ATTITUDES TOWARDS FEMALE BREAWINNERS WITH SAME-SEX AND OPPOSITE SEX PARTNERES AND HOUSEWORK RESPONSIBILITIES
Kit Camarillo (Wanda Pillow, Ming Wen)
Department of Education, Culture & Society, Sociology

In this project, I seek to examine the social expectations for female breadwinners in lesbian and opposite-sex households to gain a better understanding of how gender plays a role in the ways couples negotiate working and household roles. The primary research question is: How do expectations of housework contributions differ between male breadwinners with female partners, female breadwinners with male partners, female breadwinners with female partners? Existing research is hampered by the fact that research on the housework performance of breadwinner has mostly focused on male breadwinners. There is a lack of research on female breadwinners and much less is known about female breadwinners who have female partners. Lesbian households make up a small portion of households, but are theoretically interesting. Given the gendered nature of household labor, how do two women negotiate deciding who does household chores? It is important to research how female breadwinner roles and the division of household labor differ between same-sex and opposite-sex couples because it gives a better understanding of nontraditional roles in our society and possibly brings positive change through better understanding.

Existing gender roles are harmful for women in both non-traditional and traditional households. The division of labor in the household is one issue that stems from gender role expectations and contributes to inequality and female disadvantage. Men still contribute less time to household chores than their female partners regardless of their financial contribution (Deutsch, 2007). Some argue that the problem with the gender system is the unfair distribution of power that men have. Because of gender inequalities, men have more status, leisure and are paid more (Deutsch, 2007). Ridgeway and Correll theorize the following ways to change oppressive gender systems: equal pay and comparable worth; affirmative action; open information about wages; bureaucratic accountability for work related evaluations; and family friendly work place policies. These structural changes could bring about change at the levels of work and home places (Ridgeway and Correll, 2004).

However, women who earn more financially in the household tend to still do more housework than their male partner. Benjamin and Sullivan (1999) found that women with high communication skills and high pay were able to negotiate a more equal division of household labor within their home, but if they lack either high material resources or communication skills then it was unlikely change in distribution of household labor would occur. Compared with heterosexual couples, lesbian couples share more equally in childcare tasks and report higher satisfaction levels with their domestic arrangements than did heterosexual couples (Goldberg, 2013). The division of household labor among lesbian couples seems to be more equal but not completely. Peplau and Fingerhut (2007) explained that social exchange theory predicts that the partner with more education, money or social status increases their power in the relationship but that lesbian women neither want to be dominated or dominate in their relationships.

Do lesbian couples divide housework more equally than opposite sex couples? Do
we expect that lesbian couples are better at equality in the household? A seven-question survey was developed and utilized in order to understand social expectations of female breadwinner in same and opposite sex couples. The survey was completed by 300 women and men aged 18 and over, living in the United States, currently married or living as married. Results were available immediately after each completed their survey. Results from the surveys indicate that attitudes concerning the division of household labor are changing and that society seems to view lesbian relationships as being more inherently equal than heterosexual relationships. This study points to the continued need for research on household labor and gender differences and specifically research that includes a range of households, including lesbian households. In addition, the study raises questions about whether shifts in attitudes toward gender and household labor actually impact what occurs in households.