

## **Unconventional Wisdom Vol. 3**

### **A SURVEY OF RECENT FAMILY RESEARCH AND CLINICAL FINDINGS**

PREPARED FOR THE COUNCIL ON CONTEMPORARY FAMILIES' 13TH ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE AT  
AUGUSTANA COLLEGE, ROCK ISLAND, ILLINOIS April 16 and 17, 2010

Edited by Joshua Coleman, Co-Chair, Council on Contemporary Families, and Stephanie Coontz, Co-Chair and Director of Research and Public Education, Council on Contemporary Families

The Council on Contemporary Families aims to increase communication among family researchers and practitioners while helping the press and public access accurate information and best-practice findings about how today's families work. Our 13th anniversary conference will detail some of the latest research and clinical findings on how intimate relationships are sustained and what happens when they dissolve, as well as other issues and problems in contemporary family life.

To get the conversation going, we asked conference participants to send in short descriptions of some of their recent research findings, practical experiences, or clinical observations about emerging family trends and issues, new interventions to help families, and other topics. See also: Unconventional Wisdom, Issue 1 and 2.

#### **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

I. RECENT FAMILY TRENDS

II. METHODS FOR IMPROVING PARTNERED RELATIONSHIPS AND CHILD WELL-BEING

III. FAMILY DYNAMICS AND CONFLICTS

IV. SEXUALITY AND GENDER

V. SERVING VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

VI. WORK-FAMILY ISSUES

#### **I. RECENT FAMILY TRENDS**

##### **MORE PEOPLE OVER 65 NOW LIVE WITH SPOUSES THAN ALONE**

For most of the 20th century, a college-educated woman had significantly less chance of ever marrying than her less-educated sisters. Today, highly educated women are only a little less likely than less-educated women to marry, and when they do marry, they are much less likely to divorce. The result is that by age 40, a higher percentage of educated (and also of high-earning) women are married than their less-educated or less affluent sisters.

In the mid-20th century, people over age 65 were less likely to be currently married and more likely to be living alone than people under 65. Today, people over 65 are more likely to be currently married than are adults under that age of 65, although more of them are on second or third marriages.

Betsey Stevenson, Assistant Professor, The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania:  
betsey.stevenson@wharton.upenn.edu 215.898.3019, 267.495.6441 (cell).

#### BUT INCIDENCE OF FAMILY INSTABILITY CONTINUES TO BE HIGH FOR AMERICAN CHILDREN

American children are far more likely to see multiple parents' partners (stepparents or cohabiting partners) cycle in and out of their homes than are children in any other wealthy country. Consider the number of children who experience three or more parental partnerships. This would imply a scenario such as being born to a lone mother who later marries the child's father, then divorces him and starts a cohabiting relationship, then ends that relationship and lives with someone else. According to a set of surveys in many countries in the mid-1990s (which are likely to still be roughly accurate today), the percentage of children who experience three or more mother's partners by age fifteen was less than 2% in every other Western country except for Sweden, where it was about 3%. But in the United States it was 8%. This means that about one out of twelve American children saw at least this many transitions in their living arrangements.

Andrew J. Cherlin, Griswold Professor of Sociology and Public Policy, Johns Hopkins University,  
cherlin@jhu.edu; 410-516-2370.

#### DIVORCE RATES WERE DECLINING BEFORE RECESSION; RECENT RECESSION DECLINES MAY BE LESS CAUSE FOR CELEBRATION

The good news is that divorce rates have been falling for the past 25 years, so that younger couples are more likely to reach their 15th wedding anniversary than were the baby boomers. The bad news is that the recession has further lowered divorce rates, but not necessarily by making marriages stronger. A majority of attorneys' associations across the country say that divorce filings have gone down in their jurisdiction, with many reporting that clients have put their divorces on hold because they cannot afford to split up their assets. Historical experience suggests, however, that financial stress is more likely to exacerbate marital conflict than resolve it, and research shows that children who remain stuck in a highly conflicted marriage usually display more adjustment problems than children whose conflicted parents divorce. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, divorce rates went down but domestic violence rates went up.

Stephanie Coontz, Professor of History and Family Studies, The Evergreen State College, Olympia, WA.  
coontzs@msn.com; 360 352-8117

#### IN DUAL EARNER COUPLES, HUSBANDS WITH THE LOWEST EDUCATIONAL LEVELS NOW DO AS MUCH OR EVEN MORE HOUSEWORK THAN THEIR MORE EDUCATED COUNTERPARTS

For years it has been conventional wisdom that men with higher levels of education were more egalitarian in dividing the housework with their wives than less educated men, and during the 1960s and 1970s, that was true. But during the 1980s and 1990s, husbands who did not graduate from high school and who were married to working women began to catch up. Today they equal or even exceed the housework contributions of their counterparts with higher levels of education.

My analysis of dual-earner households, based on time use data from the 1960s to the early years of the 21st century, shows that husbands who did not graduate from high school have increased the time they spent on housework to a far greater extent than men with higher levels of education. The most highly educated group of husbands (college educated) increased the time they spent in housework by 33% over the period 1965-2003. Husbands who graduated from high school, but not college, increased theirs by 52%. But those who did not graduate from high school doubled their amount of housework, with a whopping 100% increase in contributions. The outcome is that, starting from a lower level in the 1960s, by the early years of this century husbands in dual earner couples who had not completed high school were taking on at least as much responsibility for housework as husbands with a college education, and more than those who graduated from high school.

Oriel Sullivan, Research Reader, Department of Sociology (Centre for Time Use Research), University of Oxford: oriel.sullivan@sociology.ox.ac.uk

#### EDUCATED HUSBANDS LAGGING BEHIND: HOUSEWORK IS AN ACADEMIC(S') ISSUE

When the call came from Stockholm early one October morning, Nobel Prize-winner Carol W. Greider was not working in her lab or sleeping. She was doing laundry. She is far from alone. A recent study of fulltime women scientists at thirteen of the top research universities in the United States show that female scientists do nearly twice as much housework as their male counterparts. Partnered women scientists do 54 % of the cooking, cleaning, and laundry in their households while partnered men scientists do just 28 %. This translates to more than ten hours a week for women- in addition to the nearly sixty hours a week they are already working as scientists-and to just five hours for men. The extra hours women put in have real consequences for their careers. Another study showed that women who have children within five years of receiving their doctorate are less likely to achieve tenure than are men with "early babies."

But there are solutions. U.S. employers today offer a number of specific benefits for healthcare, daycare, and sometimes even housing and college tuition as part of compensation packages designed to attract the best employees. We recommend that a benefit for housework be added to that list. It should be considered part of the structural cost of doing business. At the same time, housework needs to be professionalized to create better paid jobs for housecleaners.

Londa Schiebinger, John L. Hinds Professor of Science, Stanford University. schieb@stanford.edu; 650-723-5829

Barbara D. Finberg Director, Michelle R. Clayman Institute for Gender Research, Stanford University

#### HAS THE RECESSION REVERSED THE DECADE-LONG RISE IN FERTILITY?

The number of US births rose every single year from 2002 to 2007, reaching an all-time high. Birth rates increased in all age groups. But fertility fell slightly in 2008 and then fell more rapidly in early 2009. This is very likely an effect of economic hard times, but since fertility is a measure with a built-in 9 month lag, it will be some time before we see how far fertility has fallen as a result of the recession.

Steven Martin, Affiliate, Maryland Population Research Center. smartin@socy.umd.edu.

## "TYING THE KNOT" VS. "SHACKING UP"

In a longitudinal study comparing the well being of more than 2000 adults between 1987-88 and 1992-94, we found that those who entered into any type of co-residential union during those 7 years were more likely to report improved psychological well-being than those who remained single over the entire period, though they were also more likely to report reduced contact with parents and friends.

Where there were statistically significant differences between marriage and cohabitation, getting married was not always more advantageous. People who got married were more likely to exhibit improved health than those who entered cohabiting relationships, but people who moved from the single to the cohabiting state reported greater gains in happiness and self-esteem than those who moved directly from singlehood to marriage.

Overall, however, the average differences were small, and significant numbers of all three groups reported the same or lower levels of happiness over the time period, suggesting that other factors may be more significant determinants of well-being than whether someone stays single, moves in with a partner, or gets married.

Kelly Musick, Associate Professor of Policy Analysis and Management, Cornell University,  
musick@cornell.edu; Phone: 607-255-6067

## THE AGING OF THE AMERICAN POPULATION

Since the beginning of the 20th century, American life spans have increased by a staggering thirty years. Contrary to early predictions that this would cause a staggering increase in disability and loneliness, their quality of life is generally very good. In fact, a three-decade study of 28,000 people conducted by a University of Chicago sociologist found that older Americans are generally very happy. Consider the following facts:

Only 5 % of people over the age of 65 live in nursing homes, and that percentage has been falling for at least ten years.

Disability rates continue to decline for persons 65 and older. More than half of the old-old, those over 85, report no significant physical disability whatsoever and require no assistance in their everyday lives. Our fears of Alzheimer's disease are hugely exaggerated. Current estimates are that no more than ten % of all elderly people (aged 65 to 100 or more), are Alzheimer's patients, although the incidence does increase steadily in those over 85.

Aspects of brain function decline with age, but contrary to long-held assumptions, current research shows the aging brain continues to form new synapses. We already know that even brains with Alzheimer's-type abnormalities can work just fine if people draw on what neuroscientists have termed "cognitive reserve."

Ashton Applewhite, Author and CCF Board Member, applewhite@earthlink.net, 646-644-4040

## WHAT DO MEN AND WOMEN WANT IN A MATE? TIMES HAVE CERTAINLY CHANGED!

Since the 1930s, researchers have been asking college men and women to rank 18 characteristics on a scale of unimportant to extremely important--and my, how times have changed! The headline over

seven decades is the rise in importance of love and mutual attraction -- and the decline of chastity: Ranked #5 for women and #4 for men in 1939, by 2008, love and mutual attraction topped the charts for both sexes. Chastity, ranked #10 for both men and women in the 1930s, had plummeted to dead last by 2008.

For men, a woman's education and her ability to earn a good income has become a top-tier priority, while her housekeeping skills have fallen far down on the list of a man's desired traits, a trend that began to appear in the 1970s survey and continues today. For women, a man's desire for a family is more important than the past, but whether he's got a "pleasing disposition" seems less important than it was.

Christie F. Boxer, Department of Sociology The University of Iowa

Christine B. Whelan, Department of Sociology, The University of Pittsburgh. 412-648-7593 (office), whelanc@pitt.edu

**BUT NOT SO MUCH CHANGE FOR MOMS WHO WORK: PERCEIVED AS "THEY CAN'T", BUT DAMNED IF THEY CAN!**

Past research finds that mothers are seen as less competent and less committed to paid work than childless women. For example, in laboratory experiments with college students and in an actual audit of employers, we found that when people evaluated identical resumes, which varied only on whether women were identified as mothers, mothers tended to be rated more negatively on a wide variety of work-related dimensions. Mothers were less likely to be recommended for hire and, if recommended, were offered lower salaries.

But how do people respond when mothers provide overwhelming evidence that they are competent and committed? Our recent study found that exceptionally successful mothers are able to overcome these prejudices about their ability, but at the cost of their perceived amiability. When mothers were seen as more competent, they were also rated as less likeable and as having more negative interpersonal qualities.

Stephen Benard, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Indiana University. sbenard@indiana.edu

## **II. IMPROVING PARTNERED RELATIONSHIPS AND CHILD WELL-BEING**

**DOES INFIDELITY DOOM A MARRIAGE? NO!**

A large clinical trial on couple therapy, as well as a large community study of couples in therapy, has shown that couples with infidelity improve in couple therapy. In fact, they improve as much as couples without infidelity, even though they start out treatment being more unhappy and distressed. The one small subset of couples with infidelity that did not improve was those who continued to deceive their partner and the therapist.

Andrew Christensen, Professor, Department of Psychology, UCLA Phone: (310) 825-7732; Christensen@psych.ucla.edu

## THE VALUE OF "BOOSTER SESSIONS" FOR COUPLES WHO HAVE COMPLETED COUPLES WORKSHOPS

We have designed a "relapse prevention program" at the University of Washington to see whether therapists could help couples maintain the improvements to their relationship that they had gained in a couples workshop. Out of 100 couples, forty were randomly assigned to two workshop-related conditions: twenty attended a couples workshop only. Another twenty attended a couples workshop and then received "booster sessions" of individual couples therapy as part of a "relapse prevention" effort. Researchers assessed the couples' marital satisfaction before the workshop, after the workshop, and then after six months had passed.

The workshop created effective, lasting changes in marital satisfaction with effects similar to those obtained in six months of marital therapy. Couples who participated in the relapse prevention program, or an additional nine "booster sessions," were better able to maintain gains made during the workshop-based intervention than the couples who did not receive booster sessions. The sessions were most beneficial for couples who had trouble handling daily stress, which suggests that therapists should be attentive to these couples' special need for follow-up.

John Gottman and Julie Gottman, Co-Directors, The Gottman Institute, Seattle, WA,  
johng@gottman.com

## ACCEPTANCE IN COUPLES THERAPY

Sometimes acceptance of differences in individuals is the route to change in relationships. During the last third of the 20th century, therapists focused on developing intensive strategies for producing changes in couples' values and behavior. In the past 10 years, however, therapists have placed much greater emphasis on helping couples to put aside a change agenda and meet one another at an emotional level of understanding. In a multi-site clinical trial of Integrative Behavioral Couples Therapy (Christensen et al, 2004), couples learned to recognize that their conflicts weren't something that each was doing to the other, but a shared problem that was happening to them both. We call this "empathic joining." We found that helping couples discuss their dilemma as one they share, rather than being at loggerheads, was more effective in improving the outcomes for even severely distressed couples than traditional, change-based approaches.

Christopher Martell, Clinical Associate Professor, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences and Department of Psychology, University of Washington, and Independent Practice, Seattle. Phone: 206-329-5255 Ext. 305; c.martell@comcast.net

## HELPING COUPLES NEGOTIATE THE TRANSITION TO PARENTHOOD: WHAT WORKS?

When a baby arrives, everything changes. Not surprisingly, 40 to 70% of couples experience stress, profound conflict, and drops in marital satisfaction. The Bringing Baby Home project at the newly founded Relationship Research Institute seeks to address these problems. The short-term goal is to develop a program for expectant parents that is hospital-based and administered by hospital personnel. This involves modifying the standard birth preparation program hospitals offer to include an additional two-day couples workshop and/or a support group. The long-term goal of the Bringing Baby Home

program is to spark a lasting, systemic change within the community by rethinking the way adults care for infants and subsequently how they communicate with, teach, and guide young children.

The Bringing Baby Home program format involves a two-day workshop with day one focusing on strengthening the marriage and getting to know the baby and day two, addressing the regulation of conflict and building strong family interactions. Detailed background materials are provided so couples can revisit specific topics and intervention strategies.

Working with 120 couples, representing a variety of cultural, ethnic and economic backgrounds,, we have learned that adding our new two-day workshop to standard birth preparation education can prevent many negative consequences for young families. So far we have discovered that:

- \* We Can Prevent Relationship Deterioration
- \* We Can Prevent Escalating Hostility
- \* We Can Largely Prevent Post-partum Depression

John Gottman and Julie Gottman, Co-Directors, The Gottman Institute, Seattle, WA,  
johng@gottman.com

#### WE CAN REDUCE THE NEED FOR DIVORCE BEFORE MARRIAGES BEGIN AND BEFORE THEY END

A number of research strands suggest that many divorces could be prevented-even after filing for divorce-in a way that is likely to benefit both adults and children in the long run. For instance, one study suggests that even after filing for a divorce, about 25% of individual spouses and 10% of couples would still be very interested in a reconciliation service, if it were available. This is why Utah has initiated a first-of-its-kind "Divorce Orientation Education" class that is mandated for divorcing parents.

Dr. Alan J. Hawkins, Professor of Family Life, Brigham Young University; hawkinsa@byu.edu; (801) 422-7088 [voice](801)

#### AND WHEN DIVORCE DOES OCCUR, MEDIATION LESSENS CONFLICT, IMPROVES PARENTING

Although it is common for individuals in the throes of a painful divorce to think "I never want to have anything to do with you again," former partners who are also parents can never completely divorce. They are tied together on the sidelines at sporting events, graduations, their children's weddings, even when grandchildren are born. Recognizing this, experts have developed new approaches to dispute resolution that help couples to divorce each other without also divorcing their children. Foremost among these is mediation, where parents work with a neutral expert who helps them focus on the children and the future, not the past.

In a 12-year follow-up of couples randomly assigned to either mediation or litigated divorce, my colleagues and I found that as little as five to six hours of mediation had powerful long-term effects. Parents who took part in mediation settled their disputes in half the time of parents who used litigation, and they were much more likely, even 12 years later, to jointly discuss children's discipline, moral training, school performance and vacation plans. Nonresidential parents with mediated divorces maintained much more contact with their children than those who had litigated. And although their

increased involvement with children created more contact, and hence more opportunities to argue, conflict between couples who went through mediation actually decreased.

Robert E. Emery, Professor of Psychology, Director of the Center for Children, Families, and the Law, University of Virginia; 434-924-0671, ree@virginia.edu

### **III. FAMILY DYNAMICS**

#### **CHANGING SCHOOLS A BIGGER THREAT TO TEEN'S ACADEMIC SUCCESS THAN LIVING IN A SINGLE-PARENT FAMILY**

#### **PARENTAL EDUCATION AND ASPIRATIONS MORE IMPORTANT THAN NUMBER OF PARENTS**

Children who grow up in female-headed families have a higher chance of dropping out of high school and therefore a lower chance of entering college than children from two-parent families. But this does not necessarily mean that being raised in a single-parent family causes these outcomes. Once I take into account other aspects of family background, including parental education, income, occupation, and aspirations for children, my research finds very little additional negative effect of coming from a single-parent family on the test scores of teens or their likelihood of entering a four-year college. In fact, changing schools - often the result of housing shortages and low income - has more impact on whether a teen completes high school than does being raised by a single mother.

The most powerful family influence on a young person's schooling outcome is not the structure of the family but the mother's education and aspirations for her children. My new statistical results confirm the findings of Robert Clark's little-read *Family Life and School Achievement: Why Poor Black Children Succeed or Fail* (1983), which also found that class trumps family structure in preparing students for school.

W. Norton Grubb, David Gardner Chair in Higher Education Faculty Coordinator, Principal Leadership Institute University of California, Berkeley. (510) 642-3488; wngrubb@berkeley.edu

#### **THE UPSIDE OF ARGUING IN FRONT OF THE CHILDREN**

It is common to hear parents discuss the need for a "united front" as a way to prevent problematic alliances or mixed messages in a family. Many parents worry about the effect of arguing or disagreeing in front of their children and for good reason, as numerous studies show that ongoing, unresolved conflict in front of children is harmful to their long-term well-being. However, in my clinical work, I have found that individuals who grew up in homes where they observed little or no conflict may also be compromised. Having observed little conflict or conflict resolution in the family home, these individuals sometimes fail to learn how much assertiveness and conflict tolerance is required in order to meet one's needs in a long-term committed relationship. They may be deprived of the opportunity to learn how to repair a relationship after a fight has strained it, or to observe that one can have conflict and still be close. They may be especially ill-equipped to deal with an aggressive, domineering, or self-centered spouse or partner.

Parents should be helped to understand that while high conflict is damaging to children, conflicts are a fact of life and shouldn't always be kept out of children's sight. What appears to matter most to children



is how the parents get into and out of arguments, how respectful they are of each other in an ongoing way, and whether or not the conflicts resolve.

Joshua Coleman, Ph.D., Psychologist, Author, and Co-Chair, Council on Contemporary Families. W: (510) 547-6500, C (925) 528-9002; drjoshuacoleman@comast.net

#### DOES MARRIAGE MAKE YOU FAT?

Marriage is thought to have a protective influence on both men and women's health, although via different mechanisms. However, as I will show in the September 2010 issue of journal of family issues, African-American women are more likely to become obese if they are married than if they are never married and not cohabiting. In fact, marriage is associated with a modest increase in Body Mass Index for African-American, Hispanic and white men and women.

Emily Fitzgibbons Shafer, Ph.D. candidate, Stanford University, Department of Sociology, 650-450-2772, eshafer@stanford.edu

#### HELICOPTER PARENTING: A THREAT TO MARRIAGE?

Many commentators worry about the impact of intensive parenting practices on children. "Helicopter parents," they claim, delay the development of independence and autonomy in their children, and may produce narcissistic young adults. In fact, the evidence is not at all clear that this is the case. Several studies note that children raised by hyper-involved parents express greater satisfaction with their college experience than other children, make stronger gains in writing and critical thinking, and take pleasure in close relationships with parents while pursuing achievement-oriented goals.

My interviews with families suggest that the real problem with "out of control" parenting is its effects on the parents themselves. Many of these parents invest so much time and emotion in child-rearing that they neglect the maintenance and repair of their marital relationships. They also fail to develop the adult social support networks that are essential for healthy aging and for strong communities.

Margaret K. Nelson, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Middlebury College, Middlebury, VT . 802 388-6659 (h); 802 443-5301 (w); mnelson@middlebury.edu

#### FOUR MYTHS ABOUT FATHERS AND DAUGHTERS

Even though most daughters say they want a more honest, meaningful relationship with their fathers, they often don't give them the same opportunities that they give their mothers. Especially after divorce, daughters may put up barriers and perpetual negative myths that prevent their Dads from being as involved as the fathers want to be. Moms may also unknowingly work against the father-daughter relationship - acting out the erroneous cultural belief that daughters are "naturally" going to have a closer relationship with their Moms. These behaviors are based on the following myths about the father-daughter relationship:

Myth: Dads don't want to have closer, more emotionally open relationships with their daughters. Fact: Research shows that most fathers wish their daughters wanted to spend more time with them and shared more of what is going on in their lives.

Myth: Dads, like most men, are less interested than daughters in talking about personal "stuff" and are less communicative and less self-disclosing. Fact: Research shows that the differences in male and female communication styles are small. Fathers can be just as self-disclosing and communicative with feelings as their daughters.

Myth: Dads don't have as much impact as Moms do on a daughter's life. Fact: Studies show that fathers have as much or more impact than mothers do on many aspects of a daughter's life - especially on her relationships with men, her vocational achievements, and her self-confidence.

Myth: Most fathers and daughters are satisfied with the quality of their relationship. Fact: Research shows that most daughters and fathers long for a more meaningful, closer relationship.

Linda Nielsen, Professor of Education, Wake Forest University Nielsen@wfu.edu; 336 758 5345

#### CHILDREN HAVE MORE ACCESS TO GRANDPARENTS THAN EVER; BUT GRANDPARENTS OFTEN SQUABBLE OVER ACCESS TO THE CHILDREN

One surprisingly contentious relationship in modern families is between the two sets of in-laws of the adult children. In-laws frequently vie for the attention of both their grandchildren and their adult children. They often compare the number of hours that they babysit, feeling favored or slighted on the basis of whether they spend more or less time. In addition, many grandparents feel inadequate when the other set can offer financial support or vacations that are outside their abilities. Families can overcome these feelings by finding ways to communicate across distance and by designing special ceremonies to maintain their relationships with their children and grandchildren. Those who realize that it is not the cost or the amount of the time spent with their children and grandchildren, but rather the quality of the interactions, appear to be the most happy in their relationships with their adult children and their grandchildren.

Ruth Nemzoff, Ed.D., Resident Scholar, Brandeis Women's Studies Research Center Waltham, MA 02454; 781-891-2623 RNEMZOFF@bentley.edu

#### MANY CHILDREN OF DIVORCE FEEL POSITIVE ABOUT ITS LONG-TERM IMPACT ON THEM

Each year, one million kids have parents who separate. Despite dire predictions about the long-range results of divorce, a 2005 survey found that 75 percent of adults who were children of divorced parents had positive feelings about the impact of separation and divorce. The difference between those who had positive and negative feelings was whether the parents were able to maintain civil contact. My forthcoming study of successful divorced couples suggests that two key factors are when couples still think of each other and their offspring as part of an extended kinship network and when former partners are able to talk about the successes of their children rather than focus on the "failure" of their marriage.

Judy Osborne, Director of Stepfamily Associates, Brookline, MA. judyosborne16@gmail.com 617-731-5767

#### YOUNG ADULTS' BLOGGING DISCLOSURE PRACTICES: HOW CAN PARENTS HELP?

Almost 70 percent of all U.S. homes are wired to the Internet, and three-quarters of young adults under 30 have created Facebook profiles. But very few teens and young adults, even when they live at home with their parents, pay attention to privacy management or consider whether their parents might read their entries. Almost 95 percent of the 300 active bloggers we surveyed were certain their parents did not read or pay attention to their blogging disclosures.

These findings pose a delicate dilemma for parents. On the one hand, parents need to recognize that children claim information ownership and have personal privacy rules about how they expect others to manage their information. On the other, parents have the opportunity to explain to their children that their personal information will almost invariably be accessible to everyone, including parents and strangers. Rather than spying on children's blogs or pretending ignorance of them, parents should openly discuss these issues, exploring the privacy rules children have and where necessary negotiating new rules that take into account potential ramifications of dealing with unwanted others.

Jeffrey T. Child, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, School of Communication Studies, Kent State University, Phone: 330-672-1224 [jchild@kent.edu](mailto:jchild@kent.edu)

Sandra Petronio, Ph.D., Professor, IU Department of Communication Studies and School of Medicine, Indianan University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI), Phone: 317-274-8655; [Petronio@IUPUI.edu](mailto:Petronio@IUPUI.edu)

#### **IV. SEXUALITY AND GENDER**

##### **MOMS UNDERESTIMATE INFANT DAUGHTERS**

Although boys outshine girls in a range of motor skills, there are no known gender differences in motor performance during infancy. But an experimental study showed gender bias in mothers' expectations about their infants' motor development. Mothers of 11-month-old infants estimated their babies' crawling ability and risk-taking propensities in a novel locomotor task-crawling down slopes on an adjustable walking. Mothers of girls underestimated their crawling ability and risk-taking, and mothers of boys overestimated their ability and risk-taking. Mothers' gender bias had no basis in fact. When the babies were tested in the same slope task a few moments after mothers' provided their ratings, girls and boys showed identical levels of motor performance.

Karen Adolph, Professor of Psychology & Neural Science, New York University, [Karen.Adolph@nyu.edu](mailto:Karen.Adolph@nyu.edu), 212-998-3552

Catherine Tamis-LeMonda, Professor of Applied Psychology, New York University, [Catherine.Tamis-Lemonda@nyu.edu](mailto:Catherine.Tamis-Lemonda@nyu.edu), 212 998 5399

##### **GOOD SEX AFTER 50? ABSOLUTELY! ESPECIALLY FOR OLDER HISPANICS**

Call them Boomers or older Americans, but don't call them Seniors; it turns out they hate that! What they love, apparently, is sex, according to a forthcoming national survey on the sexual behavior and preferences of Americans between the ages of 50 and 70. While individuals over 70 have sex less frequently, most state that it is still very important to them. While single boomers aren't nearly as active, all healthy boomer couples, especially Hispanics, continue to enjoy a satisfying sex life.

Pepper Schwartz, Professor of Sociology, University of Washington. Office: (206) 543-4036, couples@u.washington.edu

#### ELEMENTARY SCHOOL GIRLS AND HETEROSEXUAL FANTASIES

Much research has documented a "sexual awakening" that occurs among children during adolescence when children hit puberty and start to transition into adulthood. The notion of a sexual awakening assumes that pre-adolescent children (those 9 years old and under) are non-sexual, or sexually "innocent." But my in-depth study of 43 elementary school girls (most of whom were 9 or younger), reveals that long before puberty, American girls have been watching and internalizing a heterosexual "script" that is very different from the Disney movies their parents take them to see.

As early as first grade, girls proclaimed themselves "boy crazy." By the second grade, it was a status symbol for girls to talk about their "crushes" on boys - even if they didn't really have a crush. The girls measured each other by their interest in and attractiveness to boys. Fourth- and fifth-graders evaluated other girls by whether they could get a boyfriend, even though few of the girls had, or even wanted, boyfriends. They labeled boys "hot" and talked about wanting to be French-kissed.

The girls fantasized vividly about heterosexual romance, but they also expressed the view that most real-life intimacy was "inappropriate" for younger girls like them. One fourth grader said, "In kid world, dating is just an idea." Kissing and dating were for teenagers, and sex was for married adults. Nevertheless, the detail and passion surrounding heterosexual fantasies were striking given their youth. This research reminds us that young girls are not kept in a cultural incubator to be protected while they await adolescence. They actively grapple with the hyper-sexualized world around them, as do their older sisters.

Kristen Myers, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, Northern Illinois University; kmyers@niu.edu, 815-753-6431

#### SEXTING: PUNISHMENT AND PROSECUTION MISS THE MARK

Thirty-nine percent of teens admit to sending sexually suggestive material over digital devices. When discovered, they are vulnerable to prosecution using current laws related to child pornography, which can result in their having to register as sex offenders. This is an ineffective and inappropriate punishment that can re-victimize minors. Parents need to be taught how to listen and talk openly with their kids about their struggles, desires, and fears regarding relationships and sex without shutting them down, becoming angry, blaming them, or immediately taking away their computers and phones. Whole-school approaches that teach general assertiveness skills, provide leadership opportunities to ostracized youth, do not use zero tolerance approaches, and don't assume kids can't help themselves are the most effective strategy of dealing with this behavior.

Linda R Young, Ph.D., Counseling Psychologist, (425) 698-9008. Lry5@columbia.edu or Linda@drlindayoung.com

#### DO MEN "NEED" ORGASMS MORE THAN WOMEN?

Conventional wisdom is that men have a stronger sex drive than women, and some scholars have gone so far as to say that women don't really care about whether they have an orgasm in sex, but just about

the warmth of the relationship. However, a recent study of college women's sexual experiences found that those who had an orgasm were much more likely to report that they enjoyed what went on physically with their partner. Indeed, a statistical analysis of whether the student had an orgasm and her reported enjoyment of sex found that orgasm was more predictive of enjoyment for women than men.

Professor Paula England, Department of Sociology, Stanford University. pengland@stanford.edu; W: 650-723-4912

#### COLLEGE STUDENTS LESS LIKELY HOLD TO A SEXUAL DOUBLE STANDARD. AND SOMETIMES THE DOUBLE STANDARD GOES AGAINST MEN

One of the striking changes in college life over the past 40 years has been the decline in the double standard about whether it is okay for women as well as men to have premarital sex. But women have long been judged more harshly than men for engaging in casual sex outside of a relationship.

However, results from an on-going survey of college students, the College Social Life Survey, taken thus far by approximately 20,000 students at 20 colleges and universities across the nation, show that a surprising number of students now hold men and women to the same standard. And where a double standard still exists, it can cut in either direction.

A majority of college men still judge their female colleagues more harshly than they do fellow male classmates for the same sexual behavior: 63% of men say they lose respect for women who hook up frequently, and only 41% say they feel the same way about men who engage in the same behavior. But the majority of women hold a reverse double standard, assessing men's casual sexual behavior more harshly than other women's. More than 70% say they lose respect for men who engage in casual sex, while less than 60% lose respect for other women.

Rachel Allison, M.A. Research Assistant, rallis2@uic.edu

Barbara J. Risman, Professor and Head, Sociology University of Illinois at Chicago, Executive Officer, CCF. brisman@uic.edu, 919 349 0090, 312 996 3074

#### BUT THE DOUBLE STANDARD IN MARRIAGE CHANCES FOR OLDER WOMEN IS ALIVE AND WELL

We've all heard so much about the wealthy older man marrying the beautiful young model that it seems as if men's money and status allows them to buy women's youth and beauty. But, in fact, research shows that men with low income or no college education are just about as likely to marry someone much younger than themselves than are men with college degrees, even though they are less likely to marry at all. It seems that the effect of low education or earnings on men's marriage chances depends less on whether they can marry a young woman than whether they can marry at all. Research also shows that, regardless of men's education, the older they are when they marry, the younger the woman they choose to marry in relation to them. As a result, older women are more likely to be left unmarried.

Paula England, Professor of Sociology, Stanford University. 650-723-4912, pengland@stanford.edu

#### WHAT SAME-SEX COUPLES CAN TEACH HETEROSEXUAL ONES

It is sometimes said that same-sex marriage is a threat to heterosexual marriage, but in fact heterosexual couples have much to learn from the way that same-sex couples divide housework and relate emotionally. Same-sex couples not only share the load in the tasks of daily life, but they also tend to approach one another less harshly during times of conflict.

Researchers think there are two main reasons that same-sex couples are particularly egalitarian: The first is that they are not under the pressure to follow gender stereotypes that often produce conflict or misunderstandings in heterosexual couples. The second may be an ironic consequence of the lack of acceptance of same-sex relationships in American society as a whole. Because there are not yet established rules and conventions for same-sex couples, they have more practice at negotiating an individualized relationship.

Christopher Martell, Clinical Associate Professor, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences and Department of Psychology, University of Washington, and Independent Practice, Seattle. Phone: 206-329-5255 Ext. 305; c.martell@comcast.net

#### DOING "TRADITIONAL WOMEN'S WORK" IN NON-TRADITIONAL HOUSEHOLDS: WOMEN PARTNERS OF TRANSGENDER MEN

Studies of gay and lesbian families often describe partners' household division of labor as more egalitarian than that of heterosexual partners. But what about other types of "non-traditional" partnerships? Transgender men (individuals in transition from female to male) and their women partners are a little-discussed but growing group. In the largest study ever conducted with women partners of transgender men, I found that many such women reinforce their transgender partner's masculinity by performing traditionally female-stereotyped household labor. Women also frequently reported administering their transsexual partners' testosterone injections, providing post-surgical care and acting as healthcare liaisons, essentially serving as unpaid nurses within their families.

Carla A. Pfeffer, Assistant Professor of Sociology, Purdue University. 219-785-5264, cpfeffer@purdue.edu

#### GROWING UP WITH A GAY OR BISEXUAL SIBLING

A new research study shows that growing up with a gay or bisexual sibling may cause people to think differently about their own heterosexuality. Among twenty-two young adults interviewed, those with gay siblings reported a belief that they were "born straight" just as their siblings were "born gay". They also reported a belief that sexuality could be attributed to one's genetics and was immutable to change over the life course. However, interviewees with bisexual siblings described sexuality as "a continuum" and "fluid." People with bisexual siblings were also more likely to acknowledge that they, too, could be attracted to someone of the same sex, even though they identified as heterosexual.

Many of the young adults in this study made significant life changes after finding out that their sibling identified as gay or bisexual. For example, some moved to neighborhoods that they felt were safer for gay people and their family members. Others searched for new faith communities or new faiths entirely because of anti-gay messages in their home churches. These findings suggest that policies and practices that exclude gay and bisexual people may have the unintended consequence of also excluding their siblings from full participation in community life.

Amy Brainer, Graduate Student, Department of Sociology, University of Illinois-Chicago. E-mail: abrain2@uic.edu. Tel: 312.731.7977.

#### HEALTH DISCRIMINATION AGAINST MEN?

Historically, many clinical studies were carried out on male subjects, leading to the development of treatment protocols that were not always appropriate for female patients or did not meet their needs. But in the case of Gardasil, female health seems to have been privileged over men's. This vaccine was tested and FDA-approved 3 years earlier (and marketed more vigorously) for girls and women than for boys and men, even though it protects against 4 types of human papillomavirus (HPV), a family of viruses which are 'equal opportunity' infectors.

Most of the publicity surrounding hpv, a sexually transmitted infection (STI) that spreads via skin-to-skin contact, emphasizes its role in causing cervical cancer and genital warts. But a more thorough public health campaign would reveal that HPV is a global pandemic and national epidemic, affecting an estimated 75 percent of adults under 50 years of age in the U.S. Certain types of HPV cause not only the majority of cervical cancers but also anal, oral, and penile cancers. In fact, due to Pap Tests catching most cervical cancers at early stages, other HPV-related cancers now likely result in more combined deaths in men than in women in the United States.

Despite HPV'S health threats to men, Gardasil has been primarily marketed as a cervical cancer vaccine and is not widely accessible to men and boys. When Gardasil received FDA approval for use in females ages 9-26 for the prevention of cervical cancer and other HPV diseases in 2006, the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) voted for "routine" vaccination. Last October, when the FDA finally approved Gardasil for use in males ages 9-26-solely for the prevention of genital warts-the ACIP voted in favor of only "permissive" use. Insurance companies are less likely to cover the costs of vaccines that are not considered "routine."

With mounting evidence that HPV vaccines (including Cervarix) may prevent a range of HPV-related male cancers -including oral cancers, which are on the rise and often fatal due to lack of accurate screening/testing- it is imperative to provide equal access. We are also long overdue for a HPV public health campaign that fully educates about the range of treatable and serious health consequences.

Adina Nack, Associate Professor of Sociology, Gender and Women's Studies, California Lutheran University. Tel: 805-493-3438; E-mail: nack@callutheran.edu.

#### THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS INVOLVEMENT IN THE LIVES OF IMMIGRANT MUSLIM WOMEN: REPRESSIVE OR LIBERATING FORCE?

Active involvement in conservative religious institutions is often considered to be oppressive to women because such institutions validate the legitimacy of male domination. But my study of first generation Muslim Bangladeshi women in a Midwestern city shows that, in fact, such involvement can counteract the isolation and dependence of women at home.

When women formed religious groups that met regularly at a mosque - a traditional religious institutional setting -- the women developed access to economic opportunities, formed wider social networks, and developed a social support system that empowered them to challenge their subordinate positions within their households. However, when the religious gatherings happened in informal home

settings, they reinforced traditional patriarchal relationships, due to male surveillance either by husbands or grown sons during the gatherings.

Pallavi Banerjee, Graduate Student, University of Illinois at Chicago. Pbaner3@uic.edu. 8475280386.

## **V. SERVING VULNERABLE POPULATIONS**

### **MENTORING CHILDREN OF INCARCERATED PARENTS**

As of 2007, 1.7 million children had a parent who was incarcerated in a state or federal prison. Children of incarcerated parents are at higher risk for developing behavioral problems, school problems, and insecure attachment in their relationships.

Mentoring is one strategy that has been used to serve this population. We looked at 57 mentor-child matches and found that while children initially found it difficult to establish trust and closeness with the mentor, those who continued in the program exhibited fewer symptoms of anxiety or depression, as well as fewer incidences of aggression and school truancy. While attachment theory posits that children with less than optimal relationships with their incarcerated parents and their current caregivers would have a more difficult time forming and maintaining relationships with mentors, our analyses did not support that prediction. These children were equally likely to remain in the program.

Despite these optimistic findings, we found that a third of the mentor-child relationships ended within the first six months. We are concerned about the impact of such losses on those children, who are already at high risk, and caution against the unfettered expansion of mentoring programs until problems of program implementation, follow-through, and fidelity have been solved.

Rebecca J Shlafer, University of Minnesota, shlaf002@umn.edu (612) 624-1169

Julie Poehlmann, University of Wisconsin-Madison, poehlmann@waisman.wisc.edu (608) 263-4839

Brianna Coffino, University of Minnesota

Ashley Hanneman, University of Chicago

### **JOB TRAINING PROGRAMS WORK BEST WHEN BOTH PARTNERS PARTICIPATE**

Job training programs have traditionally focused on individuals, but our studies show that when it comes to serving parents, training them along with their partners -- even if the couple is not married or even living together -- yields better results. In a demonstration program for couples, mothers who participated along with their partners had larger immediate gains in employment and earnings and decreases in welfare receipt following their exit from the program relative to mothers who received employment assistance on their own. Fathers showed similar although weaker results.

Demonstration couples were all young adult parents from poor urban areas, and primarily African American. They were all in committed relationships, although most were not married or cohabiting. These results confirm the value of recent efforts to move beyond the focus on relationship skills that dominated early healthy marriage initiatives and to integrate employment-focused assistance to couples into such programs.



Rachel A. Gordon, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology and Institute of Government and Public Affairs, University of Illinois at Chicago, ragordon@uic.edu, 312-413-0295

Carolyn J. Heinrich, Director and Professor, La Follette School of Public Affairs, University of Wisconsin-Madison. cheinrich@lafollette.wisc.edu, 608-262-5443

#### WHY ARE SO MANY POOR CHILDREN GIVEN ANTI-PSYCHOTIC DRUGS?

We have known for a long time that poverty is a significant factor in the causation of mental illness. Sadly, the nation's poor also suffer from the misdiagnosis and mistreatment of their children. Anti-psychotic drugs are prescribed four times more frequently for Medicaid-eligible children than children with private insurance, a practice that has the potential for long-term and damaging side effects. I suggest that it happens for the following reasons:

Poor families often depend on emergency room care and do not have a consistent practitioner who knows the children or the circumstances of the family. Physicians who are paid through Medicaid often have only one brief opportunity to assess a child's needs under the pressure of a long line of clinic patients. By contrast, private-insurance or private-pay patients are likely to go to a physician, psychologist, or psychiatrist who knows them well or who has training in child psychopathology. A child who has been waiting in an uncomfortable situation for some time may present as more troubled than he or she is. Furthermore, physicians may misinterpret symptoms as pathology rather than difference when dealing with children of a different class or ethnicity

Poor families are more likely to live in neighborhoods where domestic and gang violence are common. The stress of these conditions can lessen family members' ability to cope with children's problems of impulse control or anxiety. This may convince physicians that medication is more likely than counseling or parent education to control children's behavioral problems.

Jean Mercer, Ph.D. Professor Emerita of Psychology. Richard Stockton College. 856-222-1216 (home/office); Jean.Mercer@stockton.edu

#### VI. WORK-FAMILY ISSUES

##### FAMILY LEAVE POLICY: NON-EXISTENT OR UNDER-UTILIZED IN U.S. BUSINESSES

Today only half of all American workers have any statutory right to unpaid leave from their jobs to care for family members, including newborns, sick children, sick spouses, and elderly parents. But now, even many of those workers covered by the 1993 Family Medical Leave Act often cannot get the leaves that the law requires. Among the private companies that the FMLA requires to provide family leave, between 25 and 43% do not comply with the law. And the ones least likely to comply are in some ways those with a workforce most likely to need leaves: companies with mostly wage rather than salary workers and those whose workers are non-unionized.

Big companies, especially those with a large number of women employees, are more likely to obey the law and offer time off, but non-unionized companies are only half as likely as unionized ones to obey the law. It would be great if the U.S had a paid family leave policy of the kind found in over forty other industrial countries. But at the very least, we could start by enforcing the leave policy we already have.

Naomi Gerstel, Ph.D., Professor of Sociology at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA 01003.  
Phone: 413-585-8775. E-mail: gerstel@sadri.umass.edu

Amy Armenia, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Sociology at Randolph-Macon College Ashland, VA 23005,  
Phone: 804-752-7324, E-mail: amyarmenia@rmc.edu.

#### HEALTH OF THE U.S. WORKFORCE IN DECLINE, ESPECIALLY FOR MALES

Families and Work Institute's ongoing National Study of the Changing Workforce (NSCW) reveals that the health of U.S. employees is declining. For example: in 2008 less than one third of employees (28%) reported that their overall health was excellent, a drop of 6% since 2002. Another example: using a four-part measure of perceived stress that has been correlated with physical health, 41% of employees reported experiencing three or more indicators of stress. These changes cannot be explained by the aging of the workforce, and they are most widespread among men.

Families and Work Institute conducted an analysis of which aspects of the work environment are the most important in predicting employees' health, using data from the 2008 National Study of the Changing Workforce. Across the board, "Economic Security" was the number one predictor of overall health, fewer minor health problems, fewer signs of depression, less frequent sleep problems, and lower stress level. Surprising to some was the significance of "Work-Life Fit." This was the second most powerful predictor of overall health, less frequent sleep problems, and lower stress levels, and the third most important predictor of the other health outcomes, ranked above other such stressful aspects of work such as job challenge and lack of supervisor support for succeeding on the job. Work-life fit is measured by questions that ask employees how supportive their supervisors and coworkers are when work-family issues arise and whether they have the schedule flexibility they need.

Ellen Galinsky, President and Co-Founder, Families and Work Institute, 212.465.2044,  
egalinsky@familiesandwork.org

#### WOMEN ON TRACK TO BE MAJORITY OF UNIONIZED WORKERS

Much has been made about the fact that women are now 48 percent of the nation's workforce. But in some ways, even more significant has been the shift in the proportion of women in labor unions. Although only a minority of the labor force is unionized, labor unions tend to take the leadership in deciding what issues to press legislators about. Today, women make up 45 percent of union membership, up from 35 percent in 1983. By 2020, women will make up a majority of unionized workers. This means that issues about work-family balance, paid sick days and paid parental leave are likely to become more prominent in the next decade.

John Schmitt, Senior Economist, Center for Economic and Policy Research, schmitt@cepr.net, 202-293-5380 x113

#### THE ECONOMICS OF CARE WORK

The care "sector" of our economy includes both paid and unpaid work that contributes substantially to state economic development. Estimates for Massachusetts in 2007, for example, show that paid care work accounted for 800,000 workers, or 22% of the state's paid labor force, and paid care industries about 13% of the state's Gross Domestic Product. All together, Massachusetts residents perform work

that is the equivalent of about 3.1 million full-time workers. If the value of Massachusetts GDP were expanded to include unpaid labor, care work (both paid and unpaid) would account for about 36% of GDP.

Randy Albelda, Professor of Economics, University of Massachusetts, Boston, [randy.albelda@umb.edu](mailto:randy.albelda@umb.edu)

Mignon Duffy, Assistant Professor of Sociology, UMass Lowell, [Mignon\\_Duffy@uml.edu](mailto:Mignon_Duffy@uml.edu)

Nancy Folbre, Professor of Economics, University of Massachusetts Amherst, [folbre@econs.umass.edu](mailto:folbre@econs.umass.edu)

Nancy Folbre also contributes to New York Times Economix blog at <http://economix.blogs.nytimes.com/author/nancy-folbre/>

#### SELF-RELIANT WOMEN AND NEO-TRADITIONAL MEN: CAN THEY WORK TOGETHER IN LONG-TERM COMMITTED RELATIONSHIPS?

Among a random sample of urban and suburban young adults, eight out of ten women and seven out of ten men say they want to blend the traditional value of life-long marriage with the modern value of equal sharing. Yet young people also fear that workplace obstacles and relationship uncertainties will put the ideal of equal marriage out of reach. As they prepare for second-best options, women and men are pursuing different fallback strategies. Most women see self-reliance through work as essential to their survival, while most men believe they cannot afford to let caretaking duties undermine their career prospects. While "self-reliant" women and "neo-traditional" men may appear to be on a collision course, both groups would prefer to find flexible jobs and childcare supports that help them strike a similar balance between family and work.

Kathleen Gerson, Professor of Sociology and Collegiate Professor of Arts and Science, New York University. 212-998-8376 (office), 718-788-7139 (home)

#### MEN NOW FEEL MORE WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT THAN WOMEN

Think work-family conflict is about professional women dropping out? In fact, men now report higher levels of work-family conflict than women do. And high-school educated women report higher levels of conflict than do professional women.

Joan C. Williams, Distinguished Professor of Law, 1066 Foundation Chair and Director, Center for WorkLife Law, University of California, Hastings College of the Law

(w) 415-565-4706; (c) 202-365-8013; [williams@uchastings.edu](mailto:williams@uchastings.edu)