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The Performance of Desire: Gender and Sexual Negotiation in Long-Term Marriages

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Abstract

We integrate theoretical traditions on the social construction of gender, heterosexuality, and marriage with research and theory on emotion work to guide a qualitative investigation of how married people understand and experience sex in marriage. Results, based on 62 in-depth interviews, indicate that married men and women tend to believe that sex is integral to a good marriage and that men are more sexual than women. Moreover, husbands and wives commonly experience conflict around sex and undertake emotion work to manage their own and their spouse's feelings about sex. We refer to this emotion work as "performing desire" and show how it is linked to gendered experiences in marriage and to competing cultural discourses around gender, heterosexuality, and marriage.

Keywords

emotion work; gender; intimacy; marital sex; sexual attitudes; sexual behavior

Sexual activity in the context of long-term heterosexual relationships may be an important site of conflict as well as relationship vitality. Studies find that Americans consider sex an essential element of relational intimacy, key to personal fulfillment, and crucial for relationship longevity (Michael, Gagnon, Laumann, & Kolata, 1994; Rubin, 1990). At the same time, research points to the potential for conflict around sex in heterosexual relationships (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983; Duncombe & Marsden, 1996; Rubin). Despite sex being increasingly framed as desirable, if not mandatory, to ensure marital harmony, cultural discourses about gender and heterosexuality frame men and women as sexually different, with men stereotyped as sexually assertive and women stereotyped as sexually passive: This framing is typically labeled as the sexual double standard (Crawford & Popp, 2003). These stereotypes shape how individuals understand and experience themselves as gendered and sexual beings (Crawford & Popp; Schwartz & Rutter, 1998).

Most research on the sexual double standard has been conducted with younger women and men — either adolescents or the college aged, usually involved in dating relationships rather than committed relationships (see Crawford & Popp, 2003, for references) — largely ignoring older individuals and those in longer-term relationships. We know little about how cultural discourses around heterosexuality play out in long-term married relationships, even though social scientists are especially concerned with the success and failure of long-term marriages (Bradbury & Karney, 2004).

Cultural discourses set the stage for what Hochschild (1983) termed "emotion work." When faced with a social situation, individuals manage their emotions; they attempt to bring their

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feelings in line with cultural expectations for how they think they *should* be feeling (Hochschild). Married people, however, face potentially conflicting discourses around sex. In addition to emotion work to manage one's own feelings, emotion work may also be done "by the self upon others" (Hochschild, p. 7) in the form of offering encouragement, affirmation, a supportive ear, empathy, and affection. This form of emotion work is essential for maintaining family and marital ties (Erickson, 2005; Hochschild), yet few researchers have examined emotion work within the institution of marriage and family. Those that have have largely overlooked sexual intimacy as a site of emotion work.

We bring together theoretical work on gender, marriage, and emotion work to guide an analysis of how couples in long-term marriages make sense of, negotiate, and experience heterosexual sex. Marriage is a unique site for examining sexual negotiations because it is a historically patriarchal, gendered institution, premised on men's "privilege and entitlement to women's labor, sexuality, and emotions" that is increasingly contested (Lorber, 2005, p. 159). We contribute to debates surrounding emotion management, gender, and marriage by analyzing in-depth interviews with 31 married couples to ask: (How) Do cultural constructions of gender, heterosexuality, and marriage influence married people's ideas about, and experiences of, marital sex?

The Social Construction of Gender, Heterosexuality, and Marriage

We draw from the social constructionist perspective to view gender, heterosexuality, and marriage as socially constructed, interdependent entities that are created and recreated, and, sometimes, challenged and transformed, in ongoing interactions and everyday practices (Connell, 1995; West & Zimmerman, 1987). In their classic article on the social construction of gender, West and Zimmerman argued that, rather than constituting a fixed identity, gender is an emergent feature of social situations that is constantly negotiated and renegotiated. Cultural norms and beliefs about gender guide individuals' understandings and performances of gender (West & Zimmerman).

The observation that gender is what one does, rather than what one is, highlights the dynamism of gender. Yet gender involves more than just how people see themselves and how they act; it also shapes how people experience themselves (Bordo, 1993; Connell, 1995). As Bordo observed, "Our bodies are trained, shaped, and impressed with the stamp of prevailing historical forms of selfhood, desire, masculinity, femininity" (pp. 165 – 166). The meanings of heterosexuality are highly gendered insofar as existing patterns of gender relations, and a gender hierarchy shapes individual histories of desire and identification (Schwartz & Rutter, 1998). Men and women, for example, are held to different standards of sexual behavior (Crawford & Popp, 2003). Women continue to encounter a sexual double standard that is rooted in cultural understandings about gender and sexuality. Femininity is typically framed in terms of being sexually desirable rather than sexually desiring whereas masculinity connotes sexual aggression and prowess. Conflicting messages about sex and sexuality may lead women to develop a fraught sexual identity, "to sacrifice their sexual autonomy in exchange for social desirability," and to become disconnected from their own desires (Crawford & Popp, p. 24). Yet marriage is increasingly based on the idea of sexual compatibility — indeed, romantic love is the basis of modern Western marriage (Giddens, 1992). But little attention has been paid to how the sexual double standard shapes married individuals' experiences of sex.

Although sex is commonly used to refer to the act of sexual intercourse, it can also involve a range of behaviors, emotions, and negotiations. We thus use the terms "sex" and "sexual intimacy" to refer to this broader range of sexual behaviors — from a casual but intimate touch or glance to sexual intercourse. How does sex fit into modern marriage? A nationally representative survey of the sex lives of Americans found that married people are quite

sexually active and, relative to other marital status groups, report the highest level of satisfaction with their sex lives (Michael et al., 1994). Marital satisfaction is significantly and positively associated with sexual satisfaction (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983; Henderson-King & Veroff, 1994), although causal order between these variables is difficult to assess. Most studies find that the frequency of sex within marriage declines over time. Sexual frequency declines precipitously during the first year of marriage with a slow but steady decline thereafter, net of the effect of the presence of children (Call, Sprecher, & Schwartz, 1995). Researchers have speculated that the decline in frequency of marital sex is a result of habituation (Call et al.) and that, with increasing marital duration, married men and women find sex less rewarding (Liu, 2000). But past research reveals little about the meanings that married people attach to sex, the typical decline in sexual activity over time, or the gendered dynamics of sex in the context of long-term marriage.

Americans are now more likely than ever before to enter into marriage with a full history of sexual experimentation and with high aspirations for sexual pleasure (Giddens, 1992; Rubin, 1990). As ideas about marriage have changed and as sex has become separated from reproduction, within marriage, sexual activity is increasingly seen as desirable, if not mandatory, to ensure marital harmony, and a goal for many couples is to become sexual equals (Giddens; Rubin). Rubin, for example, in her study of the sex lives of nearly 1,000 Americans, found that married men say they want sexual equality and married women expect to receive as well as to give sexual pleasure. Married couples, however, tout egalitarianism in all realms of marriage, but this ideal is not always backed up with action (Blaisure & Allen, 1995; Rosenbluth, Steil, & Whitcomb, 1998). For example, although men and women espouse egalitarian goals in relation to housework, men continue to do significantly less housework than women, and husbands do less housework than any other male group (Bianchi, Milkie, Sayer, & Robinson, 2000; Hochschild & Machung, 2003). Previous research suggests that the gender gap in household labor persists because of cultural expectations about gender and marriage. That is, wives perform the bulk of domestic labor, regardless of their employment status, because it fits with their (and their partner's) gendered construction of self (Twiggs, McQuillan, & Ferree, 1999). Moreover, the gender gap in domestic labor and responsibilities and gendered experiences of marital sex may be linked. The division of household labor influences how married couples feel about one another (Voydanoff & Donnelly, 1999). In particular, wives report lower levels of marital quality when they perceive the division of domestic labor as unequal (Pina & Bengston, 1993). An unequal division of household labor may also affect the amount of time and energy wives have for, and are willing to give to, sex with their partner.

In sum, private and personal sexual desires and passions are informed by the wider patterns of gender relations in a society. Despite an ideal of sexual equality in marriage, cultural discourses continue to promote the notion that men and women are sexually and emotionally very different beings. As a result, men and women do not typically enter into marriage with the same sexual and emotional understandings, beliefs, and experiences. In order to examine how married people reconcile their ideas about marital sex with their gendered experiences, we employ Hochschild's concept of emotion work.

The Emotion Work of Marital Sex

In her influential treatise on emotion management, Hochschild (1983) conceptualized emotional labor as labor that "requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others" (p. 7). Hochschild used the term *emotion work* to refer to emotion management done in a private context, as opposed to that done for a wage. For clarity, we adopt the term *emotion work* throughout this article. Emotion work is a complex construct that involves the active management of one's own emotions and efforts to manage the emotions of others. People may, for example,

work on their own emotions in an attempt to bring their feelings in line with how they think they *should* be feeling according to cultural norms and beliefs—what Hochschild termed "feeling rules" (p. 56)—and may feel confused and guilty when their feelings are not in line with the normative expectations. Feeling rules also lay the groundwork for individuals' social interactions: They "guide emotion work by establishing the sense of entitlement or obligation that governs emotional exchanges" (Hochschild, p. 56). Hochschild suggested, for example, that, because of economic dependence and gendered expectations, women may be more likely than men to "cultivate the habit of suppressing their own feelings" (p. 57), especially when doing so "*affirms, enhances, and celebrates the well-being and status of others*" (p. 165, emphasis in original).

Importantly, then, in addition to doing emotion work for one's self (e.g., to bring feelings in line with how one thinks one should be feeling), emotion work may be undertaken for the benefit of others. An individual may manipulate his or her emotions to try to change how someone else is feeling or to show support and affection for another (Erickson, 2005; Hochschild, 1983, 1997). Individuals may be aware that their emotional display does not conform with what they are truly feeling—what Hochschild (1983) called "surface acting" (p. 35)—or they may convince themselves that their feelings are genuine and spontaneous, rather than manufactured: termed "deep acting" (p. 35).

Since the publication of Hochschild's work on emotion management in public and private life, studies have examined emotional labor in a number of occupations, including prostitution (e.g., Chapkis, 1997), but have largely overlooked the more private institution of marriage and family as a site of emotion work (see Duncombe & Marsden, 1996; Erickson, 2005; Hochschild, 1997, for exceptions). Yet Hochschild (1983) stressed that, because of the immense emotional obligations of private life, emotion work is likely to be strongest in the context of close personal bonds.

Building on her concept of the second shift, the care of children and home that follows wives' paid employment (Hochschild & Machung, 2003), Hochschild's (1997) study of working families identified a third shift that working parents perform comprised of "the emotional work necessary to repair the damage caused by time pressures at home" (p. 51). Similarly, in her study of employed married parents, Erickson (2005) found that wives report performing substantial amounts of emotion work within the family. Moreover, in line with Hochschild's concept of feeling rules, the wives in Erickson's study expressed a belief that women are held accountable for the performance of emotion work in ways that men are not. Erickson concluded that family researchers must reconceptualize emotion work "as an important aspect of the *work* that takes place in families" (p. 349, emphasis in original).

We extend Erickson's argument by examining the role of emotion work in married people's intimate lives. Sex represents a fundamental way married people can show they love and care for one another. To be sure, there are other ways to show affection, but sex is culturally vaunted as a signifier of love and marital bliss. Thus, it may become a powerful symbol of the relationship. But as well, sex is often understood as a physical act that resides outside the purview of society (Chapkis, 1997). As such, sex is imbued with a sacred quality and may be viewed as a spontaneous, authentic reflection of a person's true feelings for another. Chapkis, however, in her study of sex workers in the United States and the Netherlands, argued that sex does not exist "independent of its social expression and management" (Chapkis, p. 75). It may be easy to see how this is so in regard to a monetary enterprise like prostitution, but what about in marriage, where sexual expression is deemed a signifier of mutual love and affection?

Although few researchers have explicitly examined the emotion work of marital sex, previous studies offer some evidence that married sex may be an important site of emotion work. Married people may perform emotion work in an effort to reconcile their expectations for sexual fulfillment in marriage with their actual sex lives (Duncombe & Marsden, 1996). Based on the literature on emotional support in marriage (Erickson, 2005), husbands and wives may also perform emotion work around sex in an effort to make a spouse feel good about him or herself and about the relationship. But as well, cultural discourses about gender, heterosexuality, and marriage may shape how married people manage their emotions surrounding their sex lives. Husbands and wives may not simply view sex as important for marital happiness; they may be deeply conflicted about the gendered dynamics of marriage and heterosexuality (Rubin, 1990). For example, Rubin found deep contradictions and confusion about the place of sex in marriage. One husband, in trying to explain why he has trouble seeing his wife as a sexual being, told Rubin, "'Maybe it's just too plain scary to have a woman who's like a nurturing mother be sexual at the same time"' (p. 175). In their study of the sex lives of thousands of American couples, Blumstein and Schwartz (1983) found that husbands had negative reactions when their wives initiated sex more often than they did. Hence, entrenched cultural expectations about how men and women *should* be sexual (West & Zimmerman, 1987) may influence heterosexual negotiation and may play a role in the emotion work that married people do around their sexual relationship.

For the purposes of this study, we use the term "performing desire" to refer to the emotion work that married men and women undertake to manage their and their spouse's feelings about their intimate lives in accordance with cultural discourses about how sex should be expressed and experienced in the context of marriage. Performing desire involves managing feelings around one's sexual relationship according to how one thinks desire should be both felt and performed, which is in turn linked to individuals' own and their spouse's expectations, beliefs, and experiences of gender, marriage, and heterosexuality.

In summary, the literature on gender relations, heterosexuality, and marriage suggests that married men and women perform emotion work in response to cultural expectations and discordances surrounding marital sex. In the research reported here, we examine how long-term married couples experience their sexual relationship and how they navigate competing cultural discourses around marital sex. We accomplish this by conducting a qualitative analysis of in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 62 married individuals.

Method

Data Collection and Recruitment

As part of a larger project investigating the link between marriage and health, we recruited 31 married couples to participate in in-depth interviews. We restricted our sample to couples married 7 years or longer because the median duration of marriage for divorcing couples is 7 years (National Center for Health Statistics, n.d.) and our goal was to capture the dynamics of long-term marriage. A strength of this study is that we conducted separate interviews with the husband and the wife. In line with studies of couples that involve sensitive issues, such as domestic violence, we interviewed each spouse separately with the understanding that spouses may not talk openly about conflict-ridden aspects of a relationship or intimate issues such as sexual feelings and behaviors in front of one another, particularly if hierarchical power relations characterize the relationship (Dobash & Dobash, 2004).

We conducted interviews throughout 2003. Interviews lasted from 1.5 to 2.5 hours and were generally conducted in respondents' homes, but occasionally we met respondents at their work-place or, rarely, a café. Each interview explored a broad array of topics related to marriage and how marriages change over time. To understand how married individuals

experience and feel about their sex lives, we asked a series of open-ended questions designed to explore how sexual experiences, dynamics, and feelings changed over time. In general, respondents were open and willing to share information with us about their sex lives. Only one respondent flatly refused to discuss her sex life. As two White women in academia, our social locations and identities may have influenced what and how much respondents were willing to disclose. Interviews were taped and transcribed and pseudonyms were assigned to maintain confidentiality.

Mostcouples (20) were recruited through a local newspaper article featuring the second author's findings from a quantitative study of married couples. The end of the article included a brief description of our qualitative study along with a request for study participants. We received over 70 responses to this article. In an earlier recruitment effort, we recruited 7 couples through an advertisement we placed in a local newspaper requesting participants for a study of long-term marriages. We used these initial pilot interviews to fine-tune our interview protocol and identify research areas to explore in more depth in subsequent interviews (Charmaz, 1983). In a few instances, respondents referred us to other couples who met our criteria of having been married for 7 years or longer. Through this snowball technique, an additional 4 couples were recruited and interviewed.

We conducted a brief phone-screening interview with all individuals who contacted us about the study. To obtain a diverse sample of couples, we included questions about length of marriage, how many children (if any) they had and how many lived at home, overall marital satisfaction, household income, and race/ethnicity. We also emphasized that we wanted to interview both spouses (only 3 individuals refused this condition and were disqualified). Using the screening information, we made every effort to include people from diverse racial and ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds — however, most of those who contacted us to participate in the study were White and middle class. White middle-class individuals are often overrepresented in qualitative studies (Cannon, Higginbotham, & Leung, 1988). They may be more willing than other economic and ethnoracial groups to volunteer to participate in a study because they do not have negative historical associations with research projects (Collins, 2000; Zinn, 1979) and are more likely to have greater flexibility and control over their schedules. The majority of those who contacted us also indicated that they were very satisfied or satisfied with their marriage. However, when we began interviewing, we found that levels of marital satisfaction were more varied than suggested by the screening question (which may have been influenced by the presence of a spouse during the phone screening).

Sample

The final sample consisted of 31 married couples. Marital duration ranged from 8 years to 52 years in length (mean = 25 years). Only 5 of the 62 respondents had been previously married. Average household income ($60,000) was higher than the median household income in the United Staes in 2004 ($44,473) (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.). Because income is inversely related to age, this income difference may partly reflect the average age of our sample (53 years). Most respondents (58) had a least some college education and 8 held graduate or advanced degrees. Four respondents reported a high school degree as their highest level of education. The majority of respondents were White (52). Of the remaining 10 respondents, 6 were African American, 1 was Asian American, 2 were Latina, and 1 identified as multiracial.

Analysis

Our goal was to understand how and why married people experience, negotiate, and interpret their sex lives. Hence, we used a grounded theory approach to analyze the interview transcripts (Charmaz, 1983; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Grounded theory methods offer detailed procedural steps to analyze textual data with the goal of going beyond description to build theoretical explanations (Charmaz; LaRossa, 2005; Strauss & Corbin). Our analysis began with a careful examination of the data. This involved numerous readings of transcripts and fieldnotes written immediately after each interview. Next, we conducted open, line-by-line coding to identify concepts. Categories concerning beliefs about gender and heterosexuality, opinions about the importance of sex in marriage, and respondents' own perceptions and experiences of sexual desire were identified and their indicators were extracted for analysis. From these broad categories, we identified subcategories that helped us to understand how the concepts were related to one another, what Strauss and Corbin refer to as axial coding. For example, we found that married people described consciously working on their and their spouse's feelings about their sex lives, but that the ways they do this and their reasons for, and interpretations of, this work often differed based on gendered experiences and beliefs. Through selective coding, a process of honing in on a key, centrally relevant concept that ties all the categories together "to form an explanatory whole" (Strauss & Corbin, p. 146), we found that married people perform emotion work around sex in response to discordant discourses about, and experiences of, gender, marriage, and sex.

Results

We analyzed the interviews with long-term married couples with particular attention to questions about how husbands and wives experience sex and sexual intimacy over the course of marriage. The section that follows examines married people's beliefs and experiences of marital sex, focusing in particular on how gender discourses and gendered experiences of marriage and heterosexuality shape their sexual negotiations. The first part of the analysis discusses competing cultural discourses around gender and marital sex that respondents articulate and highlights the paradoxical ways these discourses inform how married people make sense of their sex lives. The second part of the analysis develops the concept of performing desire by examining the gendered emotion work that married people undertake to negotiate sex and to manage feelings around their sexual relationship. We now turn to our results on competing cultural discourses around marital sex.

Contested Terrain: Marital Sex

A recurring theme throughout our interviews is that heterosexual sex is a contested terrain. Respondents view sex as vital to marital happiness, yet believe that men and women naturally have different sexual desires and proclivities. Some find comfort in this belief, but, as we report, most describe sex as a conflict-ridden domain of the marriage.

Sex as a gauge of marital success—A general theme around sex that emerged in the analysis of our interviews was that many men and women view sexual activity as a gauge of marital success. In 29 of the 31 couples, at least one spouse, and often both, say that sex is an integral part of marital success and describe sex as a barometer of the health of their own marriage. Lindsey (White, age 43, married 19 years) says she would be very bothered "if I thought we didn't have a good sex life. I mean it is that intimacy thing. And as long as we are sort of going along, I know everything is okay. You know, sex is a real indication of the health of your relationship." Similarly, Joel (White, age 31, married 11 years) says, "When our sex life suffers, then everything else is bad. And when we make a concerted effort to improve our sex life, even if we leave everything else alone, things get better." Like Joel and Lindsey, several of the married individuals we interviewed believe that sex is "crucial in a relationship" (Katherine, White, age 72, married 50 years). However, despite viewing sex as a gauge of marital success, our respondents also contend that the sex drives of men and women differ in ways that may lead to conflict or unhappiness over sex.

Discourse of sexual difference—Two thirds of our respondents assert that men and women are very different sexual beings. A message that recurred throughout our interviews was that men are more sexually driven than women and that women have an innately lower libido than men: "It's that male/female thing. For men I think it is just … well, it's physical. It's like they build up that sperm and they need a release" (Lindsey, White, age 43, married 19 years). Richard (White, age 64, married 36 years) expresses a similar sentiment when he states, "I guess for men, if you could satisfy yourself, you don't care about the girl. We are two meals away from being an animal." For many of our respondents, this discourse of difference in sexual desire resonates in large part because their own relationship mirrors it. For example, Pat (White, age 68, married 46 years) says, "I always felt like maybe [my husband] was more of a sexual person than I was, but I always thought that was because men were more sexually motivated and wanted instant gratification more than women."

Although the majority of the married individuals we interviewed express a belief in gendered sexual differences, not all of our respondents' sexual desires and experiences fit this discourse. Four wives indicate that they have always had a stronger sex drive than their husbands, and their husbands also discussed this issue in their interviews. These couples espouse the belief that men are more sexual than women but see their own experience as anomalous. For example, when asked about her sex life, Toni (White, age 53, married 24 years) says, "I have always sort of felt like we have a role reversal. Like I have greater desire than him. For a woman, it feels weird, because you always get these messages that men are the [sexual] aggressors. So it has been tough." Expressing a similar sense of gender vertigo, Toni's husband of 24 years, Joe (White, age 55), says that the times when he has made excuses to avoid having sex, "Like saying, 'Not tonight dear, I have a headache.' It feels surreal. Like, my wife should be doing this, not me!" Indeed, as we report below, many couples describe their belief in gender difference in sexual desire as comforting because it helps them to make sense of their own sex lives.

The explanatory power of the discourse of sexual difference—As we report later in our analysis, experiencing unequal sexual desire is potentially a source of conflict for couples. However, relying on a belief in gender differences in sexual desire can also be a source of comfort insofar as it provides an easy and immediate explanation for differences in sexual desire. Indeed, joking about the innate sexual differences between men and women is a common theme throughout our interviews. Robert (White, age 52, married 19 years), for example, says, "We joke about it all the time, that there is no time and that women have to have the perfect setting and everything has to be just right or they are not interested, where men would be up for it in the middle of the bus station!"

In addition to joking, maintaining a belief in gender differences in sexual desire helped Pat (White, age 68, married 46 years) come to terms with her husband's affair. Pat's husband, Matthew (White, age 69), had a brief affair with his secretary about 16 years into their marriage. Pat found out about the affair when the "other woman" phoned and broke the news. Pat explains how she was able to forgive Matthew: "As I say, I think that men look at sex differently than women. And so that's [the affair] something that I just put away." Because Pat attributed the affair to gender differences in desire, she does not view it as something that ever threatened her marriage. Pat uses her belief in men's greater sexual needs to manage ("put away") her feelings about Matthew's affair (Hochschild, 1983).

In sum, wives may be less inclined to *try* to be sexual, and their husbands may not expect them to be sexual, because of their belief that women are naturally less sexual than men. However, this discourse of sexual difference stands in direct contradiction to the belief that an active sex life is an integral part of marital success. Hence, although beliefs in gender differences in sexual desire may help some couples explain away their sexual differences, 46

(74%) of the 62 respondents report conflict over sex, especially around sexual frequency. Respondents were not asked specifically about conflict. Rather, they spontaneously described conflict about sex in their open-ended responses to general questions about how their sex life has changed over time.

Sexual conflict—In 23 (74%) of the 31 couples we interviewed, both the husband and wife shared stories of sex as conflict ridden. In fact, it was rare for respondents *not* to express any problems with their sexual relationship. In almost all instances, respondents construct conflict over sex as a problem of frequency of sexual intercourse. Moreover, this conflict is gendered in that husbands are far more likely than wives to report wanting to have more frequent sex (19 husbands compared to 4 wives). Louise (White, age 35, married 13 years) typifies descriptions of such conflict when she says, "We don't have sex as often as he would like to have it and that is probably the most major issue between us. … Because he will feel sort of sad and lonely and want some affection from me and apparently I'm not there."

Conflict over sexual frequency is often related to the reasons for one spouse's decreased or lesser desire. Aubrey (African American, age 35, married 9 years) says that their arguments about sex mainly revolve around his wife's "excuses" for not having sex:

> We were talking about it just recently, and I expressed the fact that it always seems as though she doesn't have time, or she is not in the mood, or whatever. Making up some excuse. And I mean one of the things that really bothers me is the fact that there are some times when she will spend time on the phone with her sister and she has a lot of energy then, but then when she finally gets off the phone and winds down, now she doesn't have any energy and now she is sleepy.

Only four wives (13%) in this study say they have a stronger interest in sex than their husbands, but they too described conflict over frequency of sexual intercourse. Irene (White, age 51, married 32 years) says that most of the conflict she and Brian (White, age 55) have had over sex have to do with Brian's lack of interest. About 10 years ago, Brian stopped wanting to have sex altogether. According to Irene, "We went through a little bit of a hard patch then, until I said, 'You know, you need to go to the doctor and get yourself checked out and find out what's going on'."

In sum, our data show that married couples hold discordant beliefs about marital sex and that sex is an area of conflict in long-term marriages. The following section demonstrates that couples take different paths in negotiating contradictions and conflict around sex. We analyze these different tactics using Hochschild's (1983) concept of emotion work, paying particular attention to their gendered dimensions.

Negotiating Sexual Conflict and Difference

In large part because respondents view sex as crucial to a "good" marriage, but believe that women are less sexual than men, they undertake emotion work around their sexual relationship in an effort to reduce marital conflict, enhance intimacy, and facilitate a spouse's well-being. We refer to this emotion work as "performing desire." Two major themes emerged as central in our analysis of how and why married men and women perform desire: (a) efforts to change the sexual self and (b) the centrality of household labor to sexual negotiation.

Changing the sexual self—Twenty-three (37%) out of 62 respondents spontaneously described how they consciously work to alter their own sexual feelings, attitudes, and behaviors. We find that men and women are similarly likely to make a concerted effort to

change their sexual feelings or behaviors (13 wives vs. 10 husbands). But we do find a gendered pattern in the strategy of changing one's sexual self. The wives we interviewed are more likely to say that they make a conscious effort to be more sexual—to want sex more often, or at a minimum, to be willing to have sex more often—whereas more of the husbands say that they make a conscious effort to reduce their sexual desires and focus on the quality of sex (as subjectively perceived by our respondents), rather than sexual frequency. Efforts to change the sexual self thus involve (a) inducing desire and (b) repressing desire and may be experienced as spontaneous or (c) obligatory performances of desire.

(a) Inducing desire. Sixteen married individuals (26%) (12 wives, 4 husbands) describe consciously trying to be more sexual because of their belief that sex is an important part of marriage and because sexual frequency is a source of conflict. This strategy of performing desire involves one spouse, typically the wife, working to be more receptive to his or her spouse's sexual advances or to initiate sex more often. For example, Pat (White, age 68) learned late in her marriage of 46 years that her husband felt that she never initiated sex because she was not attracted to him, "but that wasn't the case. So it was good that we talked about it and got that across. Because I think anybody likes to think that they are sexually attractive to their mate. And so I try to [initiate sex] now." Although Pat describes an act—initiating sex—she reveals the emotion work underlying the act. Pat explains that she does not initiate sex because it feels natural, or even because of her own desire, but because she wants to reassure her husband of his attractiveness. She evaluates her sexual relationship with her husband as becoming better over time and attributes this to "trying to meet each other's needs."

One of the younger couples we interviewed provided a poignant example of efforts to induce desire. Sasha (White, age 30) and Joel (White, age 31) have been married for 11 years. They have two small children. Both Sasha and Joel describe her sex drive as much lower than his. According to Sasha, this difference in interest has created a great deal of conflict in their marriage: "We would usually get into a big long fight that lasted until two or three in the morning and then we would make up and it would be fine. But if I would go a week or two without having sex, we would have one of those arguments." Both Sasha and Joel subjectively report that their sex life is getting better because Sasha is actively trying to increase her interest in sex. As Joel puts it:

> I think Sasha believes that she has an abnormally low sexual desire. So I think that she understands that she's got to make more of an effort to *want* to have sex than I do. And so she does make more of an effort. So I don't think that she has sex more frequently when she doesn't want to as much as she more frequently makes a concerted effort to want to.

According to Joel, Sasha has to "make more of an effort to want to have sex," but he prefers to think of her performance of desire as authentic (Hochschild, 1983). In Joel's estimation, Sasha induces a real feeling to want to have sex, a form of deep acting (Hochschild). Because Sasha was less forthcoming about sex in her interview than Joel, we do not know if Sasha is deep acting or if she simply submits to sex more often to reduce conflict in her marriage. However, both she and Joel provide a significant motive for Sasha to deep act, or lead Joel to believe she is: Joel has consistently expressed dismay and a sense of rejection about their sex life. As Joel explains,

> I'm sort of hypersensitive about it. I easily feel rejected. And so I let her know. … I've let her know over the years. … It's usually me that brings it up whenever our sex life is screwed up in some way or declining or whatever. And the reaction is

> rarely hostile. It's usually that, by the time I'm bringing it up, she is starting to become aware of it and realizes that, you know, we need to fix it.

For Joel, fixing their sex life involves Sasha wanting to have sex more often. Sasha confirms that, in the past when they had sex less often than they presently do, Joel was persistent about making "his needs known:" "It was like, 'Hey it's has been almost a week, woman.' You know. He wouldn't say it like that, but like yeah, he would just make his needs known" (Sasha). Hence, Sasha may try to be more sexual, or at least have sex more often, to assuage Joel's feelings of rejection and in response to his persistent requests.

Whereas the wives we interviewed say that they are more likely to try to change their sexual selves in ways that increase sexual frequency, 4 husbands also do this in an attempt to match their wives' greater sexual interest. Of note, 3 of these husbands are contemplating, and 1 has a prescription for, Viagra. All these husbands say they are taking or considering taking Viagra at their wives' behest. Jim (White, age 55), says that his wife of 32 years has always had more interest in sex and "I got the sense that she felt that I was not attracted to her or that she felt more insecure about there not being [more frequent sex]." Four years ago, Jim started having "problems staying 'excited' for any length of time. And at one point, she just said, 'Well, I'll miss it.' Which honestly made me feel terrible. Like she was just deciding that for the rest of her life she was going to miss sex because I was having this problem." Jim redoubled his efforts to maintain an erection during sex after this comment from his wife, but sex has not been frequent and his wife has been encouraging him to "ask the doctor about Viagra." When asked if he wants to take Viagra, Jim responded, "Not really. I don't know, maybe I should, but I don't have the desire to. [If I did get Viagra], I'd say that it was 75% for her and 25% for me. And maybe I will."

Husbands who are less sexual than their wives described increasing difficulty getting and maintaining an erection with age and view this as a physiological problem. As Harold (African American, age 61, married 32 years) puts it, "the plumbing doesn't work." On the face of it, Viagra would seem to provide an effective pharmaceutical substitute for performing desire. Yet, in general, they are reluctant to take this step, in part because of the embarrassment of seeing a doctor, but also, in large part, as Jim's comments reveal, because of a genuine lack of sexual interest. Nor does Viagra seem to be a panacea. Brian (White, age 55, married 32 years) has had a prescription for Viagra for almost 10 years, but he only remembers to take Viagra when his wife, Irene (White, age 51), prompts him. According to Irene, "Since he's discovered the little pill, [sex] it has been a whole lot better. Except that he forgets a lot of the time and I'm asking him: 'Why we aren't doing it? Why haven't you taken your little blue pill lately?'

Whereas women's lack of sexual interest is often explained as a biological difference between the sexes, men's lack of interest in sex is typically chalked up to a physiological problem. Yet our analysis suggests that taking Viagra also constitutes a performance of desire for these husbands. Viagra may allow them to perform sexually, but seeking out a prescription and remembering and actually wanting to take it requires actively trying to change their sexual feelings and behaviors.

(b) Repressing desire. Six husbands and 1 wife report trying to decrease their sexual desires. As with those who try to be more sexual, these individuals consciously strive to adapt to their partner's level of sexual interest. They also view sex as important in marriage, with one significant difference: To cope with sexual differences, they focus on what they perceive as the quality of sex, not the frequency with which it occurs. For example, Kyle (White, age 44) says that he and his wife of 20 years, Jenn (White, age 42), have witnessed profound changes in their sex life over time and with the births of their four children. During the early years of marriage, he always wanted more frequent sex whereas Jenn always said she

preferred quality over quantity. Kyle describes the process of gradually changing his feelings when Jenn does not want to have sex: "Still some days [when I initiate sex], she gets pretty damn irritated. But the good news is that 10 years ago, she'd get irritated and I would get offended. And now she gets irritated and I'm like, 'Let's go to sleep. This is good. This is more time to sleep."' Over time, Kyle has come to agree with Jenn that quality is better than quantity: "I don't have a lot of personal ego wrapped up if we don't do it any particular time. Sex to me [now] represents not as much the physical act as the bonding associated with the act. It's significantly changed from my perspective." After 20 years of marriage, Kyle has come around to Jenn's view and, although they have sex less frequently, they both, independently, report that it is qualitatively better.

Performing desire, thus, involves not only trying to increase the frequency of sex or to reinvigorate a sex life but also efforts to reduce one's own sexual desires and to focus on what respondents perceive as sexual quality.

(c) Obligatory performances of desire. Most respondents present their emotion work around sex as something they willingly undertake and say that when they are successful at performing desire their relationship improves. However, not all married individuals are able to change their feelings about sex, even when they try, and some express resentment about having to work at sex. Although this was not a pervasive theme, it is an intriguing one because it suggests that the performance of desire is not always experienced as completely voluntary nor is it always successful. Moreover, this is a gendered theme in that many husbands *expect* wives to perform desire—whether in the form of acting more interested in sex or simply having sex more often. The husbands we interviewed say that they often wish that their wives were more interested in, and spontaneous about, sex.

For example, after 13 years of marriage and with two young children, Nathan (White, age 36) complains that Karen's (White, age 35) "sex drive has dropped off" and would like for Karen to reevaluate her priorities, putting sex higher on the list: "I told Karen that I felt this last weekend that I just felt like I was so far down on the list of priorities that even exercise was coming ahead of me." Nathan's comments, and others like it, demonstrate an expectation that sex *should* be more of a priority in a relationship. Indeed, Karen says she experiences marital sex as "an obligation." She explains, "When you're married, you *have* to have sex. I think when we weren't married it was kind of a rebellion. You know, I'm not supposed to be doing this because I'm not married." When prodded further as to why she feels that sex within marriage is obligatory, Karen responds bluntly, "I don't think that he would stay married to me if we didn't have sex."

Karen has had difficulty changing her feelings about sex. She maintains an awareness that, when it comes to sex, she is often surface acting (Hochschild, 1983). One way Karen reconciles her trepidation over their sex life is by holding out faith that her interest in sex will change over time:

> I've always heard that, you know, women are supposed to want it more when they are older. I'm kind of hoping that kicks in. But I don't know. Part of me worries: Am I always going to feel like this and have to be obligated for the rest of my life? Because I don't want to feel like that. I think it will probably be better as the kids get older and we're able to be more spontaneous. So I won't feel like it's such an obligation.

Unlike some of the other married individuals we interviewed, Karen has not been able to convince herself to be more sexual—to deep act desire. For Karen, the performance of desire is experienced as compulsory.

In sum, the most common way to perform desire for our respondents focuses on changing the sexual self, typically to be more sexual, but some married individuals try to be less sexual and some express resentment at having to perform desire. The following section delves deeper into the relational, interactional, and gendered dimensions of the performance of desire. In particular, we highlight the centrality of housework in sexual negotiation.

Housework, childcare, and marital sex—Our respondents reveal that how they feel sexually, along with how they try to change their spouse's sexual feelings, is intricately linked to broader aspects of the relationship, especially the division of household labor. In this section, we identify two themes: (a) Some respondents use housework to increase sexual frequency or use sex to get greater participation in housework, and (b) the wives who juggle paid employment and motherhood describe sex as another form of work, in addition to paid work, childcare, and housework, that must be done to sustain a relationship.

(a) Tit-for-tat: The exchange of sex and housework. Nine respondents (15%) (5 wives, 4 husbands) report they use housework or use sex to get more of what they want from the relationship—a kind of conscious or unconscious exchange system. They use sex, emotional engagement, and/or household labor to try to influence their spouse's feelings and behaviors. Jake (White, age 39) and Louise (White, age 35), for example, have argued about sex on and off throughout their 13-year marriage. Jake explains how he views Louise's sexuality: "She is not real physical and unless she is reminded, she totally lacks interest in sex. And it compounds the problem that I don't feel like I should have to remind somebody to be attracted to me." Jake would like for Louise's interest in sex to be spontaneous. He firmly believes "You can't engineer [sex]. You know, you can't say, 'Okay here is what we are going to do. You are going to put this on and I am going to dress this way. We're going to do this.' I mean you can't. Sex is more a—is totally this animal, chemical whatever it is." What Jake does instead is try to treat Louise extremely well in the hopes that these efforts will increase the frequency of their lovemaking. He cooks most of their meals and describes himself as very affectionate. Thus, although Jake views sex as outside the realm of social engineering and wants Louise to spontaneously express an interest in sex, he tries to change aspects of himself and engages in household labor in the hope that these will encourage Louise to want to have sex more often.

We find a gendered pattern in this strategy, in that the husbands we interviewed, but not the wives, employ Jake's tactic of using domestic labor in an attempt to increase the frequency of sexual intercourse. The wives, on the other hand, tend to link their willingness to engage in sex to their husband's attempts to be more emotionally engaged or more involved in domestic labor. Chantelle (African American, age 40, married 17 years), for example, suggests that her interest in sex is linked to her husband's behavior, especially his household work. Chantelle says that sex has always been important to her husband Anthony (African American, age 48), but "it is just not on my top 10 list. I remember telling him one time, it feels like … it [sex] is just something else I have to write down on my list to do." Moreover, Chantelle says, whether she feels like having sex is less about sex per se and more about "what goes on outside of the bedroom:"

> For me, it is not even about the act, as much as it is more about the little things that he would do, that he probably doesn't think even really matter to me. Whereby, for him I think it is more (claps hands), okay we are right in the moment, let's go. And it doesn't work. I don't think it works for most women like that. And especially as you become older, it is more what goes on outside of the bedroom. [I tell Anthony,] "If I have had a really good day, and you have been helpful, I would say you took out the trash and you brought the trashcans in and you mowed the lawn and everything. Those are the things that work for me to kind of get me going."

Chantelle directly connects her desire, or at least willingness, for sex to broader aspects of her relationship with Anthony. In doing so, she relies on natural differences between the sexes—"I don't think it works for most women"—and uses her willingness to engage in sex as a strategy to change Anthony's behaviors. Chantelle wants Anthony to view their lovemaking as a gift—something that he must *earn* by participating in household chores rather than take for granted. Paradoxically, Chantelle uses the discourse that women are less sexual than men to potentially gain a degree of gender egalitarianism in her marriage.

Indeed, many of the wives we interviewed say they carry the bulk of the responsibilities in the domestic realm along with holding down a full-time job and that this, more than anything, dampens their sexual desire. These wives point out that sex is not a priority for them because they are too busy and too tired.

(b) Sex and the third shift. Respondents often remarked that sex is low on wives' list of priorities because they are tired, busy, and stressed out. Although this theme was hinted at in a number of interviews, it was most prevalent among five dual-income couples with children, suggesting that it is linked to the third shift — the family emotion work that follows household work and paid employment (Hochschild, 1997).

Our analysis suggests that, among dual-income parents, sex is often experienced as a part of the third shift. In addition to housework, child-care, and paid work, employed wives often feel compelled to show affection to their partners by having sex with them. For example, Lindsey (White, age 43, married 19 years), who has two teenagers, recently started working as a high school teacher and describes her daily routine as incredibly busy. Her husband, Robert (White, age 52), says this has taken a toll on her interest in sex, "Sex is not a focus for her at this time. I don't know if that changes or not down the road when she has less responsibilities. When we first got married, [sex] it was huge. And she actually was more aggressive about it than I was at that time." Robert points out that whereas he is able to relax in the evenings, Lindsey often still has work to complete, such as grading and domestic tasks. He views her enormous responsibilities as the primary reason for her decreased interest in sex. But Robert also says that he wants sex more often and for sex to be more spontaneous. Lindsey views it differently:

> It is not that I am not interested; it is just that you are distracted. I am sure that he would say that it is never enough. But that is kind of a time restraint, not a lack of desire. For women, you know it's the – I just hate those clichés about 'I am too tired' but we are just on a different schedule. It is really hectic during the week.

Lindsey emphasizes that, as a woman, she experiences a time crunch that leaves little time for sex. She says that Robert is "wanting some [sex] all the time" and feels like there is "never enough." As a result, she feels defensive about sexual frequency, pointing out that they have less sex now than in the past not for lack of desire, but for lack of time.

Jason (White, age 31) and Maria (Latina, age 33), another dual-income couple with children, talk about a similar gendered sexual time bind. Jason says that whereas his interest in sex has remained fairly constant (and high) throughout their 8-year marriage, Maria's has fluctuated:

> I think for guys, generally speaking, you know it [sex] is always a priority. For women, obviously it just depends because of wherever they are in their lives. And for Maria, she was more concerned about the bills, the kids, daily routines, things that needed to get done. Dishes, even dishes or laundry, that kind of stuff, was already a priority first before any leisure time at all or sex, or whatever.

As a self-described traditional woman who enjoys being "the CEO of the house," Maria's identity may be based more on her competence in the domestic, rather than the sexual, realm. But our analysis strongly suggests that Maria puts domestic obligations ahead of sexual activity because she bears the brunt of the household labor—both in terms of getting it done and in terms of an awareness that it needs to get done—along with holding down a full-time job. Jason describes his occasional efforts to do the dishes as "helping out" and during her interview, Maria expressed resentment that Jason does very little housework even when he is home during the day. Hence, wives, like Maria, may have less time and less energy for sex. In fact, when Maria was asked what she and Jason talk about when it comes to sex, she replied, "I'm tired. [laughs] Seriously, I am tired. I have to work the next day." However, Maria also says she has made an effort to fit sex into her busy days more often because she thinks it is important in a marriage, and Jason says that sex has gotten better in the last couple of years "because I have gotten her to be more spontaneous about it." In this way and others, sex is part of the third shift—the relationship work that many women do in addition to their paid jobs and household work.

Discussion

The 62 married individuals we interviewed articulate two discordant discourses about sex: On the one hand, women are less sexual than men; on the other hand, sex is critically important to a healthy marriage. This discordance creates tension in relationships—often to the point of conflict over sex.

Couples joke about how different men and women are sexually, and some find a degree of comfort in the discourse of natural differences between men and women's sexual desire because it mirrors their own sexual experiences. Underscoring the strength of the discourse that men are more sexual than women, the four couples whose sexual experiences contradict this discourse also espouse it and consider their own relationship atypical. But the discourse of gender differences in desire competes with the discourse of sex as a gauge of marital well-being. Married men and women strongly endorse the importance of sexual intimacy in marriage. We were frequently told, if sex is good (which, for most couples, means frequent), the marriage is okay, but if sex is bad (i.e., infrequent), the marriage is suffering. Rather than simply accepting a biological explanation for gender differences in desire, couples often experience friction over sexual frequency and describe actively working to manage their sex lives.

In particular, married men and women work to manage their and their spouse's feelings around their sexual relationship in accordance with ideas about, and experiences of, gender, heterosexuality, and marriage. They do this in an effort to reduce marital conflict, enhance intimacy, help a spouse feel better about himself or herself, or all three. We refer to this gendered emotion work as performing desire and identify two major manifestations: First, married men and women work to change their sexual self and, second, housework plays a central role in sexual negotiation.

Many husbands and wives try to change their sexual selves, but tend to do so in different ways: Wives are more likely to try to increase their interest in sex, whereas husbands are more likely to attempt to reduce their sexual interest, although this was less common. Research with adolescents and the college aged concludes that a pernicious sexual double standard may lead women to become disconnected from their own sexual desires (Crawford & Popp, 2003). Upon marriage, however, the sexual double standard supposedly gives way to mutual sexual pleasure (Giddens, 1992; Rubin, 1990). The present study shows that this process is neither easy nor seamless: Many of the wives we interviewed experience themselves as less sexual than their husbands, yet they view sexual frequency as a barometer

of a good marriage, as do their husbands. They are torn between a discourse that women are naturally less sexual than men and an expectation that sex is important to a good marriage. As a result, many wives try to change their feelings about sex, typically to increase their interest in sex. We also find that when husbands experience themselves as less sexual than their wives, they rely on physiological explanations (Irvine, 2005; Loe, 2004) and either take, or are considering taking, Viagra. Yet Viagra is not a cure-all. Several husbands in our study suggest that seeking a prescription for Viagra and actually taking the pill involves performing desire — that is, they must work to change their sexual feelings, and they do so because their partner wants to have sex more often.

In some cases, the performance of desire is described in such a way as to suggest it is potentially beneficial to the marriage. But, some married individuals, mostly wives, express a heightened awareness of the emotion work around sex that must be done to sustain their relationship, and, sometimes, resentment at having to do it. Many husbands expect their wives to be more interested in, and spontaneous about, sex. This expectation of spontaneity and authenticity increases the emotion work that wives perform around sex (Hochschild, 1983). Not only are they expected to have sex more often, their performance of desire should be a spontaneous, authentic response.

This study also reveals the interplay and tensions between various forms of work—housework, emotion work, and paid employment—and sex in marriage. In particular, housework is central to sexual negotiation, just as it is central to how husbands and wives feel about one another (Pina & Bengston, 1993; Voydanoff & Donnelly, 1999). In some marriages, we found evidence of a kind of exchange system whereby sex and domestic labor are intertwined insofar as one is used to get the other. These maneuvers are often based on the discourse of natural sexual differences between men and women. Wives assert that because sex is not as important to them, their husbands must earn intimacy, for example by being emotionally engaged or by being more actively involved in housework. Husbands similarly said that they engage in certain behaviors—like cooking meals—in the hopes that this will increase sexual frequency. Paradoxically, although this strategy is linked to the discourse of gender differences in sexual desire, it may lead to a more equitable division of household labor. That is, married men and women draw on naturalized gender differences in the sexual realm in order to challenge gender differentiation in the domestic, interpersonal realm. This highlights the tensions and contradictions embedded in gender construction and interactions (Connell, 1995; Lorber, 2005).

We also find that performing desire contributes to the perceived burden of the third shift (Hochschild, 1997), producing highly gendered experiences around sex. Many wives find it difficult to fit sex into their day not simply because of the prevailing cultural discourse of women as less sexual than men, but also because of the gendered realities of their lives. Employed mothers, in particular, feel pressure to have sex and identify this as another task to add to housework, childcare, and paid work. Although much has changed in terms of women's place in the home and work-place, a substantial body of research shows that married women do significantly more household labor than married men (Bianchi et al., 2000). Wives engaged in paid employment still shoulder the second shift and have less leisure time (Hochschild & Machung, 2003). The employed wives in this study indicate that it is difficult for them to find the time, energy, and inclination to be sexual. Yet they and their husbands view sex as important to marriage. As a result, these wives try to be more sexual and spontaneous about sex. This suggests that as long as women face societal ambivalence toward female sexuality *and* bear the brunt of the second shift, some will experience sex as another task in addition to their other responsibilities.

Limitations and Future Directions

A limitation of this study is the relative homogeneity of the sampled couples. The majority of the sample was White, middle class, had been married for at least 7 years, and indicated a fairly high level of marital quality. Thus, there may be some selection bias in that these couples are less likely than average couples to experience sexual conflict or more likely to understate their levels of sexual conflict. In this sense, we may have understated the degree of conflict around sex that married couples typically experience. Future research should follow married couples longitudinally to gain a better understanding of how sexual negotiations change over the life course—for those who remain together as well as for those who eventually divorce. Future study should also include other relationship forms, such as long-term heterosexual and homosexual cohabiting couples, and greater sample diversity, particularly in terms of race and socioeconomic status. For example, African American couples espouse more egalitarian attitudes about gender and tend to allocate family work more equally than White couples (Orbuch & Eyster, 1997). If this pattern extends to sex, it is possible that the performance of desire may be more equally shared among African American couples than White couples.

Our primarily middle-class, college-educated sample may shape our findings in a number of ways. These couples may be more likely to espouse egalitarian relationships (Blaisure & Allen, 1995). Comparing couples who support gender egalitarian ideals with those who value gender complementarity would further tease out the role gender ideology plays in heterosexual negotiations. But as well, in marriages in which one or both spouses engage in manual labor, shift work, or hold two or more jobs, sexual dynamics may be influenced by the emotional and physical energy, as well as the time investment, spouses have for sex (Gonzalez-Lopez, 2005). A study solely comprised of dual-income couples with children would further illuminate sexual negotiations on the third shift. Future research should also compare dual-income and single-income couples' sexual dynamics to better understand how economic power and household work shape sexual negotiations (Blumstein and Schwartz, 1983).

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