



Re-negotiating Gender: Household Division of Labor when She Earns More than He Does

Lake Lui

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In Chinese societies where both “money” and “gender” confer power, can a woman’s economic success relative to her husband’s bring about a more equal division of household labor? Lui’s qualitative study of “status-reversed” Hong Kong families, wherein wives earn more than their husbands, examines how couples re-negotiate household labor in ways that perpetuate male dominance within the family even when the traditional gender expectation that “men rule outside, women rule inside” (*nanzhuwai, nuzhunei*) is challenged. Going beyond the dyadic negotiation of household labor, this important study also explores the role of “third parties,” namely the couples’ children and parents, who actively encourage couples to conform to traditional gender norms, thereby reproducing an unequal division of household labor. Based upon the experiences of families with stay-at-home dads, Lui further identifies a new mechanism of deconstructing gender, by which couples concertedly construct new norms of “work” and “gender” that they maintain through daily interactions to fit their atypical relative earnings. As a result, there are sparks of hope that both men and women can be liberated from a set of traditional social norms. *Re-negotiating Gender: Household Division of Labor When She Earns More than He Does* is essential reading in the fields of family and gender studies, sociology, psychology, and East Asian studies.

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