see any patterns? Are there stages of life, at this historical moment, that are more or less equal for boys and girls, men and women? Do the data on young people suggest increased gender convergence in the future? Why or why not?

5. Activity: Interview one or two older friends or relatives about how their expectations and strategies for managing family responsibilities and paid employment have changed over time. How have the expectations they had as young adults changed (or not) with life circumstances? Are there differences by sex? Do you foresee similar changes in your own future? What strategies do you use, or plan to use, to manage family responsibilities and paid employment?

6. Activity: Risman and Seale find that being athletic and participating in sports are considered normative by middle-school girls. Yet, middle-school girls are expected to "do gender" largely in terms of physical appearance and bodily presentation. Do you think these findings hold for college-aged students as well? Check out your school's websites for both women's and men's sports (or the websites of a school that has varsity athletics). Describe how you see male and female athletes being portrayed, either similarly or differently. What types of messages about gender do you see? What do you think accounts for any differences you see? Try looking at the websites of schools that differ from your own along several dimensions (size, division, geographic location) to see if you see the same patterns across schools.