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WOMEN'S RESPONSE TO SPOUSAL UNEMPLOYMENT:
ECONOMIC, LABOR FORCE, AND
FAMILY CONSTRAINTS

by

Elizabeth Miklya Legerski

A thesis submitted to the faculty of

Brigham Young University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science

Department of Sociology

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

WOMEN'S RESPONSE TO SPOUSAL UNEMPLOYMENT: ECONOMIC, LABOR FORCE, AND FAMILY CONSTRAINTS

Elizabeth Miklya Legerski

Department of Sociology

Master of Science

Using data collected from 29 interviews with the wives of steelworkers who were forced into unemployment, I explore the conditions and factors that shape women's choices in response to their husbands' job loss. Access to a unique and under-studied sample of women married to unemployed working-class men necessitates the use of grounded theory research techniques that allow me to "give voice" to working-class women.

Rational economic perspectives, although frequently used in work-family analyses, are inadequate for exploring decision processes and fail to consider the powerful effects of gender on action. Although the work of gender theorists may help illuminate the results of a micro-level analysis, many theoretical gender analyses may not

be helpful in understanding the variety of labor force responses of women married to unemployed, working-class men. Nonetheless, I suggest that combining the work of gender scholars and new institutionalist theorists may be helpful in addressing both macro and micro-level processes that operate to constrain individual agency.

The results of the analysis suggest that economic, labor force, and family constraints operate simultaneously to create a complex weave of factors and circumstances that shape women's decisions regarding work. The need for adequate health insurance, expenses associated with employment, low wages, a sluggish local economy, limited access to desirable and adequate jobs, a lack of educational experience and marketable work-related skills, the responsibility of caring for children, and an unequal division of domestic tasks are among the factors cited as influencing women's decisions regarding labor force participation.

Women's strategies for maneuvering through spousal job loss and reemployment are based on taken-for-granted assumptions about gender, family, and work. But equally important in women's decision-making process, and often less addressed, are the effects of a *gendered* economy, labor force, and division of labor – each of which create substantial barriers to sustaining employment. In the context of spousal unemployment, these systems of inequality create situations in which working-class women are unable to sufficiently aid in the financial relief of their families.

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CHAPTER 1

RESEARCH PROBLEM

Scholars in many fields have been interested in the changing face of the work force and women's increased labor force participation. A number of feminists and gender scholars have been particularly interested in the lives and experiences of women in management and other professional careers (e.g., Hochschild 1989; Cassell 1996). Economists and family scholars in particular have focused a great deal of attention on dual-earner households and the relationship between husbands' and wives' employment participation and family arrangements (e.g., Folbre 1994). Some have also been interested in the lives of working-class families (e.g. Rubin 1976, 1994).

Other scholars have explored how economic restructuring may influence the advances women and families have made (McCall 2000). Given that the United States continues to shift from a manufacturing to a service economy, more working-class individuals will face unemployment and a lack of access to work that provides a living wage for their families. Because economic restructuring has led to a wider wage gap between college and non-college educated women (see McCall 2000), working-class women may not be able to ameliorate the economic effects of spousal unemployment. Nonetheless, there is little research that considers exclusively the lives and experiences of women married to blue-collar men in the context of spousal unemployment. In this thesis I argue that understanding how women married to blue-collar workers make decisions following their spouse's job loss will not only help us to better comprehend the struggles of working-class families, but will also contribute to our understanding of the persistent and even increasing stratification of women.

This thesis builds on the work of Gerson (1985) by exploring the work and family decisions of women in the context of spousal unemployment. Like Gerson, I contend that women play an active role in constructing their lives. Consequently, considering the meanings working-class women place on their employment decisions has important implications for how we understand the issues that women describe as factoring into their labor force participation. I also argue that we must seek to discover the larger, structural processes, which influence the decisions women make as well as the explanations they give for their decisions. Acknowledging that the labor force, economy, and family are gendered and understanding how gender schemas, scripts, and repertoires influence the employment choices women make may help explain economists' lack of results supporting the increased labor force participation of women married to unemployed men.

The closing of the Geneva Steel plant in Vineyard, Utah, in November of 2001 provides an ideal opportunity for exploring families' reactions to unemployment. Using data collected from 29 in-depth, semi-structured interviews conducted with the wives of displaced men, I explore women's decisions regarding paid work. The sample includes a variety of women, both working and nonworking, as well as respondents with and without children in their home.

I begin my analysis in chapter two by exploring the relevant features of rational, utility based notions of work and family arrangements, economic explanations of the added worker effect, and the inadequacy of micro-economic theory to explain women's responses to spousal unemployment. I also review research concerning women, work, and family and argue that, although helpful, paradigms like "doing gender" do not adequately consider the structural barriers women face. I then review literature on gender

and occupations and describe how, although ethnographic approaches have provided valuable micro-descriptions, little work exists which examines working-class women's decisions in the context of spousal unemployment. I also explore recent literature on institutional understandings of gender and suggest that such an approach may be more helpful than the previously mentioned theories due to its ability to link micro and macro processes.

In chapter three I examine the occupational and wage structure of workers in Utah and describe some general characteristics of the sample under examination. In chapter four I explain the principles and advantages of using grounded theory and describe my method of data analysis. In chapter five I then utilize grounded theory to explore the factors that influence women's choices when their husbands are unemployed. In chapter six I revisit the literature described in chapter two and offer some theoretical insights based on the results of the grounded theory analysis, and in chapter seven I offer my final conclusions.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Micro-Economic Theories of Work and Family

Rational Families. Becker's (1991) work is an economic, rational approach to the study of family change and women's labor force participation. According to this perspective, family members act in ways that will maximize the family utility function. Such an approach suggests that utility is considered in every family decision – from the number of children conceived or adopted, the market and household division of labor, and fertility decisions, to the amount of altruism invested in partners and children. Utility maximization derives from functional equilibriums, reciprocal choices, and game-like exchanges where market forces take precedence over other factors.

In what became a controversial analysis of the family, Becker develops theorems that describe the ideal efficient family and concludes that a division of labor between household and market work is advantageous for families, leading to greater returns. He explains that in the “efficient family” children and parents “work out efficient relations that maximize the combined resources of the family as a whole” (Becker 1991:365). He suggests that according to utility maximizing models, resources should be allocated to various activities, and family members, according to relative efficiencies. According to this logic, efficient family members also willingly allocate time and resources to maximize commodity output. Although Becker does not specifically incorporate spousal unemployment in his models, he refers to the work of other economists to support the notion that women would increase their labor force participation if their husband becomes unemployed. Because Becker's theorems rely on the assumption that

individuals are intrinsically identical, he suggests that husbands and wives can exchange labor force participation equally and that family members receive an equal share of total household output (Becker 1991:32). Although Becker acknowledges the increasing number of women in the labor force, he argues that the specialization of household work by women and market work by men creates an “efficient” family model.

The Added Worker Effect. The number of women in the labor force has steadily increased since the 1960s – a phenomenon that has not gone unnoticed by micro-economists. Despite women’s presence in the work force, the assumption that women are predominantly secondary wage-earners continues to persist. Nonetheless, as dual income households increased, micro-economists began to analyze various aspects of household employment more closely, including women’s labor force participation during spousal unemployment, or the “added worker effect.” Using neoclassical theories of work, economists predicted that in times of economic downturn when a husband became unemployed, his wife would be more likely to either increase her labor force participation or enter the labor force in order to maintain the family’s income (Blau and Ferber 1992; Lundberg 1985).

The specific theories used to generate the added worker hypotheses may vary but they are predominantly informed by neoclassical economic assumptions like those central to Becker’s analysis. For instance, Yeung and Hofferth (1998) draw upon two theoretical traditions in their examination of the added worker effect, citing both family stress theory, and economic theory. Family stress theory predicts that stressor events lead to changes in family interactions, family goals, roles of family members, and values. In the case of a husband’s unemployment, families will be forced to make changes in one or all

of the aforementioned aspects of family. One such response may be that the mother of the family changes her role as secondary wage-earner and takes the lead position in breadwinning. Such a decision might also require changes in the family's values and goals and is sure to affect changes in family interactions.

Despite the use of advanced statistical models, most explorations into the possibility of an added worker effect have resulted in marginally significant (Seitchik 1991; Lundberg 1985) or negative results (Yeung and Hofferth 1998; Juhn and Murphy 1997; Maloney 1991). Yet, Seitchik (1991) has demonstrated that a wife's income is extremely important for the financial survival of blue-collar families. Among his sample of displaced, married men, 14 percent of the blue-collar families were in poverty. Without the spouses' earnings he calculated the percentage of blue-collar families in poverty would increase to 24 percent.

Economists have offered a number of explanations as to why an added worker effect has not been observed. For instance, it has been suggested that a "discouraged worker effect" exists, resulting from a general economic down-turn. Thus, employment opportunities for the wife may also be negatively affected by a bad economy, making her less likely to work (Cullen and Gruber 2000; Maloney 1991). Yeung and Hofferth (1998) conclude that there is no evidence that partners can compensate for income loss by increasing their hours at work and that in areas of high unemployment a spouse may actually be less likely to increase their hours of work. They explain that when families experience a substantial loss of income or work hours, they generally cut back on expenditures as well as seek and receive public assistance.

Cullen and Gruber (2000) suggest that the receipt of unemployment insurance may crowd out the need for an added worker response, influencing the spousal labor supply decision during an unemployment spell. They also found that “the spousal response would make up only a small share (about 13 percent) of the associated reduction in family income, suggesting that even in the absence of unemployment insurance spousal labor supply would not provide an effective source of insurance against income fluctuations due to unemployment” (Cullen and Gruber 2000:548). They also argue that another possible reason for the lack of an added worker effect is that the amount of income earned by a wife during an unemployment spell is small compared to long-term income expected to be earned by the husband.

Critique. The economic perspectives espoused by Becker and added worker theorists rely on the central assumption that individuals are rational decision-makers who engage in cost-benefit analyses in order to make decisions that maximize family utility. Although discussions of the added worker effect are numerous, much of the research finds little support for the hypothesis and lacks a satisfactory theoretical explanation of the results. In addition, previous research employing neoclassical economic perspectives fails to adequately address the structural arrangements that constrain individual choice and the significance of unequal wealth and power distributions between men and women and among family members (see Folbre 1994).

Models developed out of neoclassical economic paradigms often rely on two major assumptions: (1) that changes in the labor force participation of one spouse are compensated for by complimentary changes in the labor supply of the other spouse, maintaining a sort of work equilibrium within the family; and (2) that couples substitute

participation in the home and labor force when necessary (Cullen and Gruber 2000). But these assumptions appear faulty in light of gender and division of labor research which consistently confirm that husbands and wives do not trade labor equally, especially within the home. For instance, Hochschild (1989) found that even in dual-earner households women usually do most of the housework and chores like cooking and cleaning. Contrary to substitution hypotheses, there is no evidence to suggest that because a husband is home due to unemployment he will take up the bulk of the housework, allowing the wife to participate more fully in gainful employment (see Bittman, England, Folbre, Sayer, and Matheson 2003; Bianchi, Milkie, Sayer, and Robinson 2000; Brines 1994). Furthermore, because married women are no longer loosely tied to the labor market they may be less able to move in and out of the labor force with changes in a spouse's employment (Blau and Furber 1992).

Gender Approaches to Work and Family

What about the importance of considering the structure of gender in the process of employment decision-making? While neoclassical explanations of why women are unlikely to increase their labor force participation may be valid, they do not address the powerful effect that gender has in shaping family decisions. Rational economic perspectives that produce logical and parsimonious hypotheses may be appealing, but the lack of confirmatory results suggests that a purely rational approach may not be sufficient. Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that gender not only influences decision-making; the economy, occupations, and wages are gendered as well, making increased participation in the labor force more difficult to achieve than neoclassical economists might predict.

Doing Gender. West and Zimmerman (1987:125-6) describe gender as “a routine accomplishment embedded in everyday interaction” and argue that men’s and women’s competence as members of society is subject to the successful production of gender. They define gender as “the activity of managing conduct in light of normative conceptions” of appropriate behavior for one’s sex category and explain that individuals are held accountable for “doing gender” appropriately (West and Zimmerman 1987:126-7). Because doing gender is situated conduct, or observable, actions are subject to comment by others, creating a sense of accountability for the reproduction of gender.

According to this paradigm, gender is both “an outcome of and rationale for social arrangements” (West and Zimmerman 1987:126). West and Zimmerman argue that “if we do gender appropriately, we simultaneously sustain, reproduce, and render legitimate the institutional arrangements that are based on sex category. If we fail to do gender appropriately, we as individuals – not the institutional arrangements – may be called to account” (1987:146). But the reproduction of gender is not only enforced through peer observation. West and Zimmerman argue that individuals are also involved in “self-regulating processes as they begin to monitor their own and others’ conduct with regard to its gender implications” (1987:142).

Like West and Zimmerman, Swidler (2001) also argues that individuals are held accountable for the reproduction of gender. In her analysis of love, Swidler suggests that gender codes exist which create normative standards by which individuals are judged. In her cultural analysis, she asserts that we are basically rational decision-makers who are aware of gendered expectations and choose to comply, or not to, depending on situational contexts. Either way, individuals worry about how their actions will be read, recognizing

that there are consequences for failing to act according to gender appropriate expectations. In the context of women's responses to spousal unemployment, cultural notions of appropriate divisions of labor may factor into how women decide to cope with changes in family financial status. An economic analysis of spousal unemployment might suggest that it does not matter who provides the income as long as some one does. But theories that stress the significance of social accountability suggest that individual notions of acceptable behavior based on gender may play a role in shaping women's employment responses.

Ethnographic Studies. Ethnographic explorations of social phenomena are advantageous because they allow us to better understand human processes that cannot be easily categorized or quantified. The work of Gerson (1985) provides an important source of insight into how and why women make decisions regarding paid employment and family. In interviews with women she found that, "a woman's exposure (or lack of exposure) to genuine workplace opportunities strongly influenced her *perceptions* of economic need and her motivation to meet felt needs by working at a paid job" (Gerson 1985:76). Although Gerson finds that economic conditions are certainly involved in spousal decision-making processes, she strongly questions the use of strictly economic cost-benefit types of analyses. She argues that while "economic squeezes" within households may influence the choices men and women make, their actions cannot be boiled down to pure economics. Instead, a contextual approach to women's labor force participation must be used in order to understand how women's decisions regarding employment are made (see also Glass and Riley 1998).

Although Becker and Moen (1999) asked questions similar to those used in Gerson's analysis, they designed their research with a focus on exploring the employment decisions of middle-class professional and managerial women. In their analysis they view the family as "a locus of strategic actions that may shift and change at different time points during the life course" (Becker and Moen 1999:996). They find that couples are involved in processes of scaling back by limiting their participation in the labor force in order to preserve family life – results that they suggest are contrary to the work of Hochschild (1997) who found that women often saw employment as a haven from the demands of family life.

Becker and Moen conclude that both gender and life-course factors shape the strategies that individuals pick in limiting employment participation. Although they acknowledge that repertoires of work-family strategies become institutionalized and shape subsequent repertoires of strategic action, they also argue that the decision to scale back is reflexive and conscious – a pragmatic choice "in the face of structural imperatives of the organization of work and the situational imperatives of personal and family relations" (1999:1004).

Gendered Economy, Labor Force, and Family. Both Gerson (1985) and Becker and Moen (1999) acknowledge in their analyses the importance of considering gender when describing micro phenomena like the process of personal work-family decision-making. A great deal of effort has also been focused on understanding how gender operates on a more macro level in relation to labor markets, the economy, and the family (as an institution). Much of the previous discussion relies on the notion that individuals are gendered beings, interact in gendered ways, and assign gendered meanings to actions.

In contrast, Kimmel (2004) argues that gender is more than simply a property of individual identities. He explains that gendered institutions and selves have a reciprocal relationship: “Institutions create gendered normative standards, express a gendered institutional logic, and are major factors in the reproduction of gender inequality. The gendered identity of individuals shapes those gendered institutions, and the gendered institutions express and reproduce the inequalities that compose gender identity” (Kimmel 2000:94).

Acker (1990), who has theorized about gendered organizations, cautions that gender should not be considered simply an addition to ongoing processes and institutions. Instead, she suggests that “it is necessary to go beyond gender as category, social role, or identity in order to understand how gender differentiation and women’s disadvantage are produced” (1992:566). Consequently, we must think of gendered institutions as “processes, practices, images and ideologies, and distributions of power in the various sectors of social life,” as opposed to simply a system of categorization based on sex differences (Acker 1992:567). Acker argues that qualitative and historical analyses are especially important in understanding practices and processes.

When we talk about gender as an institution that influences and is influenced by other institutions, we can begin to see how gender “is built into the major social organizations of society, such as the economy, ideology, the family, and politics, and is also an entity in and of itself” (Lorber 1994:1). One implication of conceptualizing gender as an institution is that we are then able to explore how gender patterns and organizes daily life, beyond face-to-face interactions. Perhaps the most important feature of Lorber’s argument is the notion that what makes the institution of gender so powerful

and enduring is that alternatives to the gender order are “virtually unthinkable” (Lorber 1994:28).

Gendered Work and Occupations. The notion that the economy, labor force, and family are all influenced by gender is supported by statistics regarding women’s position in the labor force. More than 60 percent of women work today, comprising nearly 50 percent of all workers (Hochschild 2003; Clement and Myles 1994; Reskin and Padavic 1999). In 1997, sixty-eight percent of U.S. married couples were dual earners. Among working-class couples, the proportion of dual earners was only slightly lower, at 64 percent. But despite the number of dual-earner families, the majority of married women still earn less than their husbands (Hertz and Marshall 2001), perpetuating the status of wives as secondary wage-earners (see also Blau and Ferber 1992; Maloney 1991). The fact that wives are secondary wage-earners is perhaps convincing evidence of continuing differences in the kinds of work that men and women do, their advancement opportunities, and their earnings (Reskin and Padavic 1999).

Not only are there large numbers of married women in the labor force, but two-thirds of mothers in the U.S. are employed and 72 percent of those mothers have children between the ages of three and five; 61 percent have children under three. In 2001, sixty-nine percent of mothers with children under three were employed full-time (Hochschild 2003: 2; Clement and Myles 1994; Reskin and Padavic 1999). Despite the large presence of both married women and mothers in the labor force a great deal of research suggests that occupational, economic, and social inequalities still exist between women and men (Tilly and Scott 1987; Goldin 1990).

The literature on the status of women in work and occupations shows that women are concentrated in predominately female occupations (Dunn and Skaggs 1999) and are more likely to work part-time (Kalleberg, Reskin, and Hudson 2000), lack access to promotion ladders and internal labor markets (Baron 1984; Reskin 1998; Althausen 1989), have careers in peripheral firms (Hodson and Kaufman 1982), and earn lower wages compared to their male counterparts (Reskin, McBrier, and Kmec 1999). A common assumption is that much of these inequalities are the result of women's choices to sacrifice better work and wages for more flexible employment that allows for greater family accommodations (Kilbourne, Stanek, Farkas, Beron, Weir, and England 1994). The reality is that most women cannot afford to sacrifice wages (see Estes and Glass 1996) and a lack of supportive employer policies merely complicates the work and family responsibilities placed upon women (Hochschild 2003; Padavic and Reskin 2002).

Institutionalist Approaches to Gender and Family

If we consider the results of research on the added worker effect, or ethnographic research suggesting that middle-class professionals desire to scale back employment, we may conclude that women may not be more likely to increase their labor force participation following spousal job loss. However, observing this behavior would tell us very little about the employment decisions of working-class women. Whereas micro-economists seek to explain the rational behavior of individuals, Immergut (1998:6) explains that new institutionalists across a number of disciplines have rejected the idea that observable behavior is the "basic datum" of analyses. Behavior "occurs in the context of institutions and can only be so understood." Although some of the previously mentioned gender scholars do conceptualize gender as an institution, a critical feature of

new institutionalist thought is that institutions are both cognitive and normative. The result is a focus on how institutions and ideas are very much taken for granted – existing as “givens” that make up an individual’s world view. A number of scholars in the areas of rational choice, organizational theory, economics, and historical institutionalism have begun using new institutionalist ideas to better explain why people make the decisions they do.

Bielby (1999), for instance, uses institutional theory to describe the relationship between family and gender and argues that because notions of family are embedded in cultural assumptions about gender we must consider how issues of family and gender are related. He argues that using new institutional theory to explain gender and family relations is useful because of new institutionalism’s primary assumption that institutions actually shape the preferences of individuals. Similarly, Douglas (1986:45, 91) contends that “individual’s most elementary cognitive process depends on social institutions,” which “systematically direct individual memory and channel our perceptions into forms compatible with the relations they authorize.” In other words, as Cornwall and King (2004) explain, institutions actually do the thinking for us (see Douglas 1986) by structuring cultural meanings, creating coherent logics, and cultural consistencies (see Swidler 2001) which act as shortcuts to solving problems and choosing life strategies.

Friedland and Alford (1991) describe the organizing principles of institutional orders as logics – sets of practices and symbolic meanings. Cornwall and King (2004) have applied this concept to the study of gender and seek to link the literature on gendered organizations, institutions, and gender logics with the new institutionalist literature which addresses how institutions shape individual opportunities and choices.

They conceptualize gender as the institutionalization of perceived differences between men and women and explain that although gender relations have changed over time the gender order has remained durable, suggesting that institutionalized ideas and practices are incredibly strong and self sustaining. Cornwall and King argue that “the gender order is constituted both cognitively and normatively” and that gender not only holds people accountable, as the “doing gender” theorists suggest, “but is also embedded within organizations and is built into the institutional order” (2004:10).

While choices and preferences may not be universal and unchanging, they are indeed shaped by institutions which serve as “efficient mechanisms for organizing new information” (Cornwall and King 2004:5). “Gender constrains not only the ends by which behavior should be directed; but the means by which those ends are achieved.” A central feature of institutions is that they are taken-for-granted and narrow our search for solutions by both constraining and providing opportunities for action (Cornwall and King 2004:18). Using similar logic, Bielby (1999:392) explains that “people choose actions because they offer socially constructed and legitimate paths for solving certain social and individual needs.” In addition, new institutionalists would point out that the availability of choices, actual opportunities, constrains choice as well. Because gender logics are composed of both gendered meanings and practices, the decisions husbands and wives make about work, even highly rational ones, are ultimately influenced by the gender order – on both a cognitive and normative level.

Critique. Overall, the gender literature on women, family, and work leaves the question, how might women respond to spousal unemployment, unanswered. Authors of the “doing gender” tradition might argue that women would resist greater labor force

participation for fear that they would be held accountable for not doing gender appropriately. Economic need might pull women into the labor force, but the reality of a gendered work force and occupations might act to constrain women's employment decisions, limiting the kinds of work they could get and the rewards they would receive.

Although previous ethnographic work on women's employment decisions is insightful, neither Gerson (1985) nor Becker and Moen (1999) have explored working-class women's employment decisions in the context of spousal unemployment, potentially limiting the applicability of their results to the population of Geneva Steel families. Gerson does provide evidence that labor force experiences shape women's attitudes about work and influence their life choices, but she does not adequately address how gender operates at a more macro level. While Becker and Moen acknowledge that there are gendered distributions in the types of solutions individuals choose, they do not adequately address how a gendered economy and labor force also play into work-family decisions to "scale back" employment.

Although the work of gender theorists, who have asserted that gender is itself an institution that influences other institutions like the economy and labor force, may help illuminate the results of a micro-level analysis, theoretical analyses in and of themselves may not be as helpful in understanding the variety of labor force responses women married to unemployed working-class men experience. Nonetheless, combining the work of gender scholars and new institutionalist theorists may be helpful in addressing both macro-level processes – the way that gender is "made" – and micro-level processes – how gender is "in the making" (Ortner 1996; Cornwall and King 2004:3).

CHAPTER 3

GENEVA WORKERS AND JOB LOSS

Because I am interested in both the micro-level process of individual decision-making as well as the influence of macro, institutional arrangements on the decision-making process, it is relevant to consider demographic characteristics of the population and sample respondents.

Sample

In November of 2001, approximately 1,200 steelworkers were laid off from Geneva Steel in Vineyard, Utah. In June and July of 2002 the union workers (N=1,177) were mailed surveys intended to assess the impact of the plant shutdown on their personal and family situation. It was decided that interviews with some of these families would provide greater detail and explanation unattainable through general survey techniques. Six hundred and twenty-two steelworkers replied to the initial survey (for a valid response rate of 53.6 percent) – a significantly larger number of respondents than many other studies on U.S. plant closings and related unemployment (e.g., Friedemann and Webb 1995, n=39; Huang and Perrucci 1994, n=75). In the survey respondents were asked if they would be willing to be interviewed in the future. Of those who replied, 385 indicated that they would be willing to participate in an interview and provided their name and contact information. In order to promote diversity in our interview sample, the 385 respondents were then divided into nine categories based on their reported level of financial difficulty as a result of the plant shut down (low, moderate, and high) and age range (under 45 years of age, 45-54, and 55 or older).

Respondents were then randomly sampled from each category. Each category was intentionally over-sampled beyond the target number of interviews in anticipation of respondent refusals to participate. In addition, because the research was partially funded through a gerontology grant respondents in the 55+ age range were over-sampled a second time. The greatest number of refusals to participate occurred among the 55+ age group, especially those in high financial crisis. From the interviews conducted with respondents in this category, I found that their reluctance to participate may be attributable to an unwillingness to talk about their extremely difficult financial and personal situation, especially with strangers.

Demographic Characteristics

In order to understand the conditions and factors that shape women's choice in response to husband's unemployment, we must first consider employment, occupation, and wage data. Using data from the 2000 Census made available from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS), it is possible to examine the wages of husbands and wives in various industries. All statistics are calculated using weighted data, by household or person where appropriate. I focus on the industry in which individuals are employed as opposed to their occupation because such an approach highlights the consequences of economic restructuring on working-class families. The 2000 Census records the industry in which each respondent is employed. Each industry code corresponds to one of 16 more general industry categories. A list of the 2000 Census industry categories may be found in Appendix A.

Top Employment Industries for Men and Women

Employed, married men in Utah between the ages of 25-64 are concentrated in five major industries: manufacturing (16 percent), construction (12 percent), education, health, and social services (11 percent), retail trade (10 percent), and professional, science, and management (10 percent). The majority of employed, married women between the ages of 25-64 are also concentrated in 5 major industries. The top five industries for employed, married women include: education, health and social services (35 percent), retail trade (11 percent), finance and insurance (9 percent), manufacturing (8 percent), and professional, science, and management (8 percent). More than one third of women are employed in the education, health, and social service industry compared to only 11 percent of men, who are more evenly dispersed among the industries than women.

The sex composition of employment industries is also revealing. Among sample respondents aged 25-64, the education, health, and social service industry is the only industry overwhelmingly occupied by women (72 percent female), although the arts, entertainment, and recreation industry, the finance and insurance industry, and the retail trade industry also have female majorities (58, 55, and 51 percent female, respectively). All other industries were composed primarily of men – over 70 percent of all those employed in the agriculture, mining, construction, manufacturing, wholesale trade, and utilities industries are men. These results are consistent with the work of scholars on work and gender who have found that women tend to be more highly concentrated in fewer industries than men (see Dunn and Skaggs 1999).

Living Wage

In 2000 Utah County had a population of 368,536 residents and a poverty rate of 12 percent, just below the national poverty rate of 12.4 percent (U.S. Census Bureau 2000). The Census calculates a poverty threshold for each family based on total family income, size of the family, the number of people in the family who are children, and the age of the householder. Despite the importance of poverty measures, there is widespread agreement that the federal poverty line is not high enough and many assistance programs set qualifications standards above the standard poverty threshold (Pearce and Brooks 2001). The Self-Sufficiency Standard was developed in response to this criticism in order to include families that may not be classified as poor according to federal poverty standards, but who are unable to meet the costs of basic necessities without public or private assistance. (For a more detailed description of how the Self-Sufficiency Standard is calculated see Pearce and Brooks, 2001.)

According to Census data, the median household income in Utah County in 2000 was \$45,833 (Utah Issues 2002a). Average income quintiles for Utah County families between 1998-2000 (calculated from CPS data) show that the median income for the bottom income quintile was \$18,758. The median income for the next quintile was \$37,919 and for the middle fifth was \$53,754 (Utah Issues 2000b). Using the Self-Sufficiency Standard to produce a living wage estimate for a family of four – a two-parent family with one child of preschool age and a second of school age – in Utah County, requires an annual income of \$45,803, or a \$10.84 hourly wage per adult (Pearce and Brooks 2001).

Tables 1 and 2 show that the median wage/salary for married men and women in the most predominate employment industries in Utah is not sufficient for supporting a family. Although married women make substantially less than their male counterparts, their wages are adequate to put their families over the threshold. For instance, in a family of four, if a married man employed in manufacturing makes 36,000 dollars a year and his wife is employed in education and makes 12,000 a year, they would typically be able to be self-sufficient. But, if the husband became unemployed, the wife's wage is not sufficient by itself. In fact, for each of the top industries for women in Utah, without the wages of a working spouse, their family income would fall well below the median income of the bottom income quintile.

Table 1. Top 5 Industries and Median Wage/Salary Income for Employed Married Men in Utah

Industry	Wage/Salary Income
Manufacturing	36,000
Construction	30,700
Education, Health, etc.	37,000
Retail Trade	30,000
Professional, Science, etc.	32,000

Table 2. Top 5 Industries and Median Wage/Salary Income for the Employed Wives of Employed Men in Utah

Industry	Wage/Salary Income
Education, Health, etc.	12,000
Retail Trade	9,400
Finance, Insurance, etc.	18,000
Manufacturing	18,500
Professional, Science, etc.	15,000

Wage Differences between Utah Men and Women

Overall, women tend to make substantially less than men in each of the industries, supporting previous work concerning the persistence of the wage gap between men and

women. Furthermore, a paired sample t-test of wage and salary income between husbands and wives confirms that women earn significantly less than their spouses – an average of \$27,731 less ($p < .001$). The difference in wages between women and men by industry is even more striking. Comparing the median wages of married men in the five major industries for men with the median wages of their wives in the five most prominent industries for women, illustrates the significant gap in wages between husbands and wives. Table 3 shows the percent of women employed in the top four industries by their husband's employment industry. This table also confirms that women married to employed men tend to be concentrated in the education, health, and social services industry. Referring back to table 2, we know how little these women tend to make in these industries.

Table 3. Wife's Employment Industry and Percent by Husband's Employment Industry.

Husband Employment Industry	Wife Employment Industry	Percent
Manufacturing	Education, Health, etc.	24
	Manufacturing	15
	Retail Trade	8
	Finance, Insurance, etc.	7
Construction	Education, Health, etc.	24
	Retail Trade	10
	Arts, Entertainment, etc.	9
	Professional, Science, etc.	8
Education, Health, etc.	Education, Health, etc.	48
	Retail Trade	6
	Professional, Science, etc.	6
	Finance, Insurance, etc.	6
Retail Trade	Education, Health, etc.	26
	Retail Trade	20
	Finance, Insurance, etc.	8
	Professional, Science, etc.	9
Professional, Science, etc.	Education, Health, etc.	27
	Professional, Science, etc.	12
	Retail Trade	9
	Finance, Insurance, etc.	8

Full-time versus Part-time Employment

Scholars who examine the wage gap between men and women are quick to control for differences in the specific occupations of individuals within each industry as well as the specific hours a person typically works. Much of the difference in wages between husbands and wives may be the result of differences in the average number of hours they work. In examining the usual work hours of employed married persons age 25-64, women compose nearly 74 percent of part-time workers (work less than 35 hours a week). Overall, more than one third (34 percent) of employed married women reported that they worked part-time compared to less than one-tenth (9 percent) of employed, married men. Sixty-three percent of employed, married women and 90 percent of employed, married men reported that they worked full-time (35 or more hours a week).

With 63 percent of employed, married women working full-time, the difference in median wages between men and women is substantial. To control for the effects of average work hours, I explored the median wages and salary income of employed, married women who worked full-time, by industry. The results of Table 4 show that although the wages of women employed full-time (and married to employed men) are better than the overall statistics appear (as shown in table 2), they do not meet replacement level. The wages of women employed part-time (and married to employed men) are dramatically lower in comparison to median male wages in the top industries (as shown in table 1).

Table 4. Median Wages for Women Employed Full-time (Married to Employed Men) in Utah

Industry	Wage/Salary Income
Education, Health, etc.	24,200
Retail Trade	18,400
Finance, Insurance, etc.	23,000
Manufacturing	22,000
Professional, Science, etc.	25,000

Table 5. Median Wages for Women Employed Part-time (Married to Employed Men) in Utah

Industry	Wage/Salary Income
Education, Health, etc.	6,500
Retail Trade	5,000
Finance, Insurance, etc.	10,000
Manufacturing	7,000
Professional, Science, etc.	6,000

Unemployment

Based on census data, the overall unemployment rate in Utah among married men age 25-64, during 1999, was about 2 percent. The highest rate of unemployment among married men occurred in the mining industry – about 4 percent unemployment. The arts and entertainment, and construction industries also had levels of unemployment greater than 3 percent. Although 56 percent of the unemployed, married men were married to women that were employed, the overall unemployment rate for married women was nearly double that of men at 3.6 percent. Unemployment rates higher than 3 percent for married women were found in six of the 16 industry categories, including the retail trade industry, finance and insurance industry, and the arts and entertainment industry – three of the largest industries for women.

Although the unemployment rate of married Utahans calculated from the 2000 Census data are well below the national unemployment rates for recent years, Current

Population Survey (CPS) results show that Utah workers have also been affected by recent increases in unemployment. The Department of Labor reported that from January 1999 to December 2001 four million workers were displaced from jobs they had held for at least three years, a large proportion of which were employed in manufacturing. They also found that the reemployment rate for displaced manufacturing workers was 56 percent lower than the overall reemployment rate for displaced workers (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2002).

The Provo-Orem area of Utah – the metropolitan area neighboring the Geneva plant, where approximately 90 percent of the employees lived – experienced an increase in overall unemployment from 2.7 percent in January of 2000 to 5.3 percent in December of 2001 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2004). As tables 2-5 show, the average wages and salary of married women employed in the industries most occupied by women are well below their male counterparts and not sufficient to replace their spouse's lost wages, especially if the woman is only working part-time.

Understanding the demographic characteristics of the local labor force will aid in analysis of the interviews. In the following section I describe the advantages of grounded theory and the process of data analysis.

CHAPTER 4

GROUNDING THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

Although useful in understanding the history of inquiries into work-family decisions, the short-comings of the paradigms discussed in chapter two, and the nature of my research question, necessitate the use of grounded theory techniques in this analysis. I am not interested in testing a specific hypothesis or validating any of the aforementioned theories but refer to them in order to provide a background of the variety of approaches applied to the topic of work-family decision-making. Access to a unique and understudied sample of women married to unemployed working-class men supports my use of exploratory research techniques that will allow me to “give voice” to the respondents and will aid in the development of an accurate description of, and theoretical explanation for, the choices women make in this context.

My analysis is directed by one primary research question: What conditions and factors shape women’s response to their husband’s unemployment? Given the nature of this question, and the inability of previous research to adequately address this issue, I have chosen to use grounded theory, as described by Strauss and Corbin (1998), as my method of analysis. Using grounded theory, as opposed to testing a specific hypothesis, allows me to consider the range of possible responses to spousal unemployment. Grounded theory methods also allow me to focus on the processes that lead to outcomes, rather than providing simple, static depictions, and are ideal for generating a thick description of women’s choices regarding labor force participation (see Lofland and Lofland 1995).

Grounded Theory

Strauss and Corbin (1998) describe grounded theory as theory that is derived from data as opposed to imposed on data. Using this method requires that the researcher is willing and able to be open, listen to, and “give voice” to respondents by paying attention to the way subjects talk about a phenomena and then interpreting what these narratives mean. Lofland and Lofland (1995:181) explain that when using grounded theory, “analysis is conceived as an emergent product of a process of gradual induction.” In this way, analysis is a creative act, open-ended in character.

Straus and Corbin caution that in the process of categorizing the responses of subjects the data should be “allowed to speak,” not forced into thematic categories for convenience (1998: 65). They define the process of organizing specific statements by topic as “open coding,” and explain that it is intended to be a dynamic and fluid process in which concepts are uncovered, named, and developed. The advantage of opening up the text in this manner is that we are able to expose the thoughts, ideas, and meanings contained within the statements individuals make (Strauss and Corbin 1998: 102).

Strauss and Corbin argue that this process is imperative when building theory because we do not just “work with a single case...rather, we want to know what this case teaches us about other cases...therefore, we use a case to open up our minds to the range of possible meanings, properties, dimensions, and relationships inherent in any bit of data” (1998:88). Doing this allows the researcher to move from specific occurrences to broader generalizations.

Following Kalleberg’s (1989; 1995) recommendation to “cross the boundaries” between economics and sociology, I seek to link macro structural influences to a micro

level analysis, focused on the choices of individual actors, by exploring the biographies and experiences of 29 women. I argue that although complex statistical models have been helpful in demonstrating the lack of an added worker effect, an explanation of these results would best be garnered using qualitative and grounded theory research techniques.

Data Collection

From February to April, 2003, twenty-nine, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the wives of laid-off steelworkers. The interviews were conducted in the women's homes and lasted between 45 and 90 minutes. Twenty-six of the women had participated in the earlier interviews with their husband that used a different interview schedule which focused on their husband's experiences at the steel plant. The three remaining women and their husbands had not been interviewed before. The interviews were mostly conducted by a team of four female college students, including myself, who interviewed respondents in pairs. Respondents who agreed to participate in the interviews were given a 35 dollar gift certificate to a local grocery store, which was purchased with funds donated by the Semnami Foundation. We met in the subjects' homes, wore casual attire, and tried to avoid taking extensive notes or focusing on the presence of the tape recorder.

The interview schedule that was developed for the women's interviews explored the women's work history and employment decisions in greater detail. These women were specifically asked about their aspirations, their expectations for work when they were young adults, their work experiences, feelings about their employment, their feelings about women's employment in general, their feelings about their husband's

employment at the steel mill, and their decisions regarding work at the time of the plant shutdown. The complete interview schedule can be found in Appendix B.

Analysis of the Interviews

After the recorded interviews had been transcribed and properly formatted, the data was analyzed in multiple phases using grounded theory techniques. The process of identifying and understanding the factors that influence women's responses to their spouse's unemployment first required a microanalysis – a line-by-line reading of the interviews to create a list of recurring topics that could then be used to classify the data within the interviews. The initial coding was conducted as a team effort. After the initial interview was read through and prominent topics were identified, a second and third interview was coded in a similar manner. Each team member read and coded the same interviews so that a common understanding of each of the topics could be achieved. Finally, the team created a list of 42 recurring topics and themes. A list of these initial themes can be found in Appendix C.

The interviews and a list of the coding topics (nodes) were then imported into a QSR N6 database for final coding and organizational purposes. Each of the remaining interviews was then coded by one of three team members who participated in the actual interviews, using the aforementioned list of topics, in a line-by-line analysis. The team members met regularly while coding in order to discuss problems, concerns, or discrepancies that arose during the coding process. Following the suggestion of Lofland and Lofland (1995: 192) with each team meeting and additional reading of the interviews, certain codes were elaborated, others collapsed, some completely dropped, and others newly added. Coding all of the interviews using the N6 software was important because it

enabled the handling of large amounts of data and allowed me to identify and relate the concepts that would later be used as the building blocks of my explanation.

Once this general coding had been conducted I returned to the data separately in order to begin the second phase of data analysis called axial coding. In the process of axial coding I sought to uncover the relationships among categories. As Strauss and Corbin describe, this process allows the researcher to begin to see how multiple factors may be operating in various combinations to create a context. At this point, they urge the analyst to focus on “the complex interweaving of events (conditions) leading up to a problem, an issue, or a happening to which persons are responding through some form of action/interaction, with some sort of consequences” (Strauss and Corbin 1998:132).

After axial coding I began selective coding – the process of integrating and refining categories. Using this method I was able to determine eight major factors that shaped women’s employment decisions. Once these categories were defined and organized I was then able to define a central category – gender – that helped explain the persistence of the eight primary factors identified. Strauss and Corbin explain that pinpointing a central category is an important part of building theory because “a central category has analytic power.” They explain that, “what gives it that power is its ability to pull the other categories together to form an explanatory whole. Also, a central category should be able to account for considerable variation within categories” (Strauss and Corbin 1998: 146).

After refining the categories and identifying the most important concepts, I began the process of diagramming the categories. Charting and mapping a visual display of the relationships between the major categories allowed me to see the relationships between

various concepts. I used flow charting as my primary diagramming technique in order to understand the decision-making process (see Lofland and Lofland 1995:197-9).

Sample Characteristics

Table 6 displays characteristics of the women interviewed. Pseudonyms were assigned to the subjects to protect the identity of the participants involved and for ease of reference. The ages of our respondents range from 31 to 59. All of the women interviewed had completed at least 12 years of schooling. Twelve (41 percent) of the women completed some post-secondary education, and two (7 percent) had obtained a bachelor's degree. Categorizing each woman's labor force participation and occupation was not always easy. I have chosen to label each woman's occupation and employment participation according to her own description. For instance, although Jean sells craft items from her home and Jennifer is currently looking for employment, both consider themselves homemakers.

Although at the time of the interviews only 34 percent of the husbands had found full or part-time work, 76 percent of the wives were employed; 35 percent full-time and 41 percent part-time. Twenty-one percent of the women considered themselves homemakers and only one woman considered herself unemployed. In addition, 41 percent of the husbands were students (enrolled in retraining programs) and 24 percent were still unemployed at the time of the interview, over a year after the plant shut down. Of the 19 husbands who were either students or unemployed, 79 percent of their wives were working full or part-time. Similarly, among the ten husbands who were employed at the time of the interview, 80 percent of their wives were also employed.

About 48 percent of the women interviewed had at least one child under the age of 18 living at home. Forty-five percent had parents, adult children, or grandchildren living with them at the time of the interview, and four women had elderly, handicapped, or disabled individuals in their home. Of the women with children under the age of 18, sixty-four percent were working outside of the home. Of the women with children under five, 75 percent worked at least part-time.

From Table 6 we can see that the kinds of work that these women perform vary greatly. They work in education, health care, sales, food services, child care, and administrative assistance, among many other occupations. The census data reveal that married women in Utah who are employed in the education, health, retail, finance, etc. industries make substantially less than their male counterparts in the top industries for males (see tables 1 and 2). Additionally, among the most educated women interviewed, only 25 percent were employed full-time; among the subjects who had 12 to 13 years of education, 38 percent were employed full-time. According to the census data concerning the median wages of married women, although married women working *full-time* in these industries earned a substantial income (see table 4), for families with children, they would still not be able to be self-sufficient. Further, our subjects who only work part-time are clearly in no position to earn a self-sufficient wage for their families while their husband is unemployed (see table 5).

Over 90 percent of the women interviewed were affiliated with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS) – a conservative religion which is headquartered in Salt Lake City, Utah and represents the largest religious organization in the state. Despite a lack of religious diversity in the sample, it is important to mention that there

was a great deal of variability among respondents in level of religious participation and family characteristics. At least two women had husbands that were of different religious faiths and several others had husbands that were not actively affiliated with the LDS church.

Although the statistics introduced in this chapter are interesting and provide key details about the work and earnings of married women in Utah, the most important issue at hand is not the percentage breakdowns, but the actions of working-class wives in the context of spousal unemployment. In the following chapter I will describe the results of the qualitative data analysis using detailed information collected in the interviews with the 29 women.

Table 6. Sample Characteristics

Pseudonym	Age	Years		Hours	Spouse Employment	Hours	Children		Others in Home
		Education	Employment				Under 5	6-18 yrs	
Mary	45	12	Bus/Teacher's Aide	PT	Student				
Brooke	45	12	Office Assistant	FT	Unemployed		2		2
Catherine	38	12	Unemployed		Unemployed				1
Michelle	58	12	Child Care	PT	Unemployed				
Heather	40	12	Minor Repairs	FT	Student				3
Julie	57	12	Document Control	FT	Unemployed				2*
Kimberly	50	12	Seamstress	FT	Unemployed				3
Joanna	59	12	Homemaker		Retired				
Debbie	52	12	Homemaker		Custodial	FT		2	2*
Isabel	59	12	Piano Teacher	PT	Unemployed			2	2
Melanie	45	12	Waitress & Child Care	PT	Student				
Nancy	34	12	Cake Decorator	FT	Construction Clean-up	FT	3	1	
Sara	50	12	Caregiver & Housekeeping	PT	Student			1	
Kayla	50	12	Waitress	FT	Baker	FT			4
Mardell	49	12	Medical Transcription	FT	Student & Refrigeration	PT			
Carly	56	13	Beautician	PT	Mechanic	FT			
Jean	43	13	Homemaker		Student			3	3
Jennifer	39	13	Homemaker		Student		2	4	
Kendra	46	13	Craft Warehouse	PT	Maintenance	FT		1	
Marion	54	13	Sales Clerk	PT	Student				
Melisa	51	13	Psychiatric Ward Mentor	FT	Truck Driver	FT			2
Angela	43	14	Secretary	FT	Welder	FT		2	
Colleen	54	14	Dishwasher	PT	Unemployed				
Laura	35	14	Pharmacy Technician	PT	Construction	FT	2	3	
Sondra	31	14	Accounting	PT	Student		1		
Marci	57	15	Teachers Aide	FT	Student				1
Margaret	58	15	Homemaker		Manufacturing	FT		1	2*
Caroline	54	16, RN	Nurse	PT	Student			1*	1
Donna	47	16, Elem. Ed.	Homemaker		Student			3	

* Includes a handicapped, disabled, or elderly individual

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

A great deal of information was collected in the interviews. The quotations presented in this chapter were chosen based on their ability to either illustrate a pattern in responses across women or to represent variation in responses. In instances where many women made similar statements I made a concerted effort to use passages from women who were not quoted in previous sections in order to use the words of as many of the women as possible.

Following the Plant Closure

The husbands of the women we interviewed had a variety of experiences getting new employment, resulting in a wide range of spousal responses to the plant shut down. Some men began looking for new jobs as soon as the plant closure seemed imminent. Twelve of the husbands started retraining programs shortly after they became unemployed. Other men, sure the plant would start up again, collected unemployment and caught up on various home improvement projects while they waited to get their old jobs back.

Angela's husband actually picked up a part-time job prior to the plant shutdown. Angela compares her feelings about her husband being out of work following a temporary plant closure in 1986 with her reaction to the final shut down in 2001 and describes her employment response each time.

It's a pretty panicking feeling when you think, 'I have to buy food, we have to pay our rent,' and your husband is used to bringing in a certain amount, and that's how much you have in your budget. And then it's cut down ... It was kind of a really panicked feeling. So I went out and got a job waitressing...[The second time he got laid off] I was full-blown cleaning everyday [self-employed home

cleaning business]....[And] he was already working that part-time job, so he just went full-time there the second time he got laid off. So it wasn't as traumatic to get laid off a second time. (Angela, Secretary)

Although Angela would later look for more stable work, she did not consider altering her labor force participation immediately.

Ten women had husbands who were able to find some form of employment by the time of our interview, although many of them were still searching for more permanent, better paying work. For instance, Laura's husband was able to find new work just a week after the layoff. She describes what it would be like for her to be the primary breadwinner for her family of seven if her husband had not found work immediately:

Laura: I think it would be very difficult. Just for the fact that we do have some bills that we're trying to take care of. If we didn't have those bills I don't think it would be a problem. We just wouldn't have, you know, all the extras. We wouldn't be able to do vacations and stuff like that. So it would be hard if it were just me [working]. I mean, I do make a decent wage, but not something that a family of seven can live off of very easily.

Interviewer: So did you consider working more when the layoff happened?

Laura: There was a time, yeah. When we didn't know, that week when we didn't know [if her husband had gotten the new job]. (Pharmacy Technician)

Because Laura's husband was able to secure full-time work quickly she did not feel she needed to increase her labor force participation following the plant closure.

At the time of our interviews, approximately 15 months after the initial layoffs began, seven of the women we met with had husbands who were still unemployed and looking for work. Melanie's husband was one of the men who did not find work immediately. When asked about her feelings concerning the plant closure and her employment response, she explained:

Actually, I thought it wouldn't last too long. That was my initial, 'Oh this happened before, its not going to last long.' But then, the longer it went it was like, oh boy, now what do we do? What direction do we go? It's kind of scary. There's kind of a loss of direction. Especially when it stretches out longer and longer and longer. You know, he got laid off in November, and we thought he'd be back ... and when that [didn't] happen we were like, 'Okay, plan B. Now where do we go from here?'

...This job just kind of fell on my lap. My sister-in law happens to be manager. Actually, she was talking to [her husband] about needing to hire another part-time waitress and he came to me and said, 'Talk to your sister-in-law about that. That might be something you could do.' And its just worked out just great. You know, I went into it with no pressure. She said, 'If this doesn't work out, no hard feelings.' But it just worked out great. I started two days a week and I just added a third. I'm feeling really pretty good. I go exercise every morning, try to keep my back strengthened so I can do the job. And it's not a real stressful job. They're not real busy where I work. (Melanie, Waitress and Child Care)

Melanie's husband enrolled in a retraining program and between his unemployment benefits and her additional income, they were able to meet their basic needs.

Brooke's husband had completed his retraining program by the time of our interviews, but he was still unable to find full-time work. Brooke describes how their situation influenced her decision to work full-time:

Brooke: He's been applying, when he hears of something. He's been checking on jobs. He's gone for interviews. But nothing has happened. He's even applied for part-time jobs. Nothing has happened.

Interviewer: Is he drawing any kind of unemployment right now?

Brooke: No. It stopped the day you graduate.

Interviewer: So you are the breadwinner, right now?

Brooke: Right, and I don't make very much at [the eye care center]. They just don't pay that well.

Interviewer: And you started this job because...

Brooke: Of Geneva [the shutdown]. It forced me to full-time.

If the economic crisis caused by unemployment is directly related to women's labor force participation, why did some women not increase their employment while others did? What specific factors influenced wives' labor force responses? In order to find the answers to these questions we must understand the different ways in which families may have attempted to compensate for the income loss incurred by the husband's unemployment.

Coping with the Loss of Income

Many of the women interviewed talked about ways they were able to cut expenses and earn extra money in order to meet their financial needs. Yeung and Hofferth (1998) suggest that when families experience a substantial loss of income or work hours they may be more likely to cut back on expenditures in order to cope with income loss rather than obtain new employment. If a woman is unable to, or chooses not to increase the financial resources of the family she may be able to reduce expenses in the home by focusing her efforts on strategies designed to minimize expenditures and maximize financial assets. Because the responsibilities of domestic labor and production (in the forms of cooking, cleaning, clothing family members, etc.) fall predominately on the shoulders of women, they are more likely than men to engage in alternative practices designed to aid the family in coping with anticipated income adjustments.

Debbie opted not to enter the labor force following her husband's job loss:

I don't buy anything that isn't on sale, but that's become kind of a game with me. I really enjoy looking for things on sale and knowing that I can get them at the best price. I buy in quantity and even with my crafts and my fabric and all those types of things. I'm very careful. I use the 40 percent off coupons and I watch for everything on sale, and if I find something that we use, then I get it. I'm very careful that way...I watch our budget very closely. (Debbie, Homemaker)

Jean, a mother of six children, was also able to supplement her husband's unemployment compensation through the production and sale of craft items from her own home:

Oh, I've always worked on and off, you know, doing things...these eggs ...things like that just to kind of bring in a little extra – but not a career. Not to make a living on, but just [to] try to help out now and again...That was an ostrich egg. The investment is 12.50, the average ones sells around 35 [dollars] and then up to 80. It just depends on how intricate it is. But yeah, I don't really get paid [much] for as much work as I put into them. But I enjoy it. I would do it anyway, but I can get paid so money's a bonus (laughs). We're about two to four hundred dollars short on our expenses [each month], and I've been able to make that with sewing and selling and things like that. But without unemployment, I don't know what we'll do. (Jean, Homemaker)

Jean also cut medical costs:

When my daughter got strep [throat] I called all around to find somebody who would give us a prescription and not see the doctor—it cost too much. And then I called up the pharmacy to find out who had the cheapest... You do a lot of research to find out who has the cheapest. (Jean, Homemaker)

In addition to shopping for sales, many women mentioned that they were trying to make ends meet by cutting back on grocery expenses:

You have to cut out a lot of unnecessary foods and different things so that we can afford them. But then that's still scrimping...We go without that and make with what we do have so that we can buy something else. (Kimberly, seamstress)

Brooke describes how her family of six tried to curb expenses by not eating out as frequently and by limiting costly entertainment:

My kids keep telling me there's nothing in the house to eat because I just don't grocery shop like I used to. You just buy what you need. We don't have meat as much as we used to. I'll try to make it go farther. We don't go out to dinner like we used to. We don't go to movies like we used to. We don't even rent movies like we used to. (Brooke, office assistant)

Other women also mentioned they had cut out vacations and recreational activities in response to their spouse's unemployment:

We used to bowl. We used to go to movies. We used to...recreation is out of the picture. We went camping once last summer. We don't rent four-wheelers. We don't go [on] the family stuff that we did, like camping trips, four-wheeling, boating. All of that...it's been kinda cut out... We just maybe rent a video once or twice a month. That's it. (Catherine, Unemployed)

Women's initial response was to reduce expenses, but doing so involved a great deal of effort. Shopping for bargains, doing price comparisons, putting attention into making things go further requires a substantial amount of time. Michelle and her husband decided to retire early, which allowed them to spend greater time looking for sales and bargains:

Yeah, we hardly ever go get new clothes anymore. And we're really watching the grocery ads a lot more careful. Of course, we have more time to do it too, to sit and say, 'This is on sale here,' and you know. We're watching that a lot more close. (Michelle, Child Care)

Many of the women described collective strategies their families used to cut costs. Frequently, the specific activities like bargain shopping were described as strategies the women engaged in alone. Because domestic production is traditionally reserved for women, men did not appear to be as likely to initiate the development or implementation of such coping mechanisms. In addition, it appeared that the women who were homemakers were more likely to go into great detail about how they cut expenses and searched for deals, whereas women who were employed were less likely to discuss at length their money saving strategies. This difference is possibly the result of two related factors: (1) employed women may have less time to engage in such time-consuming activities, and (2) because employed women are bringing in an additional income, they may have less of a need to engage in cost-saving strategies. Nonetheless, women both in and out of the labor force frequently mentioned cutting back on expenses as a way of

coping with their spouse's job loss. Whether or not their reduction in expenses was deemed sufficient factored into their decision to consider other strategies.

Edin and Lein (1996) have provided a great deal of insight into the economic survival strategies of low-income, single mothers. Like the single women they interviewed, many of the married women in this analysis were involved in similar economic strategies such as unreported, informal work. Edin and Lein did not consider in their analysis specific cost-saving strategies like those described by the women in this analysis. In fact, few researchers have considered the varied ways in which women are able to reduce household expenses by engaging in activities like coupon clipping and bargain shopping, strategies that were described as necessary for many of the women's economic survival.

The Basic Decision-Making Model

Figure 1 displays the basic process that many of the women went through when deciding about their labor force participation following their husband's job loss. It is important to understand that the model is not intended to be all inclusive. As the previously mentioned results suggest, there were a variety of paths these women could take following their spouses forced unemployment. By determining which elements were related to which others, and then working towards a coherent classification and ordering of the process, it became possible to recognize a basic set of alternative choices that the majority of women considered following the plant closure.

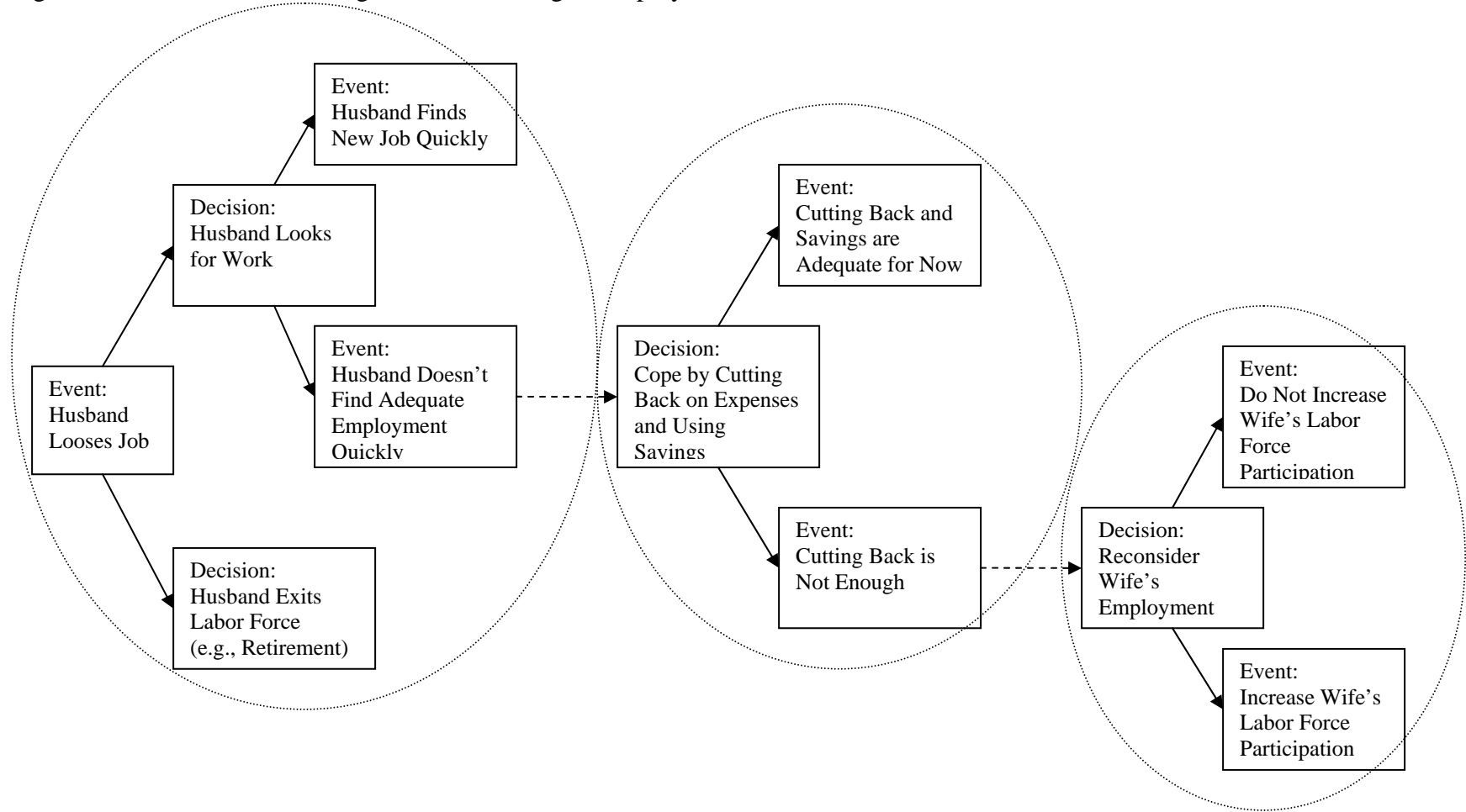
This decision-making model is grouped into three major components. The first set of events and considerations occurs immediately following the plant closure and focuses on the women's initial decisions regarding their husbands' employment. The

second set of events concerns strategies used to cope with the loss of income without altering individual family members' employment. The third set of events involves the women's decisions to increase their labor force participation.

Each woman confronted her spouse's unemployment from a unique situational context leading to a great deal of variety in responses. Nonetheless, the three previously mentioned sets of decisions and events reoccurred consistently throughout each of the interviews. The young women and the older women, the most educated and the least educated, women with children and even those with an "empty nest" – all considered their spouse's employment opportunities, strategies for cutting back, and their own employment participation following their spouses job loss. While this triad of events could be recognized in most of the women's narratives, it is important to mention that this process did not always occur in a step-wise fashion, from one set of events and decisions to the next, as the figure might suggest. Many times these events were considered simultaneously. Sometimes the women considered increasing their labor force participation prior to the plant closure, or immediately following their husband's job loss, and coping strategies such as cutting back and using savings were considered in *response* to the wife's inability to increase her labor force participation.

The third component of the decision-making model is most directly related to my research question, but considering the decisions made in the first and second components is crucial for understanding the reasons why the women may have decided to, or not to, increase their employment. In the following section I will focus on the specific factors these women described as influencing their labor force response to their spouse's job loss.

Figure 1. Basic Decision-Making Model Following Unemployment



Factors Influencing Women's Employment Response

Economic Factors. Economic factors appeared to either act as an impetus for women's employment or as a barrier to adequate employment. For instance, one type of economic factor that played into many of the women's decisions to maintain or increase their labor force participation was the need to provide adequate health insurance benefits for their families. Mary was frank in explaining the matter:

The only reason I'm working now is because we have no insurance, since Geneva shut down. (Mary, Bus/Teacher's Aide)

Melisa anticipated the plant shutdown and started looking for work before her husband lost his job. One of her major fears was the loss of health insurance:

Interviewer: And when did you start working?

Melisa: I've been there four years.

Interviewer: Why did you start working?

Melisa: Because I've heard the back and forth, back and forth. They're going to keep it, they're going to shut it, they're going to do this, and I thought, 'Well, they're going to do it one day eventually anyway, so we've got to have insurance.' I was making sure all the basics were covered in case something did happen. It was just kind of one of those, if it really does go down, then what are we going to do? So I went back to work. (Psychiatric Ward Mentor)

Jennifer, a mother of six children under the age of 18, explains that she is trying to find work. Although she states that she'll take any job, one of her biggest considerations is work that can provide health insurance while her husband is completing his retraining:

I'd like to work in a doctor's office, because that's what I [was] doing when I was going to school. But right now, I'm just like, okay, I'll see what I can find. I know they hire at the training school, and the dollar store hires, and Wal-Mart says they're always hiring. So, wherever I can find something. Cause I know that the training school gives you insurance, and that's the thing that I need for all my kids. (Jennifer, Homemaker)

Even women who are employed are having a hard time providing insurance for their families. Kendra, who works in a craft warehouse, is able to get insurance through her work but describes how her low wages barely cover the cost of high insurance premiums:

I work more. I go in on Saturdays also to make up more hours than six hours a day. I mean, my son usually sleeps, or is gone doing things so I make up time when he's not here. So, I do work extra hours...I have to pay the insurance. His [her husband's] insurance used to be covered and so, all my money... I mean, I work for nothing and it seems like if I work extra hours then that gives me just a little you know, when we pay insurance. (Kendra, Craft Warehouse)

Brooke had spent six years at Dairy Queen working part-time as a cake decorator. When she was unable to advance to full-time status after her husband's job loss she sought employment elsewhere, first at a doctors office and then at an eye care center. Because she had little work experience outside of cake decorating, she explains how she sought work any place that would be willing to train her:

I just applied at everything I could find in the paper that had 'will train.' I make less money at [the eye care center] than I did decorating cakes. It's just decorating cakes wasn't a full-time job. What I was first looking into was a full-time job decorating cakes. Decorating cakes, with my bonuses, I was making between 11 and 12 dollars an hour. It's been a job drop, other than I have more hours. (Brooke, Office Assistant)

Because access to adequate health insurance may be a significant factor in choosing full-time hours over fewer hours with greater pay, this example illustrates the conundrum that many women face between choosing jobs that provide more hours or those with less hours but more pay.

Although some women find they need to work in order to meet health care expenses, others explain that they are unable to move into the labor force, or increase their labor force participation, due to the greater potential for expenses incurred for work.

For instance, Heather states that much of her reasoning for staying out of the labor force when her children were young was the high cost of child care:

Well you look at it; [if] you fork out the money for daycare, you're going to end up giving three quarters of your check to daycare. And then you have to travel and drop them off, all that fun stuff. So I thought, 'Why pay them? I'll just stay home, stay with the money.' That's what we decided and at the time...we were able to do that. We just decided, forget it. If we can do it, I'll stay home with the kids during the day. I guess I could have found one at night and then did what everyone else does, where your husband works during the day and you work at night, but... If we can do it the other way, I think that's better....It only makes sense. (Heather, Minor Repairs)

Marion explains that although she might be able to increase her hours of employment as a sales clerk she had opted not to. Marion figures any extra income she would earn would just be spent on the cost of extra travel expenses.

Interviewer: Did you consider increasing to full-time work when he was laid off?

Marion: Oh, very briefly. Actually this works out very well for us because we can ride together. He drops me off at work and then he's out of school in time to pick me up. So I work six and a half hours a day. It's a six hour job, but like I said, it's flextime so you can pretty much work however long you want to. And where it fits him that close, it makes more sense for us to ride back and forth than to take two separate vehicles. Just travel expenses would be more than what I'd be earning in an extra hour a day, or an hour and a half. (Marion, Sales Clerk)

The costs incurred for working are an important consideration for many of these women when computing the cost-benefit analysis of their labor force participation. The lack of access to work with sufficient wages plays a large part in many women's labor force participation. The women mention their lack of access to sufficient wages more frequently than the costs associated with employment:

This is kind of sad – he brings more home on unemployment than I make.
(Marion, Sales Clerk)

We just, we have no money. How can you pay your bills? I'm working part-time. I make 250 every two weeks. He makes 270 every week on unemployment. How

can you pay your bills and your utilities and your food and make it through the month? And they want us to pay 600 dollars a month for insurance, and we can't afford that. (Mary, bus/teachers aide)

I've worked seventeen years, and I'm still making the same amount of money I was seventeen years ago....What I make won't do it. It's frustrated me a lot. (Kimberly, seamstress)

These women's narratives and the census data statistics both support Yeung and Hofferth's (1998) conclusion that a spouse may simply not be able to compensate for income losses.

While many women described their wages as an insufficient *primary* source of income, they oftentimes recognized that their earnings, as small as they may be, were an important contribution to the total household income. A number of women explained that their wages were needed to provide the crucial amount that would put them "over the hump."

I enjoy the money. I mean, I'd like to stay home, but you know, [it takes] two incomes to make ends meet and stuff. (Kayla, Waitress)

Kimberly, a seamstress, first expressed that ideally one parent should stay home with the children. But she subsequently commented on how necessary it is for both parents to work "nowadays."

I really think that kids need a parent with them, to be behind them, instead of really going to work. [But] society nowadays is...it takes both the woman and the man to make a decent living because the wages are so low out here. (Kimberly, Seamstress)

Swidler (2001) argues that when individuals leap from one cultural frame or set of assumptions to another, like Kimberly did above, it is evidence of how cultural frames, scripts, and schemas vary by context. When an individual cannot handle a problem with their dominant schema they turn to other scripts that allow them to reconcile the issue.

Because of the availability of multiple frameworks from which to draw, some frames remain silent while others come to the forefront (Swidler 2001). Swidler's explanation is essentially cognitive. However, Friedland and Alford (1991) might describe Kimberly's shift as a result of the dual nature of institutional logics which apply to both meaning and practice. Although Kimberly may desire a traditional division of labor, in practice her ability to be a stay-at-home mom is constrained by economic demands.

Many women qualified their answers and seemed to be reluctant to make blanket statements regarding the appropriateness of certain actions, especially for other people. For instance, Mardell compares her situation with that of a large family without two sources of income, as a sort of justification for her decision to be employed:

I don't know how a lot of people, if the wife didn't work and had a bunch of kids, I don't think you could survive unemployment. I really don't. It's like 300 a week, which isn't terrible if you've got other [sources of income]. Like [for] me, it's been fine. We've had enough. But if you've got a car payment, and big house payments, and kids and stuff...we might not have been able to do it if we still had a bunch of kids and I couldn't work all the time. (Mardell, Medical Transcription)

Although Marion expressed a similar sentiment, she also made the important distinction that she felt her income was necessary for providing the "extras" the family desired.

It's a matter of economics. I think it's even more now. There's very few families that can make it on one income, especially in this state. So I think most women went to work for the same reason I did, for that little bit of extra....when I started I thought it would be like some of the other jobs I had. 'Ok, I'll be here six months and I'm out of here.' But it's been a pretty good job and it gives us, not the living money, but the playing money. (Marion, Sales Clerk)

Many women talked about their employment as essential and yet described their income as reserved for paying for the family's additional expenses. Nonetheless, their descriptions appear to be quite accurate. Despite their low wages, their income contribution was often needed to allow their families to be self-sufficient and also

provided just a little extra disposable income to afford small luxuries. The respondents' views about their employment contributions provide evidence that the assumption that women are secondary wage earners is indeed commonly accepted. Although many of the women we talked to had aspirations for employment, very few expected that they would be primarily responsible for meeting their family's financial needs.

Labor Force Opportunities. The local economy and available labor force opportunities also play a large role in the employment decisions that the women make. Many women described how a lack of employment opportunities in the area prevented them from either getting a new job or increasing the hours they worked. For instance, Catherine described how the tight labor market that was limiting her husband's job prospects was also constraining her ability to find work:

I thought that my husband wasn't looking for work like he should, because he wasn't getting work. Now I'm out in the work force looking for work. There isn't anything. You go out and apply for a six dollar-an-hour job, there's already been four or five hundred people there. (Catherine, Unemployed)

Catherine's use of hyperbole in this statement concerning the number of people applying for each job illustrates her heightened sense of frustration with the lack of local job opportunities.

Mary, a bus/teacher's aide who was only working part-time, also expressed a great deal of frustration in trying to find employment that allowed for greater hours. Her disappointment in the job market is evident in her blunt answer. She sees absolutely no options for full-time employment:

Interviewer: Have you ever considered working somewhere full-time, like switching jobs?

Mary: Where? Where would you go?

Interviewer: Have you looked around?

Mary: Yeah! Where? (Bus/Teacher's Aide)

Colleen, who was washing dishes at a local restaurant while her husband looked for employment, also saw few options for employment available in the community. She explained that many people besides the Geneva steelworkers were having a hard time finding sufficient employment:

One of [her husband's] problems is that he has no skills. But even people that have skills are having problems. I don't think there's any employment you can do. My friend across the road, he's a wonderful carpenter, good friend of [my husband]. They went to school together. He could not find a job for [decent] money. He's working for his son-in-law to maintain bills and stuff. But if it wasn't for that, he doesn't know what he would have done. And they said he's such a wonderful carpenter, really, really skilled. And even he couldn't find a job. (Colleen, Dishwasher)

The above quotations illustrate how especially women whose husband's were having a difficult time finding employment saw very little opportunity for their own increased labor force participation. Their perception of a lack of available work was an important factor in their employment decisions following their spouse's job loss.

Another very important factor to consider is the kind of occupations and industries that the women were employed in and the kinds of work that they believed they had access to. From table 6 it is evident that most of these women are employed in predominately female occupations in the service sector—occupations like beautician, seamstress, waitress, teachers aide, and cake decorator—which provide limited advancement opportunities and wages.

In describing her work at a local restaurant, Colleen explains that although she likes the people she works with, the work itself is not very appealing. Nonetheless, she continues to work there because her husband has not yet found adequate employment:

Colleen: I just work three days a week now, just at the local restaurant, you know bussing, doing dishes, and putting things away. But it's hard for me to work full-time. It makes me tired. I work too much.

Interviewer: Do you like that?

Colleen: Yeah, I don't mind working there. The people are very nice. But who likes ending messes and washing dishes? But the people are very nice there. I mean, I enjoy working there. I don't enjoy what I do. (Dishwasher)

Kendra expressed similar sentiments about her employment at a craft store warehouse:

Kendra: Right now I work at [the craft store], at the warehouse, and do part-time work there also.

Interviewer: Do you like that?

Kendra: Not really. It's a very boring job, what I do. I actually count paper and put it in bags. It's very monotonous and it's kind of hard to sit there all day and your mind wanders a lot. (Craft Warehouse)

Heather also described how her work doing minor repairs at a safe company was very demanding on her body. She expresses her desire to quit that job when her husband finds a new job:

I work at [a safe company]...I cover the door jambs. They stick it right there and it just, there's a gap with materials stapling....When he [her husband] gets out of school hopefully he can find a good paying job and have benefits and then maybe I can [quit]. This is really pushing me to the limit. I'm older, my thumbs starting to hurt real bad. It hurts. Now I'm stiff because of my...what I have to do. So I got to find something that's less demanding on the body because my body is wearing out, and I can't put to much pressure. But you tell them that and its like, "Oh, well there's not another place I can put you." So in other words, its either you work and do what you are doing or you can go and find something else. And also you got to find something that has insurance. (Heather, Minor Repairs)

Nancy, who has worked as a cake decorator since high school, felt extremely limited and unsatisfied with her work. Her frustration appeared compounded by the fact that her employment was necessary now that her husband was unemployed, whereas in the past, her employment had been purely optional. She describes how she wishes she had gotten more education so she could work in a different field:

Interviewer: Do you enjoy cake decorating?

Nancy: I don't hate it. I hate working. That's the thing, I hate to *have* to work, but I have to work...I don't hate doing cake decorating, but sometimes I wish I did something where I don't have to wear a hat all day and feel...I don't know, I don't [look] dumpy or anything, but I'm just in a bakery. I wish I had gone and done something else. Sometimes I wish I would have gone to school, worked in the medical field or something. (Cake Decorator)

Marci, who works as a teacher's aide, also expressed how feeling obligated to work had changed her satisfaction with her employment at the school. Although she really enjoyed her work, because she felt like she could no longer leave at will, she found herself more frustrated with recent schedule changes by her employer:

This year has been a hard year for me....They've just changed a lot of things. But it's nothing worth changing. I mean, I still love working with the kids and stuff and they haven't been mean to me. They've been really nice to me but they've [the school] had to change my schedule like three different times. Before if I got sick of it, and I probably wouldn't quit, but I knew I could if I wanted to, I've always known if I didn't like it, I could quit. And just knowing, you know, you *can't* quit. And just knowing that has been hard. I don't know why, 'cause I wouldn't quit anyway. But, I don't feel as free. (Marci, Teacher's Aide)

Not all the women interviewed disliked their employment. Like many of the other women, Caroline, who worked as a registered nurse, was also employed in a typical female occupation. But *unlike* many of the other women, her degree, work experience, and seniority all afforded her greater prestige and pay, which allowed her the option of

limiting her time commitment to employment without sacrificing needed wages. She describes her satisfaction with her decision to go into nursing:

I like nursing....In most cases it's been really good. I could have gone to work full-time at Mervyn's and it wouldn't pay half as much as nursing part-time. And time wise, that's the right choice. And I'm actually really glad I did it. (Caroline, Nurse)

Both Sondra and Angela, who work for small companies as an accountant and secretary respectively, also expressed being happy with their work and employers. They explained that their satisfaction was partly due to kind employers who were willing to give them time off when necessary without much resistance, creating a sense of flexibility in their employment schedules. Not surprisingly, the women with the most education, those with two years of schooling or more, appeared to be more satisfied with their work and pay than the women who did not have as much education. These women also tended to be employed in less mundane and closely regulated work. Nonetheless, very few of the women interviewed expressed excitement or complete satisfaction with their work.

Education played an important part in the women's labor force participation. Of the 29 women interviewed, only two had completed a four year college degree. Six women had completed an associate's degree or the equivalent years amount of education. The remaining twenty-one women had completed a year or less of post secondary education. Like Nancy, whose frustration with her current employment caused her to reflect on her educational decisions, many other women also described feeling trapped in their current employment arrangements due to a lack of educational experience. Marci was less than one year away from finishing her degree in education before she dropped

out of college to help support her husband's education. She describes how she feels her options are limited because of that decision years ago:

I do. I feel like my options are limited. I feel like if I had my degree well, right now I'd be making twice what I make, you know. And I feel like I make good money for not having a degree, but if I would have gotten my degree I would be making a lot more, and plus, I'd have insurance. (Marci, Teacher's Aide)

Colleen made a similar decision when she decided to not complete her nursing degree after moving to the United States to get married:

He [her husband] earned pretty good money so I never did get my RN. And things have changed so much now, I mean it's been 25 years, and so now I would have to start right from scratch. (Colleen, Dishwasher)

A number of women expressed extreme frustration over their decision to not complete their education. Kimberly's strong words describe her intense dissatisfaction with her current employment:

It makes me sick. I keep thinking, I really need to get out of where I'm at...I've been lucky, but it's just...I mean, I come straight out of high school and you get married and you didn't go to college and that. And so, in some ways I wished I had [gone to college], but then, I don't know...I really want to strive to try to find a better job. (Kimberly, Seamstress)

Although Nancy similarly had no desire to go to college following high school, her current situation has also caused her to reflect on that decision:

I wish I went to school for something. I don't hate cake decorating, I just hate working. I don't hate my job, I just hate the fact that I have to work. That sucks. If I knew then what I know now, school is really easier. You just go and do something so you can make decent money and do something you like doing. (Nancy, Cake Decorator)

Kimberly and Nancy's use of strong language to describe their feelings about their situations is very powerful in illustrating their perception that education is a key factor in influencing their access to worth-while and satisfying work.

Although employed full-time at the time of our interview, Heather had considered trying to find new employment due to her dissatisfaction with her work. When asked about the kinds of work she thought might be available to her, she responded:

Since I have no degree or anything [there's] not much available, so it would have to be a fast food, grocery store type thing...I just as soon go to these fast food [places] that [are] not that pressing of a job. Like if I had to, I could quit. (Heather, Minor Repairs)

Many of the women, recognizing how their lack of education has limited their employment opportunities, expressed that they were encouraging their children to go to college and complete a degree. Angela explains that her decision to get a job waitressing at a night club in order to make ends meet during an earlier plant shutdown not only caused conflict between her and her husband, but has also caused her to insist more intensely that her children get an education:

Interviewer: Where did you waitress at?

Angela: It was a restaurant with a bar in it. He [her husband] did not like it at all. It didn't bother me as much because, I just figured that nobody flirted with me (laughter). No, but that did cause problems because he really was upset that I was doing that. And I didn't want to go against his wishes, but I mean, I could've gone out and tried to find a job, but I knew that I could probably make fifteen bucks an hour waitressing [at the club] compared to seven bucks an hour somewhere[else]. So that's what I did. So that's why I tell my kids to go to school the entire time, 'cause I don't want them to do what I did...Looking back on it, I probably, it would have been smarter to go to school, just grin and bear it and bite the bullet and go to school and try to do it. But I didn't. I should've. So I really push my kids to go to school. (Angela, Secretary)

While many women regretted not completing a degree and felt the need to encourage their children to get more education, very few expressed a desire to go back to school at this point in their lives. Catherine was one of the few who explained that she

would like to go back to school in order to get a more satisfying and better paying job.

Unfortunately, she felt she would be unable to do so because of the high cost of education and their lack of sufficient resources:

When I worked at the bowling center I did things with Special Olympics and stuff and I really enjoyed that... That's what I would like to do, but I need some education, but there's no money to get it. We can't afford my daughter's college and me to go back to school. You know what I mean? (Catherine, Unemployed)

The fact that many of the women, like Catherine, felt immediate pressure to secure greater resources for their families may explain why they did not frequently express a great desire to finish their educations at the present time.

Employment history is an important factor influencing access to other forms of work and employment. Because many of the women we spoke with had taken time out of the labor force to bear and care for children, many of them lacked extensive work histories that included advancement into higher positions or levels of responsibility. Even for those women who worked in organizations that had promotional ladders, many women were unable to take advantage of advancement opportunities due to their decisions to limit their employment participation.

Although some women were content to remain in their employment positions prior to the plant shut down, following their spouse's unemployment, they began to recognize how their work histories acted to constrain their opportunities for sufficient employment when they needed it most. For example, Kendra describes her reasons for beginning her work at the craft store and her concerns about providing for her family on a minimum wage:

Kendra: When I went and got the job it was just something I could do that was fun. Just something to occupy a little bit of my time and I really didn't expect to

go really high or anything. Because, I mean, like I said, my skills are house mom. You know you have all these skills, but yet you don't have skills that can say, 'Oh I can do that, I can do that.' You know? And so, I mean, I've been a supervisor and things like that. The job before I started counting paper was still at [the craft store] but I did dispersing which, dispersed the items out to the store, which I really enjoyed. Then I switched and I regret it.

Interviewer: What was your biggest concern when the lay off happened?

Kendra: Him [her husband] not going out and finding another job that would support our family has been a concern because I don't have a school [sic]. If that makes sense? A paper skill I mean. I have all sorts of skills, but I don't have anything on paper that says I can go get a job that will support our family. I can go out and get minimum wage. That's a concern because one day down the rode I'm sure I'm going to be the sole supporter.

Many other women also talked of how they felt their lack of qualifications limited their options for new employment:

We were like, "Ok, plan B. Now where do we go from here?" Because I was doing [child care] at the time, and that doesn't bring in a lot of money...I don't really have any skills to get a profession...My options were, I felt, very limited. What can I do? (Melanie, waitress)

Jennifer, a homemaker who sought to enter the labor force after her husband became unemployed, describes how she felt her absence from the labor market while raising children would limit her ability to find a job:

I've gotta find me a job so that [my husband] can hopefully stay in school...I've just been applying for anything I can find. But I'm not getting it...I've tried a few places around. I don't get it...I think it's the fact that I haven't worked for so many years. (Jennifer, Homemaker)

Family Factors. Women continue to be primarily responsible for the caring and nurturing of children and other family members. Even in dual earner households much of the household and care-giving responsibilities tend to fall on the shoulders of women (see Hochschild 2003). Because many of these women described their household and family duties as important to them, they frequently explained that their family responsibilities

had a direct influence on their employment decisions. Many of the women explained that they sought work that would allow them to be home by the time their kids were done with school and flexible employers who would allow for time off to care for injured, sick, or needy children. For example, Brooke described how having children affected her employment decisions:

I worked at Dairy Queen for almost six years part-time because part-time work is good with having kids. Before that I did demos in the grocery store, just because it was weekends and I could still be home all week, kind of working around kids. (Brooke, Office Assistant)

Brooke explains how her new employment was difficult for her because she was not able to take care of her younger children in the same way she was able to care for her older children.

Interviewer: You were home when your kids were young?

Brooke: Yes.

Interviewer: Was that something that was important to you?

Brooke: Yes. It's been hard being gone for the last two, because a lot of times I've missed when the kids want to talk, I'm not here. That's been hard. Even working at Dairy Queen, I was usually here when they got home after school. But I haven't been here since I started working full-time. I miss it. I feel left out because I'll find out all this stuff from my older girls because the other kids have talked to them first about stuff. I get jealous. I want to know. (Brooke, Office Assistant)

Although Brooke made the choice to move into full-time employment while her husband was unemployed, it is clear that it was an extremely difficult decision for her.

Angela, who was previously involved in an independent cleaning business, recently started working for a small business as a secretary. She made the decision because she felt she needed more stable employment:

Angela: When you're working from nine to five, a lot depends on working....My cleaning customers, they didn't care, as long as I came. I could come late. I could call them up and say, if somebody was sick or something, I could say, 'You know, [my daughter] is sick. Is it okay if I come tomorrow?' And they were totally flexible.

Interviewer: So do you think that now that you're working full-time has affected your children and your relationships with your children in any way?

Angela: You know, at very first, the little one had a really hard time. She did not like me being, just that mental thought that I was going to be gone all day really bothered her....and she would cry and she'd call me up at work the minute she's off from school. 'I don't want you working. I want you to come home right now!' But I told her, I said, 'Honey....you're important. No matter what, you're more important than my job. And if you're sick, I'll be able to stay home.' I think not even a month, maybe two, three weeks everything was fine. And it's been fine ever since. (Angela, Secretary)

Angela explains the sense of anxiety she felt about being away from home more often when she began her new full-time job. Although she has adjusted somewhat, she has not yet been able to figure out what kind of care arrangements she will make for her daughter once school is out for the summer:

I'm not going to be home as much. But it's turned out fine. Oh, I'm a little nervous about the summer, because....I've got [an] eleven [year old], so I have to figure out what I'm going to do with her. I don't know. I haven't figured that out yet....That's a little worrisome....Other than that, it's been nice to have a steady, even paycheck. (Angela, Secretary)

Laura, who is working part-time at a local pharmacy, solved the child care dilemma with the help of family:

Laura: We have a lot of family around. And frankly, if I didn't have family around I couldn't work because I would have a really hard time leaving my children in daycare.

Interviewer: How would that be hard for you?

Laura: Just mentally. I just don't, I mean, like the association with other kids is good for my kids, but you know, I like them to be with somebody that they're

familiar with and that I know is going to take good care of them. (Laura, Pharmacy Technician)

Care giving duties compose only part of women's family responsibilities.

Domestic tasks are also an important part of women's family commitments. Considering women's domestic demands is important because workplace participation and domestic production and participation in household tasks are directly related. Women have been traditionally responsible for freeing men from domestic responsibilities so they can devote time to their employment. Women's presence in the labor force and men's unemployment especially challenge the allocation of responsibilities, allowing gendered assumptions about appropriate behavior to become more evident.

Angela describes her usual day and the change in her ability to perform household chores since taking on full-time work:

I have to work at nine, so I try to get up and get stuff done a little bit before I leave, you know, try to run through the house and pick stuff up and make sure there's no dishes in the sink. And at least think about dinner. And then I pop home during lunch almost every day, because I don't work far [away] at all. So I try to do a little more then. Life has changed definitely since working full-time, most definitely changed. But it's okay. I just don't have the time to clean. I don't have the time to do the things that, you know, to keep up on stuff like I used to. Just everything. (Angela, secretary)

Brooke expressed a similar sentiment and described her disappointment with her inability to cook for her family as she had done before working full-time:

Brooke: Sometimes I make dinner. I've always made dinner so good for my kids. We've always had a sit-down dinner. I've always done that for my family. So lately, this job, it just doesn't always happen. Too tired. Too busy. Everybody's off doing what they're doing and I don't always get it done. Once in a while, my girls will start dinner or make it. They're really good help.

Interviewer: How does that make you feel that you can't do that for them?

Brooke: Bothers me because I've always done it. I like to cook anyway. When my kids come up and say, 'Uh, are you making dinner or do we fend for ourselves today?' I feel kind of guilty because I never thought I'd do that, because we've always had sit-down dinners together.

Kimberly was blunt when asked about her family's division of household responsibilities once she began working:

Interviewer: So especially when you started working, how did you divide the housework?

Kimberly: Didn't.

Interviewer: What do you mean?

Kimberly: You put a day's work in at work, then come home and do it.

Interviewer: *You* do? Or you *both* do?

Kimberly: I do it.

Many women expressed frustration with having to do a "second shift" at home after a long day at work. Brooke explained how bothered she felt by having to meet both work and domestic demands:

My husband made a comment just this last weekend. He said, 'You do everything. You work, you do all the laundry, you come home, you cook meals, try to keep the house clean.' I go, 'Yeah, I'm sick of that. I'm sick of those things. It makes me feel tired.' But then when I come home my kitchen is upside-down, which drives me crazy, because it used to be all spotless. So on my day off I spend all my time picking up and doing the housework, and then I feel like I'm not getting anything done outside of housework. It's just work, work, work. (Brooke, Office Assistant)

Kendra similarly explained that although "times are different," she still takes on the bulk of the household responsibilities:

Kendra: As you can tell, usually I'm the one that ends up doing most of it [the housework], which is really hard and gets very demanding sometimes because it's like, it's not my stuff all the time everywhere....It's like, 'I need some help here!'....My husband, I don't know why, I think he's old school thinking that you

know, you got to work, you come home and your day is over. And that's really hard because times are different. That's when mom's stayed home all day, cleaned the house all day, had dinner on the table by five. Now it's like, okay, mom goes to work, she comes home, she tries to get everything in order....I have to tell him what needs to be done and that he needs to do it now because he just doesn't see the need, you know?....I mean periodically he'll notice something and he'll do it. But...

Interviewer: Do you ever have fights with him about that?

Kendra: Um, sometimes. Very rarely. I figure it's just easier to do it. (Craft Warehouse)

Caroline was very aware of the double burden placed on wives who work.

Consequently, and perhaps surprisingly, she held firm to a traditional gendered division of labor by refusing to take additional shifts at work in order to spare herself the double burden of domestic and work obligations:

I don't want to give him an excuse to not work....I've seen women that have their RN....They've got quite a few kids and occasionally their husband is not working or he has minimal jobs that aren't paying very much. They're the breadwinner and it is easier for the husband to just sit back and say that he is taking care of the family. But they're not, because they come and complain to me that...after a 12 hour shift [they] go home and fix dinner, get the kids ready for school, help them with their homework, wash their clothes and go to Cub Scout meeting and take them to [church activities]. And I don't know how the heck they do it. They shouldn't do it. But they continue to do it. And they look tired. It's not right. I just see it so much in the nursing profession, these men who marry nurses who think they could support them. (Caroline, Nurse)

Many women were willing to put up with an increase in the double burden because they felt it was only temporary. Isabel was able to work from her home and decided to increase the number of students she taught following her husband's job loss. When asked, when their financial situation improved would she cut back on the number of piano students she taught, she explained:

I'd probably cut back a little, because it just takes up all my time. Yeah, I know there's more hours than that in a day, but you've got to have time to cook and all the other things. (Isabel, Piano Teacher)

Sondra, our youngest subject who recently had her first child, also expressed some reluctance about being the breadwinner in her family permanently:

I feel okay about it for now. Later I would like to be able to, like when we have more kids, I'd like to be able to stay home with them. As soon as he gets a career, you know. But for now, as long as it's temporary, it's okay. (Sondra, Accounting)

Although most of the women interviewed explained that their husbands were actually quite helpful around the house with domestic responsibilities, most did admit that they were primarily responsible for the necessary and daily chores like cooking, child care, and general tidying. They described their husbands as kind to help upon request, but it was clear that the burden of domestic production remained essentially the women's job. Encumbered with greater financial responsibility during their spouse's unemployment spell, many of these women were exhausted, leading some to prefer the traditional gendered separation because it at least relieved them of being responsible for both domestic and market duties.

Recognizing the number of demands placed on women, Melanie commented that she felt women typically had more stress in their lives. Her argument illustrates the array of responsibilities that women perform and the consequence of bearing those burdens:

Interviewer: How would you say that women have more stress?

Melanie: Well, we have the children to worry about. And most women, not all women, but most women do take care of finances in the home and make sure the bills are paid. They have the cooking, the cleaning. A lot of them have outside jobs. And in general, I think women just worry more about everything. Making sure everybody is okay and, you know. So, that's the way I feel about it. I may be

wrong, but all the women in my life that I've watched, they have more things to do. More worries. (Melanie, Waitress and Child Care)

Melanie points out that many times women's tasks consist of more than simply household cooking and cleaning. Oftentimes women take care of family finances, a task that becomes even more stressful during times of economic strain like unemployment when income is severely restricted. These responsibilities, combined with the duty of caring for children and other family members, act as significant factors influencing women's perceptions of, and access to, employment opportunities.

It is important to point out that some of the force behind an unequal family division of labor was due to religious beliefs. Because religion influences individuals' notions of gender appropriate behavior for individual family members, religion has an important effect on the organization of family responsibilities (see Thornton 1985). The influence of religion on family organization and labor force participation is substantiated in the analysis of the interviews. Traditional and conservative religious ideologies tend to encourage a division of work and family labor based on sex – promoting women's responsibility for the home and family and men's responsibility for breadwinning. Although the LDS church continues to encourage this traditional division of labor, in recent years LDS leaders have publicly recognized the need for some families to alter this division of responsibilities due to economic hardship.

The women interviewed appear to be extremely cognizant of the need for an "exception to the rule." Most of the women explained that ideally they thought women should be home with their children. Nonetheless, they were frequently quick to add that difficult circumstances legitimated transgressing the prescribed division of labor. By

qualifying themselves as an exception to the rule, many of the women described their employment as justified.

Ironically, Caroline, the most educated woman interviewed who was currently employed, refused to increase her labor force participation despite her husband's long term unemployment. Although her need to care for a handicapped child factored into her decision somewhat, she feared that her spouse would not be motivated to find work if she increased to full-time status. She explained that her support of a traditional division of labor was the result of her religious ideology:

Caroline: He [her husband] probably would have liked me to pick up extra shifts. I didn't think much of that. I don't think that's good.

Interviewer: How come?

Caroline: Oh, cuz maybe he wouldn't look for work.

Interviewer: So it kind of sounds like you really didn't want to be the main breadwinner?

Caroline: Um-hmm [yes]. Shouldn't be.

Interviewer: Why do you think that shouldn't be?

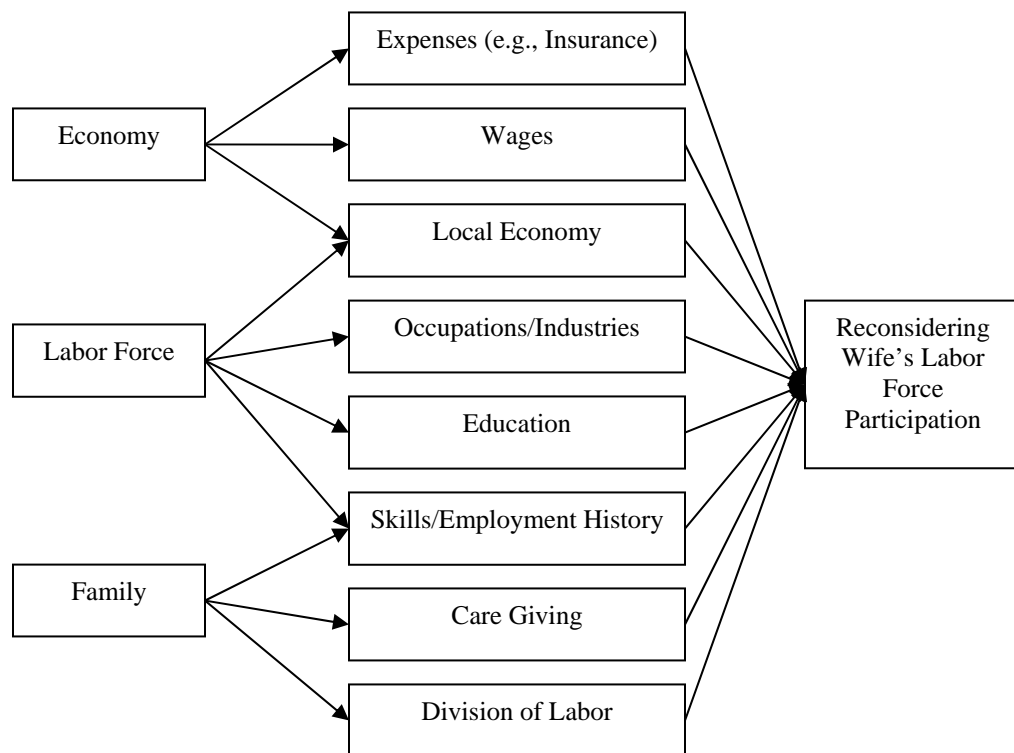
Caroline: Uh, cuz we're LDS for one thing. That's how it should be. I certainly could support a family. Very easily. I just don't feel good about that. (Nurse)

As described above, these women gave many reasons for their decisions regarding their labor force participation. Careful analysis of the women's responses reveals a set of eight major factors that constrain women's responses: 1) the need for adequate health insurance and expenses associated with employment, 2) low wages, 3) a sluggish local economy, 4) limited access to quality work, 5) a lack of education and 6) marketable work related skills, 7) the responsibility for care giving, and 8) an unequal division of

domestic tasks. Each of these factors influenced women’s decisions regarding labor force participation. Figure 2 summarizes the relationship between the economic, labor force, and family factors and women’s labor force participation.

Although each factor was an important condition to spousal employment response, rarely did the women talk about any one factor as sufficient in determining their labor force participation. Instead, the women described a combination of related factors, each of which is influenced by family composition, spousal employment status, and other household characteristics. Diagramming the relationships among the factors illustrates the notion that a complex weaving of factors and circumstances shape each woman’s decision regarding work.

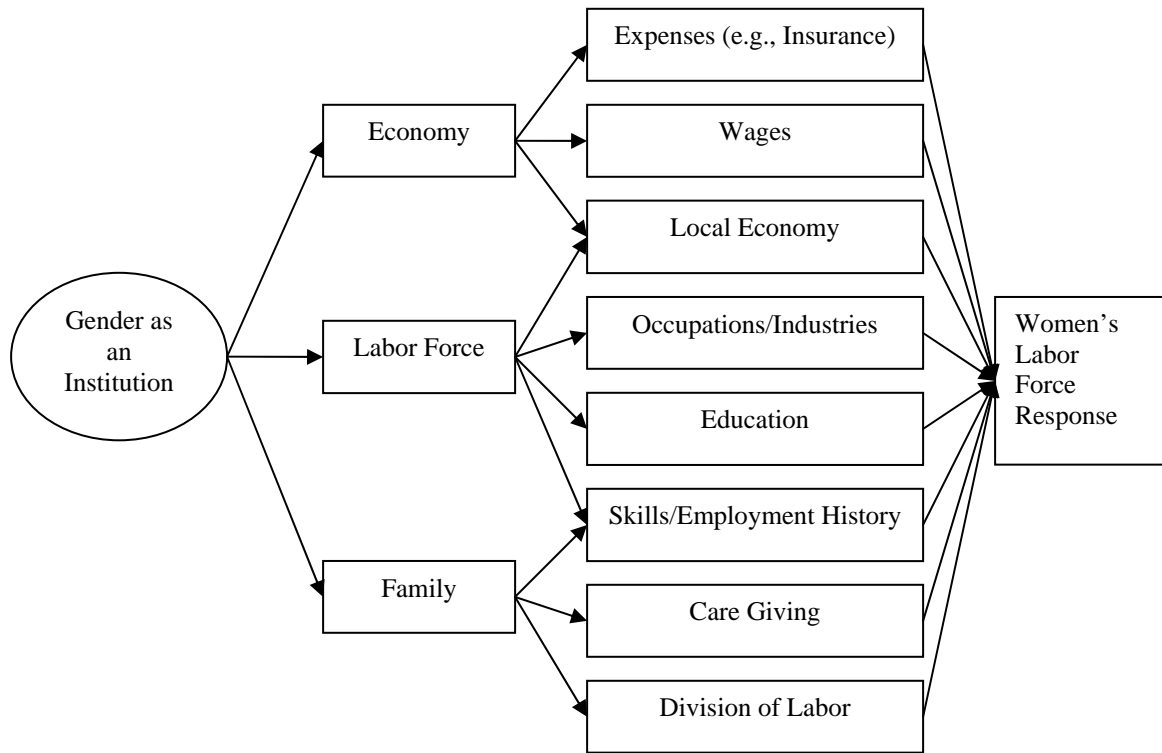
Figure 2. Factors that Influence Women’s Decision to Increase Labor Force Participation



The wide range of ages represented by the respondents might suggest that a generational effect was an important source of variation in responses among the women. The results of the analysis suggest that, although the younger women were slightly more likely than the older women to have more than 13 years of education, there were relatively few differences in their responses to spousal unemployment due to age. Women of all ages considered the eight previously mentioned factors following their spouse's job loss. Although their responses to these factors may have varied somewhat, the younger women did not appear to be more likely than the older women to have a career intended as their family's primary source of income. Despite the increased levels of education among the younger women it appeared that they still held a rather traditional division of labor. In addition, although the younger women were more likely to have small children in their homes, the older women also frequently expressed the need to be available for their grandchildren and other relatives – minimizing the differences between the older and younger women.

In the final stages of analyzing the data it became clear that each of the previously identified factors was largely affected by one primary institution: gender. Figure 3 illustrates the relationship between the central category of gender and the three sets of factors identified in the women's interviews. The relationship between gender and the economy, labor force, and family will be discussed in the following chapter.

Figure 3. The Influence of Gender on the Factors Shaping Labor Force Participation



CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION

The work of West and Zimmerman (1987) has had an especially profound impact on contemporary gender scholars who have come to accept the notion of “doing gender” as a basic part of everyday interaction (e.g., Lucal 1999). On a more macro level, a great deal of research also supports the notion that gender has a powerful affect on the economy (see Folbre 1994), the organization of the labor force (see Reskin and Roos 1990), and the family (see Coontz 1992). Although the consequences of gendered interaction are important, the effects of a gendered economy, labor force, and family are especially salient to women who are seeking paid employment opportunities. Gender does not only concern cognitive processes, but also creates very real structural constraints which limit individual practice. In my analysis of the interviews with women married to blue-collar men, I find that although the women offer many explanations for their employment decisions based on their everyday experiences with family and work, they rarely recognize the powerful effects of gender in shaping their worldview.

Strauss and Corbin (1998) offer an important insight into how people understand the world around them:

Humans the world over cannot avoid giving explanations for events and happenings. The desire for understanding is universal, although the explanations may differ by person, time, and place. Whereas some lay explanations draw on religious or magical beliefs, others are derived from practical experience or science. Explanatory schemes not only guide behavior but also provide some control and predictability over events. (p. 123)

When the women interviewed talk about their employment decisions they frequently describe their reasoning as based on practical, pragmatic considerations. Few women

mention gendered expectations (e.g., notions that they would be held accountable for not “doing gender” appropriately) as the source of explanation for their ideas on work and family. The fact that many of the women worked, in spite of their membership in a conservative religion, suggests that accountability to others may be less relevant to their decision-making. I do not mean to imply that the women did not consider how their actions might appear to others. Instead, it appears that because gender logics are built into larger institutions, explanations based on gender become less salient. The consequence is that what seem to be more “practical” considerations take precedence over gender explanations. Nonetheless, careful evaluation of their narratives suggests that gender is indeed an important factor that shapes women’s perceptions of employment. These results support the notion that gender rules, norms, and schemas – which influence how everyday things are done – are very much taken for granted.

Although Swidler, like the “doing gender” theorists, relies on the notion that individuals are held accountable for following appropriate cultural codes, other parts of her approach may be more useful for understanding the powerful effect of established schemas, rules, and scripts on individual action. In Swidler’s analysis she conceptualizes culture as a system which produces repertoires, or “toolkits,” of possible actions from which individuals draw to explain their world (2001:25). This idea also coincides well with the work of new institutionalists who argue that taken-for-granted scripts, rules, and classifications constrain choice by narrowing the search for solutions to everyday problems.

When the primary breadwinner of a family becomes unemployed both partners’ notions of gender play into the process of choosing how to cope with the job loss and

decline in income. From an economic perspective, it shouldn't matter *who* provides the income as long as the economic needs of the family are being met. But it appears that even in instances where a woman is already involved in the labor force, because the breadwinner-homemaker ideal is so culturally powerful, and the husband's job as provider is so taken-for-granted, both a husband and wife may either work hard to preserve established arrangements or they may simply be unable to alter their situation.

The notion that "gender trumps money" is evident in work on household division of labor (see Bittman et. al. 2003). Research on this topic has shown that among couples where the wife earns more than the husband, they appear to compensate for their "deviance" from the normative standard with a more traditional division of household labor (Bittman et. al. 2003; Brines 1994; Hochschild 1989). Becker and Moen have found that even among couples who espouse egalitarian gender ideologies, "in practice" the strategies they employed to limit the encroachment of work on family life "often led to traditionally gendered roles for men and women" (1999:999).

Similarly, I posit that male unemployment is an important case of deviance from traditional gender practices which reinforce men's position in the market and women's position in the home. When male occupational displacement occurs, families make decisions regarding appropriate coping strategies. The solutions that men and women generate in this situation are influenced by powerful gender schemas. Although a woman may not feel accountable to others for maintaining a gendered division of labor, she may be reluctant to cope with loss of income by increasing her labor force participation because such an action does not coincide with the cultural schemas she draws upon. Furthermore, a woman's reluctance to increase her labor force participation may also be

the result of *real* barriers like a lack of qualifications, formal education, and previous work experience – constraints bolstered by a gendered economy, labor force, and family responsibilities. Poor employment conditions merely compound the constraints women face, making her participation in market work even less appealing. Thus, gendered meanings (i.e. schemas) and practices (i.e. gendered work) both exist as equally powerful barriers to women’s employment participation.

The women interviewed did not intellectualize their responses to influences like the economy, labor force, and family. Instead, they appeared to refer to a world-view to navigate through their circumstances. Although some women critiqued their situation and acknowledged the power of the gendered system, most of the women appeared to be drawing upon schemas that are taken for granted. Their reliance on these “given” schemas is most evident in their responses to questions concerning the reasons for their household division of responsibilities. In response to inquiries about why they divided tasks the way they did many women responded with explanations like, “its just always been this way.”

For example, Melanie explains that she and her husband just kind of “fell into” their responsibilities:

We both kind of fell into what we each do. And there’s times when I will pick up something that he normally does when he’s really busy, or he’ll do the same for me. Once in a while he’ll do the dishes if I’m too busy to do them. Once in a while I’ll go out to feed the animals if he can’t do them. It’s just something we fell into. (Melanie, Waitress and Child Care)

Melanie went on to describe how men are supposed to take care of their families. Her response is especially interesting because she also describes how men and women just do what they “have to do,” almost without thinking:

Melanie: A lot of times if he's sick he'll go to work. That wasn't too often.

Interviewer: Do you think that's pretty common for men?

Melanie: Yeah, I do. I realized, and I think that more when he got laid off last year, because a man is supposed to take care of his family. And um, when they're not doing that, it's hard on them. I think it's hard on them emotionally. They're not doing what they feel like they should be doing. And it comes back to going to work when they're still sick. They're responsible to take care of their families, so they do. They do it even when they're not feeling well.

Kayla argued that she and her husband divided things the way they did because that was what they had been taught:

My mother didn't really, you know, she worked a little bit. Different times, whenever my dad would get laid off, then she would go to work, you know. But other than that, she was a stay at home mom and then as we got older she worked, you know. Just to get ahead and stuff. I just thought that I would do the same thing I'd been taught....We still do the same. I'm from a different generation than the young girls. And I still feel that my job is the home and the meals. And my husband has a farm and so my husband, he's always busy. Always....He'll throw on meat or something like that for supper. He's real helpful like that, but I would never put a list up for him to do, you know? I think that the new generation is more like that, you know, 'I work you work.' And I know that my girls do that. They'll come home and my son in law will come home and she hasn't fixed supper and she goes, 'If you want something, fix it.' My generation just didn't do that, you know? (Kayla, Waitress)

Margaret, a homemaker, also agreed that there were definite generational differences that influenced the way she and her husband did things. Although she admits that her husband was raised learning a strict gendered division of labor, she explains that her husband helps a lot and that they do not divide tasks. Yet, she eventually concedes to doing much of the housework – supporting the notion that a gendered division of labor was taken for granted:

Margaret: That's probably how he was brought up. That generation, very much so. Even though, even though, I have to give [my husband] credit in the respect that even though he was brought up with the idea that men were men and women

were women, he was always, that he always [was] the one that rolled up his shirt sleeve and pitched in for what needed to be done around the house. When the kids needed to be changed, he never, “the baby needs to be changed.” He just did it. You know, he just pitched in and did whatever. And even now, I’m injured. I’m not real well. He does a lot....And he’s always been that way.

Interviewer: So as far as the housework, how exactly did you say that you divide that up?

Margaret: Nothing’s divided up. Nothing’s divided up....We just had the carpet cleaned so he’s the one that took everything out and put everything back....But I still do the dishes and the laundry and see that the kids are taken care of. Fix meals, and take care of meals and see that things are organized that way. But if walls need to be washed or any extra scrubbing or anything like that, [my husband] always does that. But it can fall on me. It kind of depends on his hours. (Homemaker)

The idea that individuals reproduce behaviors that they see and learn appeared to be widely held among the women. Women with male children at home seemed to be especially concerned that their sons would see their fathers unemployed and fail to learn that men are “supposed to be working.” Caroline, who openly refused to increase her employment to full-time status, was especially concerned about her 21 year old son who was still living at home:

I have another son that is 21 and he’s never seen his father, other than when he worked at Geneva, you know, go off to work everyday and come back. And I don’t think, maybe to me that always bothered me that, you know, daddies are supposed to go off and go to work. And I don’t know if that influenced our son or if he got the wrong message that daddy’s stayed home....He’s had a hard time trying to find a job. And he’s getting married and we’ve had that conversation that [his fiancé] is not supposed to be the breadwinner. ‘You’re supposed to be the breadwinner.’ Cuz he’s never really seen his dad [work], other than when he worked in the six years at Geneva. (Caroline, Nurse)

Isabel also expressed that having her husband working might give her adolescent sons a greater incentive to work also. In the following passage she describes how the layoff has affected her children:

Yeah, I think it's taking a toll on them. I'm sure that they worry about it. They know we don't have a lot coming in. They're old enough now they can start getting a community job. Cross our fingers for that to happen...It's different having your dad home all day long. Of course, he's doing his thing and you're doing your thing. I think maybe they would do more if he was out working. Maybe it gives them the incentive to get going. (Isabel, Piano Teacher)

The women's frequent use of expressions like, "I've just always felt that way" and "that's just how I was raised" support the notion that gender schema are very much taken for granted. One of the consequences of taken-for-grantedness is that alternatives become unimaginable, allowing the status quo to persist. In Crittenden's (2001) analysis of motherhood she described how surprised she was to find a reluctance of mothers to speak out on their own behalf. She explains that "many mothers don't even seem to believe that they deserve a fairer deal than they are getting," and concludes that, "mothers are the true silent majority; too silent and too polite to become a cause" (Crittenden 2001:250-55). Crittenden argues that many women see their situations as their choice – a choice they made and must deal with the consequences for – a notion similarly expressed among the women in this analysis.

Cornwall and King (2004) argue that despite the durability of gendered practices, understanding gender as an institution does allow for potential change. But change requires innovation and diffusion of ideas (see also Clemens and Cook 1999). Because working-class women, with limited participation and influence in the labor force, may not have access to large networks, the diffusion of alternative options may not occur quickly. Plus, class isolation and a lack of resources may prevent women married to blue-collar men from mobilizing to create change. Consequently, and despite the fact that many women recognize the barriers that prevent them from ameliorating their family's loss of

income, these women rely on a traditional work and family gender order when making decisions regarding employment participation.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS

Although parsimonious statistical models have been able to demonstrate the lack of a significant increase in the labor force participation of women married to unemployed blue-collar workers, reasons for these results have only been conjectured. I contend that this is because neoclassical and rational assumptions about the nature of families and labor supply can only take us so far without considering the powerful effects of gender. Nevertheless, gender theories cannot be a sufficient source of explanation if they also fail to address the more macro, structural processes that constrain individual choice. By using grounded theory, as opposed to imposing a particular theoretical explanation on the data collected, I conclude that considering both micro and macro levels of analysis is required for accurately understanding the choices working-class women make.

The results of this analysis suggest that one aspect of women's strategies for maneuvering through the complex situation of spousal job loss is to relying on taken-for-granted assumptions about gender, family, and work. Equally important in women's decision-making process are the effects of a gendered economy, labor force, and division of labor – each of which creates very real structures of constraint. Much of these constraints are the result of inequality in the distribution of rewards and costs. While feminist economists have brought attention to elevating the worth of domestic production, less attention has been paid to the complex ways in which working-class women help reduce costs at home by clipping coupons, finding the cheapest prescriptions, and devising strategies to make food last longer. In the context of spousal unemployment, systems of inequality that reward the work of men and women differently

create situations in which working-class women find it difficult to sufficiently aid in the financial relief of their families through market work.

In the gender literature many scholars argue that men and women are held accountable for the reproduction of gendered behavior in interactions. Others argue that gender codes exist promoting normative standards by which individuals are judged. According to this logic, individuals are aware of gendered expectations and choose to comply, or not to. Either way, individuals are held accountable for the consequences of failing to comply with the established gender order.

Gender institutionalists, on the other hand, argue that gender logics – the form of both meanings and practices – are taken for granted. According to this paradigm people act based on assumptions they consider to be “givens.” Women’s responses to spousal unemployment appear to be a prime example of how gender logics influence what choices one considers optimal. Although working-class women are very much aware of the economic and labor force conditions that shape their decisions regarding employment, they very seldom acknowledge the powerful effects of gender which shape both their ideas and their choices. The women considered in this analysis do not appear to be worried about being judged so much as asserting that things are the way they are because that is how they have always been. The ultimate result is that although working-class women may be aware of the structural barriers that prevent them from securing sufficient employment, they may not work to challenge the system, but accept the system as is.

Recognizing that individuals, work, wages, the economy, labor force, and families are all influenced by gender logics allows us to better understand why it is that

women are often unable to significantly alter the effects of a spouse's job loss by increasing their labor force participation. Gender logics influence the kinds of work women choose to do and their level of participation in the workplace. Although a great deal of research has been generated that highlights the disparities between men and women in their wages and the kinds of work that they do, work and occupations scholars tend to ignore the dynamics of the home in their analyses. Because occupations are gendered, employment opportunities are limited for both men and women. The consequences are particularly substantial for women who consistently face lower wages and limited advancement opportunities. Gendered domestic responsibilities and a division of labor foster additional constraints.

Future research should be aimed at creating and evaluating policies that help ameliorate the burdens of unemployment on families. The results of this analysis suggest the need for public policies intended to reduce the costs of motherhood. Working-class women, particularly those who work part-time, need access to benefits like affordable health insurance. Although individuals affected by forced unemployment can gain access to retraining and education programs that facilitate their reentry into the workforce, women who have been out of the labor force raising children are not offered such benefits, limiting their access to sustainable employment. In addition, setting standards that require living wages for workers would benefit all working-class individuals but especially women who tend to be concentrated in low-wage employment.

With an unstable economy and a prolonged loss of manufacturing jobs individuals will continue to face job loss. Families will be responsible for finding solutions. As husbands and wives sit down together to devise strategies, gender logics will be a part of

the process. Understanding how institutions work together to influence and perpetuate each other will allow us to comprehend and potentially overcome the barriers working-class families, and particularly women, face on their road to economic recovery from unemployment.

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Appendix A
2000 Census Industry Categories

Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting
Mining
Construction
Manufacturing
Wholesale Trade
Retail Trade
Transportation and Warehousing
Utilities
Information and Communications
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate, and Rental and Leasing
Professional, Scientific, Management, Administrative, and Waste Management Services
Educational, Health and Social Services
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodations, and Food Services
Other Services (Except Public Administration)
Public Administration
Armed Forces

APPENDIX B
Geneva Wives Interview Guide

Introduction: Thank you for agreeing to meet with us (again). Confidentiality: Whatever you say will be completely confidential. Your name will never be associated with what you say. We are using numbers to keep your identity secure. Do you mind if we tape this conversation? No one will have access to the tapes except the people working on this project.

*Ask about HER expectations:

When you were growing up, say, in your early twenties or about the time you were married, and starting to think about your future, what did you think you would be doing at your age now?

What kind of life did you think you would lead?

Did you expect to work or go to school?

What kind of work have you done? (GET WORK HISTORY)

Do you like the work you do?

*Ask about HER feelings of her husbands work situation at Geneva Steel:

Tell us about your husband's job at Geneva.

Was it physically demanding for him? Any effects on his health?

What were some of the good and bad things about having him work at Geneva?

How did you feel about the lay off?

What were your biggest concerns?

*Ask how she feels the lay-off may have affected her family:

Financial changes/paying bills/making ends meet?

Effects on spending habits? On standard of living? Dreams deferred?

Addressing health needs?

*Ask about changes related to finding a new job or meeting family financial needs for BOTH of them:

What strategies are you currently using to meet your financial needs?

Changes in who is the breadwinner?

Did you consider working or working more?

Getting a new job?

Changing your career? Going to school?

*What have been the emotional effects on you and your husband since Geneva closed?

How did your husband deal with the lay off?

Did you notice any changes in your husband after the plant shut down?

Appetite? Sleeping habits?

Effects on Self-Esteem? Depression?

Bodies—effects on health?

Did you and your husband talk about how he was feeling and what he was going through?

What about YOU, how did you deal with the layoff, what changes did you experience?

*What kinds of things have you and your husband done to cope emotionally?

Entertainment, Hobbies, Exercise, Other

Is there anyone your husband talks to about his problems?

Who do you talk to about your problems?

Some people find that religion or God is helpful during times of stress. Do you belong to a church?

*Ask about the division of labor in her marriage.

How do you divide up the work in the house?

Who is responsible for what around the house?

Has this changed over the years?

Did the way you divide up household responsibilities change after your husband was laid off?

Housework? Finances/Bills?

Have there been any changes in how you make decisions as a family?

What is a typical day like now?

How have things changed at home or work? (at first and now)

For children? Do you think the lay off has had an effect on your children at all?

Use of time? Do you feel like you have more or less time now?

Compared to your parents?

*Ask about changes at home related to relationships:

Do you think the closing of the plant created more problems between husbands and wives?

Do you think more divorce has resulted?

How have the conflicts or arguments in your relationship changed since the layoff?

Is divorce something you have considered?

*Ask about other changes at home related to routines and relationships:

*Ask about how changes in work situation have affected treatment by others in the community:

Do you think that the laid off steel workers are treated differently?

Do you think your husband is treated differently?

Change in social status.

*Ask about any final thoughts about experiences related to the layoff:

What will happen now?

What advice would you give young women today about marriage and family?

What advice would you give them about employment?

If you could do things again, would you do anything differently? What?

Closing: "Thank you for your time. Would you mind if we return sometime to make sure we have gotten your comments and story correct and to see how you're doing?"

APPENDIX C

Main Categories for Coding Geneva Wives Interviews

Aspirations	New Job Qualities
	-Wages
Personal History	-Insurance
	-Working Conditions
Work History	
-Wife's	Place Attachment
-Husband's	
Women's Employment	Affirmation of Skills/Worth
	-Personal
	-Of the Industry
Wife's Work Experience	
-Job Hunting/Barriers	Perceived Reputation/Image
-Job Satisfaction	-Of Self
-Hours/Schedule	-Of Geneva
-Work Conditions	
-Daily Routine	Financial Matters/Concerns
Geneva Experience	
-Job Satisfaction/Feelings	Medical Insurance
-Working Conditions/Health Effects	
-Shift work	Physical Health
	-Wife
	-Husband
	-Dependent(s)
Retirement	
	Family Composition
Response(s) to Lay-off	
-Feelings	Locus of Control
-Unemployment	
-Welfare	Mental/Emotional Health
-Retraining	-Wife
-Lifestyle Changes/Spending	-Husband
-Job-Hunting	
-Preparation for Lay-off	Coping Strategies
Economy	-Play/Hobbies
	-Work
Qualifications	-Counseling
-Education	-Professional/Religious
-Experience/Skills	-Religion
	-Medications/Substances
Age	-Service/Volunteering
-Age-ism	

Sources of (Non)/Support

- Family
- Friends
- Church

Gender Roles/Expectations

- Division of Family Labor
- Expressiveness/Outlook
- Masculinity Scale
- Perceived Differences

Generational Comparisons

- Lifestyle Differences
- Gender Role Differences
- SES (Changes)

Shadow Economy

Co-Workers

- On Job Relations
- Current Status
 - Employment
 - Finances
 - Health
 - Outlook
 - Families

Family Relations

- Marital
- With Children
- With Parents, etc.

Reasons for Shut-down

Geneva's Obligations to Workers

Community Impacts

Plant Folklore

Government Role

Political Views/Changes

Future

- Of Geneva
- Personal
- Would you go back?

Outlook

Received Wisdom

- Career/Education
- Family
- Marriage

Do different?

Union

Geneva History

Relatives at Geneva

Labor-Management

Perceptions of Local Culture/Of Social Order