



For Richer or Poorer

By Harriet Pappenheim
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Introduction

Breadwinning wives account for more than 35 percent of married working women, a number that's growing every day. Yet personal and societal attitudes have not kept pace with this dramatic evolution in the workplace. The clash between economic and everyday realities is wreaking havoc on marriages across the country, calling into question notions of power, equality, and even what it means to be a man or a woman. But very few people have talked openly about it—much less offered solutions to inevitable conflicts—until now.

For Richer or Poorer gives a blueprint to the pioneers who are reshaping expectations of marriage. Tackling conflicts that lie at the heart of marriages in which women bring home the bigger paycheck, experienced couples therapist Harriet Pappenheim and award-winning journalist Ginny Graves address such hot-button issues as housework, sex, financial decision-making, parenting, and the new role of

stay-at-home-dads, and present a portrait of couples struggling to restore support, desire, happiness, and a sense of partnership to marriages under pressure.

Questions for Discussion

1. To what extent does the evolutionary basis for men's "provider mentality" relate to the conflicted feelings some husbands have about wives who earn more than they do?
2. How do high-achieving women's feelings about their breadwinner status relate to their doing more of the housework than their husbands?
3. When the birth of a baby leads some women breadwinners to feel inadequate or overburdened as new mothers, why might they direct their resentment at their husbands?
4. How might an evolutionary desire to be protected and cared for affect women's attitudes about their role as family breadwinner?
5. Why do many women breadwinners have even greater expectations of equity in their marital relationships than other working women?
6. How would you characterize the challenges faced by stay-at-home-dads in today's society, and what accounts for our culture's inability to sanction the idea of men as caregivers?
7. How do stress and sexual desire come into conflict in homes in which women are the family breadwinners, and why might these conflicts differ from homes in which men earn more than their wives?
8. How does men's traditional fiscal dominance get complicated in families in which women earn more of the money?
9. "In women, money is often...closely tied to emotion." To what extent do you agree with this statement, and how does it compare to the ways men think about money?
10. How will the ten guidelines posed by the authors at the end of *For Richer or Poorer* enable female breadwinners to respond to the challenges they face on a day-to-day basis; and which of the guidelines do you think will be the most difficult to follow and why?

About the Authors

Harriet Pappenheim, L.C.S.W., has been in private practice since 1973. She is on the faculties of the Psychoanalytic Institute of the Postgraduate Center for Mental Health and the Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy Study Center, and lectures frequently on a range of couples' therapy issues. She lives with her husband in New York City.

Ginny Graves has been writing about women's issues for fifteen years. Her award-winning work has appeared in dozens of national magazines, including *Elle*, *Reader's Digest*, *Outside*, *Self*, *Parents*, and *Fitness*. She lives with her husband and two sons in Fairfax, California.