**Chapter 7: Building Social Relationships: Intimacy and Families**

Discussion Questions:

1. How do religious background, race and ethnicity, as well as social class affect the intimate choices discussed in these articles?
2. What do these articles reflect about family life? How do they relate to contemporary definitions of family?
3. How are the influences of social and cultural forces such as economics, religion, law and politics, presented in these articles?

Kristin Blakely

Busy Brides and the Business of Family Life: The Wedding-Planning Industry and the Commodity Frontier

*Journal of Family Issues, May 2008; vol. 29, 5: pp. 639-662., first published on November 7, 2007*

<http://jfi.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/29/5/639?ijkey=UEvawYTpPrZl2&keytype=ref&siteid=spjfi>

Abstract:

As work traditionally located in the private sphere, wedding planning, like other domestic functions, has become commodified. Building upon Hochschild's work on the commercialization of intimate life, this article explores the relationship of feminism to the commercial spirit of intimate life to understand wedding planning as a commodified domestic service designed to meet the competing demands of work and home for women. In its marketing, the industry makes use of feminism, harnessing liberal feminist ideals of “having it all”: The solution for busy, engaged career women is to outsource their wedding planning. Thus, both the problem and the answer are rooted in a capitalist version of liberal feminism. Based on interviews with six wedding planners, an analysis of the online advertising of 280 planning businesses, and an examination of the industry, this case study of wedding planning illuminates the connections between liberal feminism and the commodification of family life.

George Gmelch & Patricia Mary San Antonio

Baseball Wives: Gender and the Work of Baseball

Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, Vol. 30, No. 3, 335-356 (2001)

<http://jce.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/30/3/335?ijkey=DZQX0.h5GwIfY&keytype=ref&siteid=spjce>

**Abstract:**

This article focuses on how the structure and constraints of the occupation of professional baseball shapes the lives of the players' wives. The major constraints on the role of baseball wives include high geographical mobility, the husband's frequent absence, lack of a social support network, and the precariousness of baseball careers. Baseball wives are expected to fulfill a traditional role of support for their husbands and families. Baseball wives play a backstage supporting role but in so doing become far more independent and resourceful than many American women, managing families and households on their own.

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Roberta L Coles

Black Single Fathers: Choosing to Parent Full-Time

Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, Vol. 31, No. 4, 411-439 (2002)

<http://jce.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/31/4/411?ijkey=CZA7wUPrTW2KI&keytype=ref&siteid=spjce>

**Abstract:**

This ethnographic study uses the narratives of African American, single, full-time fathers to explore the motivations precipitating their choice to parent. While the fathers had in common a number of demographic characteristics, such as full employment, residence, and support systems, which factored into their timing of and ability to take full custody, none of these are salient in their own narratives expressing why they wanted to be full-time fathers. Instead, their main motives centered on fulfilling a sense of duty and responsibility, reworking the effects of having had weak or absent fathers themselves, wanting to provide a role model for their children, and fulfilling an already established parent-child bond.

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Christine S. Davis & Kathleen A. Salkin

Sisters and Friends: Dialogue and Multivocality in a Relational Model of Sibling Disability

Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, Vol. 34, No. 2, 206-234 (2005)

<http://jce.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/34/2/206?ijkey=0Mw1f47FJdXCw&keytype=ref&siteid=spjce>

**Abstract:**

This article takes the reader into a journey of family dynamics, as sisters— one with a physical impairment and the other the sibling of a woman with a physical impairment—try to sort out their feelings and experiences through in-depth interviewing, interactive interviewing, co-constructed narrative, and dialogic conversation. There is little research that looks at the relationship between the sibling with a disability and his or her nondisabled sibling as it is experienced by the two of them. This article engages the siblings, and, perhaps, the readers, into a dialogic conversation that is multivocal, inclusive, and accepting of differences.

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Nicole D Forry et al.

Marital Quality in Interracial Relationships

Journal of Family Issues, Vol. 28, 1538 – 1552 (2007)

<http://jfi.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/28/12/1538?ijkey=tJIjyieQjCtM.&keytype=ref&siteid=spjfi>

**Abstract:**

African American/White interracial couples are a rapidly growingsegment of the population. However, little is known about factorsrelated to marital quality for these couples. The authors examinethe relationships between sex role ideology, perception of relationshipunfairness, and marital quality among a sample of 76 marriedAfrican American/White interracial couples from the mid-Atlanticregion. The results indicate that interracial couples are similarto same-race couples in some ways. In particular, women, regardlessof race, report their marriages to be more unfair to them thando men. Unique experiences in interracial marriages based onone's race or race/gender combination are also identified. AfricanAmericans experience more ambivalence about their relationshipthan their White partners. Furthermore, sex role ideology hasa moderating effect on perceived unfairness and marital qualityfor African American men. Similarities and differences amonginterracial and same-race marriages are discussed, with recommendationsfor future research.

Avishai, Orit, Heath, Melanie, Randles, Jennifer  
**Marriage Goes to School**

Contexts, Aug 2012; vol. 11: pp. 34-38

<http://ctx.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/11/3/34?ijkey=bR1kwdycBwtHg&keytype=ref&siteid=spctx>**Abstract:**

In recent years, policy efforts to alleviate poverty have focused on marriage and relationship education. Orit Avishai's, Melanie Heath's,and Jennifer Randles's research finds that efforts to address poverty via relationship skills training are misguided because this approach does not address the structural causes of poverty.

Bates, Nancy, DeMaio, Theresa J.  
**Measuring Same-Sex Relationships**

Contexts, Feb 2013; vol. 12: pp. 66-69

<http://ctx.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/12/1/66?ijkey=mZmoF7IJYeU7E&keytype=ref&siteid=spctx>**Abstract:**

The last decade has seen dramatic changes in how U.S. society views and recognizes same-sex couples. U.S. Census Bureau employees, Nancy Bates and Theresa J. DeMaio, chronicle recent efforts taken by the Census Bureau to update and improve the measurement and counting of same-sex couples.