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Theorising love, work and family in early Norwegian family research and today

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When the Norwegian sociologist Erik Grønseth wrote about love, family and sexuality in the 1950s and onwards, they were not obvious topics for a sociologist to cover, even though William Goode published a paper on the theoretical importance of love in 1959. Goode's point of departure was on love as a potentially disruptive social force and the social mechanisms used to control it. For decades, love and personal relations remained a somewhat awkward question within mainstream sociology, in spite of their importance in feminist theory from the 1970s onwards. Following the works of Giddens (1991, 1993) and Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995) from the early 1990s onwards, however, love and personal relations entered mainstream sociology and were placed at the center of grand theories of social change (see also Chapter 2, this volume).

In this chapter, I will present three Norwegian contributions to the theorization of love, work, and family, spanning half a century, from the 1950s to the present day. Why discuss past theories of love? Yesterday's theories are often dismissed in an offhand fashion, as a simple pretext to claiming the superiority of a more recent perspective, and arguments against earlier theories often rely on flattened and distorted versions. Riley (1983), for instance, shows how feminists dismissed John Bowlby's theory of maternal deprivation as an attack on women's autonomy, based partly on a misrepresentation of the theory and partly on its political use. I think becoming involved in a more empathetic way with past theories may enrich present theories. The major argument is not that past theories are necessarily directly relevant in the present day, although their relevance should not be excluded. The most important argument is that contemporary knowledge and theories inadvertently rest on, and are constructed in relation to, past knowledge and theories. Further, due to the ways in which scientific knowledge, concepts and theories circulate and are taken up in everyday knowledge and policy-making, older knowledge may form layers in contemporary social practices, language and understandings and become part of the present social reality. Finally, knowledge of the past may help to correct a certain myopia in present-day research and theorization on love, personal relations, and the family. Although they were "discovered" rather late in mainstream sociology, love and personal relations have been a part of sociology from the beginning. In Norway, Eilert Sundt's studies on marriage (Sundt 1855), courting behavior and extra-marital sexual practices among the lower classes in the mid-1800s marked the beginning of Norwegian sociology – a century before sociology was established as a discipline in Norway.

In addition to paying attention to past time, it is also important to consider space, as all theorization takes place in a particular social setting. The Nordic countries institutionalized an egalitarian, partnership-based model of marriage during the first decades of the twentieth century, half a century before similar reforms were implemented in many other European countries (Melby et al. 2006). In the latter part of the century, the active role of the state in the promotion of a dual earner/dual carer model through the welfare state is generally acknowledged.

Theories from this part of the world may therefore be of particular interest beyond their national context.

The three Norwegian contributions to the theorization of love, presented and discussed in this chapter, are Erik Grønseth's critique of the gender-complementary model of breadwinning and care ([1956] 1973, 1970), Hanne Haavind's theory of love and power in marriage ([1982] 1984), and Helene Aarseth's (2007, 2008b) theorization of how a sample of highly-educated, egalitarian couples succeeded in constructing new meaning around a re-romanticized domestic sphere. I will situate each of these contributions within their historical contexts, and discuss their connection to the international field, as well as in relation to each other.

Prelude: Vilhelm Aubert: Love as a *Real Force in the World*

Although love was not a main topic in sociology at the time, Grønseth was not alone among the early Norwegian sociologists in addressing the concept of love. Another early attempt to address the topic of love by one of the founding fathers of Norwegian sociology can be found. In his essay "A note on love" in the classic *The Hidden Society* (1965), Vilhelm Aubert set out to explore love as it appears in fiction and its relation to institutional and public events relating to marriage and family life, arguing that love as it appears in literature should be taken seriously regardless of whether or not it depicts reality, as one of the functions of literature has been to create a "culture of love." In his essay, Aubert wanted to explore the relationship between this culture of love and the social institutions of love, arguing that:

Much of what appears incomprehensible or irrational about modern family institutions can possibly be made more understandable if we assume that the literary and the private conception of love depict *a real force in the world*. (1965: 203; my emphasis)

Aubert further pointed out that:

In our cultural conception of give and take in love, there is a considerable asymmetry between the sexes. The man is permitted to take more than the woman, and the woman is supposed to give more than the man. This cluster of shared assumptions is intimately related to the institutional solutions on the borderline between family, work, and general social roles. (1965: 223)

Interestingly, Aubert stated this asymmetry between the sexes within the loving relationship itself and its relation to wider social structures as a simple matter of fact. He went on to acknowledge that it was difficult to measure the exact amount of what was exchanged in a loving relationship. Nevertheless, by suggesting that love should be analyzed as a *real force in the world* and pointing out the asymmetrical nature of the give and take between men and women within heterosexual loving relationships and its relation to institutional arrangements relating to family, work and general social roles, Aubert anticipated what later became a core element of feminist analysis. However, rather than elaborating on how the inequality of the exchange in a loving relationship could be linked to social and power relations between men and women, Aubert in his essay left the topic "without much sense of completion" (1965: 235).

Almost 20 years later, the idea of the asymmetrical exchange of love by men and women was developed by Hanne Haavind ([1982] 1984), as well as in international feminist scholarship, with Anna Jónasdóttir's (1991) theory of the exploitation of women's love power within heterosexual relationships. Ann Ferguson (1989, 1991) similarly argued that the "sex/affective" work of mothering and wifely nurturing is exploitative of women.

Erik Grønseth: Love Distorted by the Male Breadwinner Model

Erik Grønseth was the first Norwegian sociologist to theorize the relations between work, family and gender relations. Drawing on the ideas of Wilhelm Reich and those of the Norwegian feminist Margarete Bonnevie, Grønseth ([1956] 1973, 1970), presented a critique of the work of Parsons. According to Parsons and Bales (1955), the nuclear family and the specialization of men and women in a complementary arrangement of breadwinning and care was a functional response to the demands of modern industrial societies, and a response which served the needs of society and individuals. It was this contemporary conceptualization of the modern and socially desirable family arrangement that Grønseth opposed ([1956] 1973) when he "turned Parsons upside down" (Berg et al. 1977). According to Grønseth, the male provider arrangement was detrimental to love; men's position as the sole breadwinner fostered patriarchal dominance in the family and women's dependency and subordination. According to the Bonnevie/Grønseth conceptualization, this arrangement of work and care inflicted relational and psychological damage on both men and women in terms of their capacities to love, and kept them from realizing their full potential as human beings. In line with Bonnevie (1932), who argued for married women's right to undertake paid work, Grønseth saw women's financial and personal autonomy as a prerequisite for authentic and fulfilling heterosexual loving relationships. Only when they meet as equals, unburdened by patterns of subordination and dependency resulting from the male breadwinner system, can men and women love as free and independent individuals. These were radical ideas in the 1950s, and discussions still arise about whether gender equality does not rather imply a threat to love. This latter idea, derived from the notion of gender complementarity as the basis of heterosexual attraction, is not often found though in the Scandinavian context .

Although he was arguing for liberating loving relationships from patterns of domination and subordination, Grønseth saw loving relationships as deeply entrenched in everyday family life and its duties. He argued for valuing care and unpaid work in the home and suggested that the state should take a greater responsibility for the cost of children's upbringing, suggesting reforms such as a work-sharing model in which men and women share breadwinning responsibilities as well as the unpaid caring work in the family,¹ in addition to an allowance for carers. On this issue, Grønseth disagreed with Bonnevie, who had argued for the minimalization, rationalization, and outsourcing of housework and for the institutionalization of childcare. Grønseth, on the contrary, was critical of a model that implied that both spouses would work full time and which involved the institutionalization of childcare.

Fathers' and mothers' equal participation in paid work does not solve the problems of economic discrimination of child rearing families, the economic bondage in marriage and the resulting repression of sexuality and love. ([1966] 1972: 181)

In addition to acknowledging the need to reallocate paid and unpaid work between both men and women, Grønseth claimed that children needed to develop close relationships with both their mother and their father. The argument for shared parental care also served as an argument for family care, and Grønseth was critical of the “emotionally submanned” daycare institutions that were increasingly becoming part of childhood ([1966] 1972: 12). In this way, he situated his ideas of love between men and women within a wider context, taking into consideration the qualitative and non-commodifiable aspects of care work in the family and the distinction between caring as a “labor of love” within intimate relationships and care as paid work. Grønseth developed his theory against the backdrop of the 1950s, which was the heyday of the housewife/male breadwinner arrangement, and on the brink of women’s educational and occupational revolution, the women’s movement and changing gender relations. With the Work-Sharing Couples project in the early 1970s, Grønseth’s ideas formed the basis of a gender equality experiment that resonated with the ideas of the women’s movement and second-wave feminist thought.

Grønseth took a basically materialist view of love and the conditions for love, seeing oppressive personal relations and patriarchal dominance within heterosexual couples’ relationships as the result of the male breadwinner model. Subsequently, oppressive personal relations could be undone by changing the arrangements of work and care: promoting paid work for women as well as men’s involvement in the unpaid work in the home. With regard to this understanding of the causal relation between the division of labor, gender inequality, and love – in that order – Grønseth agreed with other Nordic family researchers at the time. In contrast to their Anglo-Saxon counterparts, they used the sex role theory as a tool for change rather than as a way of legitimizing gendered patterns of work and care (Ellingsæter 2000), but Grønseth was the one who most explicitly focused on the implications for love. Grønseth also went further than those who saw women’s participation in the labor market as the main strategy of liberation. Grønseth argued for a reduction in men’s paid work. He did not see change as an automatic outcome of rearranging work and care, but emphasized personal agency, emotional work and activism, as well as the need for financial support for families, in the struggle for a life-enhancing and loving society (Sand 2006).

Grønseth’s idea of an essential, true form of love which is warped by social circumstances was shared by second-wave feminists in the 1970s such as Shulamith Firestone and Lee Comer, whom Stevi Jackson discusses in her contribution to this volume. Jackson criticizes the notion of some form of uncorrupted or “whole” emotion that is somehow warped by social forces, and suggests seeing love as a fully social product of its social context. One could draw a line from Grønseth and second-wave feminists’ idea of a “true” love to Giddens’ “pure relationship” and the concept of “confluent love” (1993), which Giddens suggests has replaced romantic love based on gender-based arrangements of work and care. Much like Grønseth hoped for, “Giddens sees greater structural equality as giving rise to greater possibilities for a more modern, positive and desirable kind of love” (Smart 2007: 63). There are differences, however, primarily in the way Grønseth saw love as entrenched in everyday life. In his conceptualization, love relies on the mutual sharing of life worlds and tasks in the private as well as the public sphere, including family work and breadwinner responsibilities.

Hanne Haavind: Love and Power in Marriage

Hanne Haavind's ([1982] 1984) theory of love and power in marriage is probably the most influential Norwegian contribution to the theory of love and gender relations (Halsaa 2008). Haavind's starting point was to see gender as a social relationship in which femininity and masculinity are defined in relation to each other and women's relative subordination and men's relative superiority within marriage are defined as part of the production of gendered subjectivities and identity formation. Within marriage men and women exchange confirmation of their gendered identities based on a hidden "marriage contract" with different standards and expectations as to what to feel, what to give and what to expect for "her" and for "him." While "her" relations to "him" are assumed to be more important to her than anything else, his relations to his work are more important than his relations to her. She has to take into consideration the implications of her actions for her husband, while he is free to pursue his own interests without taking responsibility for their effects on her. In this way, marriage empowers him and disempowers her. According to Haavind, the heterosexual loving relationship is based on the two partners in a couple exchanging unequal meanings about men and women, power, and the desirable distribution of love. The key problem is that what women desire in men is also what makes them complicit in their own subordination. By relating power to love and claiming that they constitute the two sides of marriage, Haavind attracted a lot of attention.

Haavind's theory has a great deal in common with the theory developed by Connell et al. (Carrigan et al. 1985, Connell 1995, Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). The way in which Haavind sees gender relations as the outcome of everyday practices and of the mutual confirmation of gendered subjectivities is similar to the way in which Connell et al. see gender relations as being shaped by the processes of identity formation. Haavind's concept of "positive masculinity" resembles Connell et al.'s concept of "hegemonic masculinity," while Haavind's "positive femininity" has its counterpart in Connell et al.'s "emphasized femininity." In pointing out the need for female subordination to be concealed in order not to violate prevailing egalitarian gender norms, Haavind's theory is, however, clearly contextualized within the Nordic context, where egalitarian gender relations and companionate marriage had at that time become the norm.

Anna Jónasdóttir, when developing her theory of contemporary western patriarchy and the exploitation of love power, referred to Haavind (Jónasdóttir 1991: 116), but her work is in many ways unlike Haavind's. Whereas Haavind's focus is on the meaning of gender and interactive confirmation of gender identities, Jónasdóttir's focus is on gendered social conditions, aiming at a theory of a certain form of society. Also, unlike Jónasdóttir's high level of abstraction, Haavind's theory was formulated in close connection to her own empirical work. The strong emphasis on everyday life represents a level of continuity in Norwegian research into love, work and family (Gullestad 1984; Andersen 2003; Oftung 2009). Addressing the work of Haavind and Jónasdóttir together does not do full justice to either of them, but as feminist theorists in the field of love and/as power they do have a great deal in common.

Both Haavind and Jónasdóttir's theories view love as a productive force, the outcome of which is both personal satisfaction and power relations. Seeing power as arising through everyday practices within relationships that are freely entered into leads one to think of Foucault. Jónasdóttir (1991: 223, 238) refers briefly to Foucault, and Bente Rosenbeck (2008), has

discussed Jónasdóttir's theory more exhaustively in relation to Foucault. I find it suitable to point out the Foucaultian connotations in relation to Haavind as well.

This way of seeing love as productive, simultaneously satisfying personal needs and desires and producing power relations, is different from seeing power as something abstract, absolute and external to the lives of the parties involved. Instead, in this conceptualization, the mutual pursuit of desire, happiness, and recognition within the heterosexual loving relationship ensures the fulfillment of personal needs, as well as relations of power. There is no conflict between feelings of love, individual desire and personal satisfaction *and* structural exploitation. The lovers may feel free and equal, but what is exchanged may still be unequal. This theory does not postulate that feelings of love are not *really* love, nor that "love" is only an ideological cover-up for relations of domination or a kind of false consciousness. In this conceptualization, love is a relational and dynamic concept. The theories of Haavind and Jónasdóttir provide a theoretical explanation for women's continued subordinate position in relatively advanced egalitarian societies like the Nordic countries. Seeing love as a productive force, Jónasdóttir's theory in particular does not exclude the possibility of men being empowering lovers too, or of women benefiting from empowering loving relationships (Karlsson 2008). This is less obvious in Haavind's theory.

In contrast to Haavind, who places the mutual confirmation of gender identities at the core of her theory, Jónasdóttir places at the centre of her theory not gender identity, but the existential human need to love and be loved, as pointed out by Gunnarson in her contribution to this volume. According to Gunnarsson, it is not because women are confirmed as women, but because it is the only way to satisfy the existential human need to be loved as a person and to access erotic ecstasy, that women (heterosexual women, one perhaps should add) put up with exploitative and disempowering loving relationships with men. Haavind's theory, in which the eroticization of gender differences and power is at the center of the theory, is less dynamic than Jónasdóttir's theory, although Haavind herself has studied and theorized changing gender relations, claiming that gender repertoires are changing and that new elements may be added and old ones discarded (1998, 2000, 2002, 2006).

Haavind developed her theory against the backdrop of the transformation of gender relations during the 1970s, asking: how can one explain the fact that gender inequality, as expressed in traditional patterns of work and care, seems to persist, despite formal equality, despite the decline in direct male oppression and despite the widespread perception that heterosexual relations are egalitarian? The traditional family model had now come to mean the once-modern family model of the 1950s. The sex-role theoretical framework had been discarded, and Hanne Haavind and other feminist academics had launched the concept of the oppression of women. This concept was a reaction to the mainstream trends in their disciplines, where gender analysis had remained optional (Haavind 2008). In contrast to others who sought for the causes of women's subordination in external factors, such as male oppression, capitalism, or in pre-existing norms and role expectations, Haavind placed the source of suppression inside women themselves and within their intimate relationships with men. Although Haavind's work is in many senses "sociological," despite her own disciplinary affiliation as a psychologist (and she would probably disagree with the following), one could see Haavind's contribution as (remotely) related to that of Nancy Chodorow and Dorothy Dinnerstein, who, a few years earlier, had also

theorized the gender arrangement as the outcome of a(nother) loving relationship, the mother-infant relationship. Despite the differences, there is a common assumption that the gender arrangement was produced in personal and loving relations.

Helene Aarseth: *Re-eroticization of Home-making through De-gendered Projects in the Home*

Based on a study of highly educated, two-career, egalitarian Norwegian couples, Helene Aarseth (2007, 2008b, 2009) concluded that these couples have invented new connections between work, desire and meaning in family life. Within the couples in her study, men and women converged in the common project of being couples and parents, developing everyday practices that transcend gender dichotomies, in the context of a re-romanticized domestic sphere. The key to their success is a strategy of concerted self-development, in which common (as well as individual) de-gendered projects in the home and task-sharing based on individual desire are key factors. Everyday family practices become part of the making of the self, based on a decoupling from gender in combination with the revitalization of the romantic, expressive, and self-producing aspects of family work and childcare.

Aarseth points out that the success of these couples rests on some important prerequisites: they live in a cultural context in which the “double gender equality” project has high legitimacy and is grounded in discourses and social institutions outside the family. Both partners have demanding and fulfilling occupations, and see work as an important arena for self-realization, and the women are not be willing to take on the responsibility of primary home-makers. Both partners also have a high level of involvement in family life, and develop overlapping competences in the home. Due to their overlapping parental and home-based competences, the partners perceive themselves as interchangeable. This adds to the level of flexibility, as well as to the mutual recognition and generosity within the couple. A gender-neutral dynamic is the result, wherein parenting becomes a part of specific, class-related parenting practices, and also adds to the relationship. In an article on middle class parenting practices, Stefansen and Aarseth (2011) launched the concept of “enriching intimacy” for middle-class parenting practices, in which the fostering of personal growth and agency as well as class-related skills are deeply embedded in the emotional exchange between parents and children. I think this concept may be useful at the couple level as well: “enriching intimacy” between parents and children also becomes a part of the shared life of the couple, and contributes to enriching the couple level as well. Another important aspect of the re-enchanted domestic sphere revolves around the family home, in terms of renovation and building projects in the home/cabin/holiday house. The house becomes the physical manifestation of love as it is expressed in common lifestyle projects that involve literally building common dreams. Aarseth agrees that this new glue of passion is part of class-specific family practices, but she also interprets her findings as an indication of changing gender relations and a new willingness on the part of men to invest in the family. Her couples are seen as representative, not only of contemporary middle-class family practices, but also as pioneers of a new gender order.

Aarseth’s study took place in the context of the consolidation of the “dual gender equality project” in Norway. Rather than asking why we have not attained full gender equality, she aimed to understand how those who succeed actually do it. She distances herself from previous theories, such as Haavind’s, arguing that Haavind’s analysis depicted gender relations at a time

when women were still willing to take on the responsibility of being home-makers. The couples in her study, however, found a way to circumvent the old framework of task-sharing and justice (Aarseth 2008b). Rather than appealing to a sense of duty, they had achieved gender equality via the pleasure principle, so to speak (my phrasing).

In order to explain what happens in these couples, one needs a theory of intimacy. In developing such a theory, Aarseth draws on a wide range of theories and perspectives, among them Giddens' reflexive modernization, which she extends with Lash's concept of expressive reflexivity (1994) and Ricoeur's productive distance, as well as feminist elaborations of Bourdieu, such as Skeggs' class-related reflexive habitus (2004). Aarseth's work is part of the "cultural turn" in the sociology of family life (Smart 2007) and the new vista of research and theorizing that was opened up by David Morgan's concept of "family practices" (1996). As the passionate home-making projects undertaken by Aarseth's subjects illustrate, this cultural turn also implies a renewed interest in possessions, among them the family home (Smart 2007: 159). Aarseth's conclusions concur with the work of Eva Illouz (1997), who has studied love and romance as part of a modern, consumerist culture, drawing on data ranging from media representations to interviews with a mixed-class sample. Illouz observes: "For the more affluent, and educated [...] romance has been rationalized in that consumerist 'lifestyle choice' has become the basis of their relationship and social identity" (1997: 194).

Aarseth criticizes the "old" gender equality project, with its focus on equal task-sharing and justice, as well as theories that focus on dichotomies, hierarchies and power. Not only does she maintain that the struggle over the dishes is futile, and that the theories that focus on the reproduction of gender inequality are unable to explain change; Aarseth also has a pedagogical concern. Much in the same vein as I pointed out in the introduction, Aarseth argues that scientific concepts and analytical perspectives circulate and become part of people's conceptual frameworks and self-understanding in the process of reflexive modernization. As a consequence of this lay usage of scientific concepts, researchers should provide constructive models of thought that will facilitate change, rather than conflicting perspectives which will enhance gender-based conflict, and which may turn people away from gender equality.

Discussion

Grønseth belonged to the first wave of sociological theorization on love and gender equality, in a lineage spanning from Mary Wollstonecraft and Simone de Beauvoir to second-wave feminism. In this conceptualization, the causal chain is assumed to work from the outside in. "True love" is corrupted by social forces outside of the loving relationship itself, and may be set free by changing the social arrangements that corrupt it. Haavind belongs to a research tradition that drew attention to the power relations between men and women, and which seeks the causes of the current gender-based arrangement in the intra-psychic and relational domain. In her theory the causal chain was reversed; patterns of domination were produced within the loving relationship itself, and the inequality within couple relationships was believed to be the cause of gendered patterns in the labor market and society. Aarseth is representative of the cultural turn in family studies. In contrast to her predecessors, Aarseth does not try to explain the reproduction of the gender arrangement, but focuses on the transcendence of unequal gender patterns of work and care. Grønseth saw family life and work as basically conflictive; to him, the couple relationship was the main site of emotional fulfillment. Haavind also saw work and family as

conflictive, although, in Haavind's conceptualization, work is a source of personal fulfillment for men, but "his" success at work comes at the cost of "her" subordination. Aarseth, in contrast to both, identifies a mutually enriching dynamic between demanding and fulfilling jobs and an equally demanding but re-enchanted family sphere.

The three researchers' different perspectives on work must be seen in relation to changing perspectives on work in general, from early, Marxist-inspired perspectives, focusing on the lack of freedom, exploitation and alienation of paid work, towards a greater recognition of the intrinsic meaning, and even the love of and romantization, of work (Solbrække 2005). Aarseth represents a further shift in perspectives regarding the work-family dynamic, in contrast to previous conceptualizations that focused mainly on work-family conflict, negative work-family spillover and the drain on family life in relation, to a demanding, but also satisfying, work sphere (Hochschild 1997).

In spite of their differences, occupational symmetry emerges as a common assumption in egalitarian loving relationships and gender equality in all three theories. Grønseth saw occupational symmetry as a necessary prerequisite for authentic love to unfold. In Haavind's conceptualization, a lack of occupational symmetry and women's greater share of family responsibilities was the result of the power relations within the couple. Aarseth highlights family practices in occupationally symmetrical couples, in which love of self and love of common life projects contribute to enriching intimacy, thereby neutralizing gender. Occupational symmetry represents a continuum from Grønseth to Aarseth, although in Grønseth's theories, occupational symmetry is part of a corresponding symmetry in caring responsibilities and domestic work. Furthermore, Grønseth sees a symmetrical work-family arrangement as a tool with which to change gender relations in society at large, while for Aarseth, occupational symmetry is assumed to be a prerequisite for the re-enchantment of the domestic sphere.

Grønseth can also be said to have advocated similarity between the sexes by the harmonization of arrangements of work and care. Only when men and women become more similar through following similar life-courses can they meet and love as authentic people. Haavind, on the other hand, built her theory on the eroticization of the gender and power differences between men and women, while Aarseth can be seen as addressing the eroticization of (existing) similarities.

Both Grønseth and Aarseth advocate a re-energizing of the domestic sphere and emphasize the sharing of life worlds. In Grønseth's conceptualization, the re-allocation of paid work and domestic work and sharing tasks in the home on an equal basis were the tools for re-energizing the domestic sphere. In Aarseth's conceptualization, the double gender equality project is based on two full-time jobs and a common focus on the pleasurable aspects of the domestic sphere. She argues that claims of gender justice and equal task-sharing conflict with the self-developmental logic that sparks passion.

Within the work-sharing couples in Grønseth's experimental study in the 1970s, the equal sharing of paid work as well as of domestic tasks was an important part of their common life projects. Based on the follow-up study I conducted 30 years later (Bjørnholt 2009b), I would claim that the work-sharing arrangement also led to a re-energizing of family life and of the domestic sphere. In my view, the passionate sharing-project energized these couples' common

lives and became an important part of their common dreams and life narratives, and of their love projects. In the 1970s, justice, equality, collectivism, and anti-consumerism were on the agenda, and some people, like the work-sharing couples, embraced and acted on this ideal, thereby re-energizing their common lives as a couple. In this way, they had a great deal in common with Aarseth's couples, despite the differences in the content of their lifestyle projects. For the work-sharing couples, justice and the equal sharing of paid work as well as of the mundane tasks of everyday life were at the core of their life-projects, resonating with the great narratives, general trends, and ideologies of the 1970s. The common lifestyle projects of Aarseth's couples are of a more conspicuous kind, and take place within the contemporary consumerist and individualist culture.

We could see both the couples in the 1970s and Aarseth's contemporary couples as making meaning and constructing love projects that transcend gendered patterns of work and care by connecting to and weaving their lives and private life stories into the course of history, thereby drawing on the contemporary discourses and grand narratives of the time and the culture they live in. The changes in ideologies, theories and grand narratives of self and society in the time that has passed could explain why contemporary Nordic couples (Magnusson 2008) (and researchers) tend to see discussions about the sharing of domestic work and justice as a threat to the loving relationship, while the work-sharing couples (as well as the researchers) in the 1970s embraced the ideal of sharing tasks equally and saw it as a fully compatible and necessary part of a loving relationship.

In contrast to Grønseth and Haavind, Aarseth incorporates the issue of class. Her argument is developed in relation to a specific class segment, the highly-educated middle class, and her claim is thus that "pockets" or "life worlds" exist, within which gender patterns are transcended, but she also makes a more general claim about changing gender relations. One could ask whether and to what extent the observation of such pockets of egalitarian family practices should be seen as indicative of changing gender relations beyond their own class context. This middle-class bias was also present in Grønseth's experimental work-sharing couples project. After failing to recruit working-class participants from the beginning, the project eventually recruited a majority of middle-class couples (Grønseth 1975; Bjørnholt 2009b). Recently, the hegemony in policy-making model of a model of gender equality that bears the imprint of a class-specific ideal of gender equality has been criticized from class-based and postcolonial perspectives (Stefansen and Farstad 2010; Keskinen et al. 2009).

Today, the "true love corrupted by the male breadwinner model" perspective put forward by Grønseth and second-wave feminism has been theoretically surpassed. Nevertheless, the critique of the male breadwinner model and related ideas from early Norwegian family research may still be layered into contemporary Scandinavian family and gender-equality policies, as expressed in the strong emphasis on reforms designed to harmonize the life-courses of men and women as a major tool of gender equality policies. In the current pursuit of a "double full time" model, combined with the institutionalization of child-care, Grønseth's radical vision of a more loving and life-enhancing society based on a re-allocation of time to families has been largely lost. As Aarseth's study illustrates, however, a re-enchantment of the domestic sphere may also occur in combination with two full-time jobs.

In Norway, Aarseth has provided the most fully developed bid for a reconceptualization of the relationship between love, work, and family. In the critique of her predecessors, she is, however, not alone. Today, materialist feminist theories and the once-innovative concept of oppression, as well as the relationship between love and power, are generally dismissed as descriptions of a surpassed stage and unfit for studying contemporary gender relations.

Aarseth's most substantial critique of Haavind's theory is that, operating with domination-subordination as a general code, non-oppressive relations represent a deviation or a "mutation" that cannot be explained within the theory. Haavind herself, on the other hand, has discussed ongoing change in gender relations in a number of publications (1998, 2000, 2002, 2006). In an argument with Aarseth (Haavind 2008), she argues that her perspective on gender splitting and hierarchies does not imply a static view of gender relations, nor does it imply that she sees power relations as stable and absolute. I think a more fully-developed Foucaultian perspective of power would expand the explanatory power of Haavind's theory to better account for change as well as continuity in gender arrangements.

Conclusion

Having come to the end, I too will have to leave the topic "without much sense of completion" (Aubert 1965: 235), and with more questions than answers. Having pointed out the power of the common assumption of occupational symmetry and its relation to love over three generations of theories of love, work and family, while at the same time drawing attention to the class-specific connotations of this family model, an important question for further research and further discussion is whether occupational symmetry should be maintained as the main mechanism, prerequisite and/or the measure of "love" and gender equality.

A question of theoretical as well as empirical importance is that of whether perspectives that focus on the reproduction of inequality have been surpassed and rendered irrelevant to the study of contemporary family practices. The pressing, theoretical question is that of whether contemporary cultural theorizations of family practices are really superior to as well as theoretically incompatible with structural perspectives that focus on unequal patterns of gender and power. Is it possible to study family practices and personal life in hermeneutic and empathetic ways, while at the same time keeping a suspicious eye on power relations and the potentially unequal outcomes?

¹ During the first part of the 1970s, Erik Grønseth had the opportunity to try out the ideas in the experimental Work-Sharing Couples project, at the behest of Ola Rokkones, the founder and head of the Norwegian Family Council (Grønseth 1975). I carried out a follow-up study 30 years later (Bjørnholt 2009a, 2009b, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c, 2011, 2012; Bjørnholt and Regland Farstad 2012).

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