

ABSTRACT

Gerteisen, Jennifer Parks. When 'A Man' Becomes 'A Husband': Relationship Status and Transition and the Division of Household Labor. (Under the direction of Dr. Theodore N. Greenstein)

Data from both waves of the National Survey of Families and Households were used to examine differences between three relationship types in the division of household labor. Respondents were assigned to three groups: continuously married to the same partner ($n = 5,035$); continuously cohabiting with the same partner ($n = 125$); and transitional, from cohabiting to married, with the same partner ($n = 216$; total sample size = 5,376). The proportional contributions to hours spent on feminine (cooking, laundry, cleaning), masculine (outdoor tasks, auto repair), and neutral (running errands, paying bills) household tasks by male and female partners were examined for all relationship types. T-tests and OLS regression were used to determine differences between groups, and factors which impact proportional contributions at each wave of the survey. In addition, changes in contributions to each task type by male and female partners over time were examined in the context of group membership and other factors. Women in all groups contribute more to the feminine task hours than their male partners. When no controls are included, transitional males contribute significantly more than do continuously married men to the feminine task hours at both waves, and transitional women contribute significantly less than do continuously married women at the first wave. Transitional males decrease their contributions to feminine task hours between waves, and continuously married males increase their contributions to feminine task hours between waves. Transitional women increase their contributions to feminine task hours and continuously married women

decrease theirs between waves. When controls for age, gender, gender ideology, number of children in the household, income, and education are included, there is no longer a significant difference between transitional and continuously married males' contributions to feminine task hours at the second wave. Changes in proportional contributions to feminine task hours differ significantly between transitional and continuously married men, and between transitional and continuously married women. Also significantly impacting these changes, although the effects are small in magnitude, are gender, change in gender ideology between waves, and education. These results suggest that the shift from cohabitation to marriage does carry with it normative, gendered expectations about the allocation of housework. However, continuously married men increase, and continuously married women decrease, their contributions to feminine household tasks—a finding which is unexpected and suggests the possibility of separate mechanisms which operate in the context and over the course of marriage. A lack of consistent effects for comparisons involving the continuously cohabiting group indicates heterogeneity within this group, and a need for future research to more clearly delineate types of long-term cohabitators.

**When 'A Man' Becomes 'A Husband' :
Relationship Status and Transition
and the Division of Household Labor**

by

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BIOGRAPHY

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Introduction

Pre- and non-marital cohabitation in the United States and abroad is a rapidly changing phenomenon. More and more couples are choosing to live together outside the institution of marriage.¹ The number of couples cohabiting outside marriage at any given time may be relatively small. However, research has provided estimates of “ever cohabited” rates as high as 25-33% (Bumpass & Sweet 1989; Thornton 1988); more recent research indicates more than half of all unions formed at least begin as cohabiting ones (Bumpass & Lu 1999). This newly common household type represents new terrain for exploration by sociologists interested in gender and the family.

Since cohabitators share some characteristics of married couples, yet have not entered into the formalized, legal union of marriage, research on such couples and households may give us insight into broader family and gender processes. The present study focuses on gender and the division of labor in cohabiting as opposed to marriage relationships. In marked contrast to the major changes in the cohabitation trend over the past several decades, housework has largely remained unchanged, as “women’s work.” While decreasing gender traditionalism, the second wave of the Women’s Movement, and the Sexual Revolution have all arguably contributed to decreasing traditionalism of family and household *structure*, these same factors have had little impact on one of the things which must take place *inside* this structure: housework.

Most of the research on the gendered division of household labor has necessarily looked at married couple households; the population of unmarried couple households has simply not been large enough to sample and study with a large degree of methodological or

¹ For the purposes of this research, I have excluded lesbian and gay couples, because they rarely have the choice between marital and nonmarital cohabitation. I am interested in the comparison between married couples and cohabiting couples; this necessarily precludes inclusion of lesbian and gay couples.

statistical confidence. However, as noted above, this is changing. National, longitudinal research which captures this growing population is coming to fruition; with this development, it is becoming possible to study this phenomenon. The data for this research, for example, come from the National Survey of Families and Households, a longitudinal, multi-wave study which oversamples many groups of interest, including cohabitators. The first wave of the study was conducted in 1987-88, and the second wave in 1992-94; the third wave is currently underway.

The unique characteristics of this dataset provide researchers such as myself with an opportunity to explore recent trends, such as cohabitation, and to compare characteristics of cohabitators to those of married couples. I am interested, in particular, in whether the gendered division of household labor as we know it to exist in married couples is comparable to the division of household labor in cohabiting couples. Do the same processes work in both types of partnerships, and if so, do they work in the same way?

Background and Significance

I will begin by reviewing some literature which describes this relatively recent demographic trend. Next, I will provide an overview of research relevant to my focus which addresses the question "Who cohabits?" Following this individual-level review, I will examine research which looks at the dyadic, or couple, level of cohabiting relationships. After a brief review of theoretical and empirical literature which addresses the division of household labor generally, I will provide a more in-depth review of the literature which directly addresses my area of interest: the division of household labor in cohabiting unmarried partner households.

Trends in Cohabitation in the United States

There have been dramatic increases in cohabitation in the United States in a fairly short time period. Glick (1984) noted that “the number of households composed of an unmarried couple (i.e., of one man and one woman) surged by 331 percent between 1960 and 1983, with most of the increase occurring after 1970” (206). One caveat to note here is that census data historically have not explicitly delineated the relationship between the two persons; Glick’s conclusions are based on respondents’ reports of “living with an unrelated adult of the opposite sex” (209). While it is most likely that these relationships were in fact intimate in nature, Glick does not address other possibilities (e.g., platonic roommates). Again, this reinforces the point that this phenomenon is relatively new. Nearly 20 years later, the 2000 Census included an “unmarried partner” category to describe household members, and reports that 5.2% of all American households are so-called “unmarried partner households” (up from 3.5% in 1990), with almost 90% of these being opposite-sex partner households (Fields & Casper 2001).

The trend towards cohabitation is by no means solely an American phenomenon. In New Zealand, for example, 8.5% of the population (aged 15 or older) were cohabitants in 1996 (Elizabeth 2000). In Batalova and Cohen’s (2002) cross-national study, ever-cohabited rates ranged from a low of 3.3% in Japan to highs of 32.4% in Sweden, 32.1% in the Czech Republic, and 26.7% in Russia. Lindsay (1999) reports that in 1997, over 60% of Australian couples getting married had previously cohabited.

Static prevalence rates, however, can only tell us so much. Thornton’s (1988) study of cohabitation and marriage aimed to “provide a more dynamic view of the cohabitation and marriage experience” (498) than studies which focused on reporting prevalence alone. This study uses interviews conducted in 1985 with a 1961 birth cohort from a larger multi-

wave panel study of mothers and children in the Detroit area. Through these interviews, marriage and cohabitation histories were obtained from 932 young adults. While Thornton was able to obtain month-by-month data from the time the respondent was 15 until the time of the interview (age 23.5-24) and was therefore able to capture some of the dynamics involved, a drawback to this study is its examination of only one birth cohort. That said, Thornton did find that “the data show clearly that cohabitation without marriage has become a major feature of the life course” (506). He found that a third of his respondents had ever cohabited without marriage, that “one half of the women and two-thirds of the men who had ever entered into [any] union did so first through cohabitation without marriage” (506), and that over a third of the respondents who had married by the time of the interview had premaritally cohabited. Bumpass and Lu (1999) report that the proportion of first unions formed between 1990 and 1994 that started as cohabitation was nearly 60%, up from 46% for unions formed between 1980 and 1984. One important finding of Thornton’s study in terms of the dynamics of cohabiting relationships was that cohabitation tended to be a largely transitional state, usually ending—either by dissolution of the relationship or by marriage—within two years.

Another area of interest is the shape of the cohabitation trend. On a population level, Glick noted that “the cohabitation rate nearly quadrupled during the 1970s, but the increase slowed sharply after 1980, and the rate leveled off between 1982 and 1983” (211). More current analysis of national-level demographic data is needed to evaluate this projection, since as previously noted, unmarried-partner households increased 1.7% between 1990 and 2000 in the U.S. (Fields & Casper 2001). On a more individual level, Thornton points out that from a life-course perspective,

The fraction of people ever experiencing cohabitation increases rapidly and consistently over the life course...yet the fraction who are currently cohabiting increases only during the first few years and then levels off, whereas the fraction who are currently married increases steadily across the early years of the life course. (506)

Thornton, then, provides a valuable word of caution to those examining cross-sectional measures of current cohabitation rates; that is, it is necessary to consider such estimates in the context of the overall life course.

Bumpass and Sweet's 1989 "National Estimates of Cohabitation" is arguably one of the most cited works in the current literature on the topic. Using data from the 1987-1988 National Survey of Families and Households (hereafter: NSFH), they are able to examine in-depth, national data on cohabitation across cohorts. The authors found a then-current cohabitation rate of 4% (including persons aged 19-59) and an ever-cohabited rate of 25% (including persons aged 19-60+). Seventeen percent were reported to have cohabited prior to their first marriage, with the largest numbers doing so in the 25-29 and 30-34 age groups. Further, they found evidence to support Thornton's assertion that cohabitation is a transitional or short-lived state: "most cohabiting couples either marry or stop living together within a few years...the median duration of cohabitation is 1.3 years" (620-621). They also note that their data showed that more cohabiting couples married than separated (624).

Who Cohabits?

In attempting to discern what individual personal characteristics might be associated with a propensity to cohabit, it makes sense to examine family background variables. One's home life and family experiences certainly impact one's opportunities and choices later in

life. Booth and Amato (1994) examine parental influences on child behavior; in particular, they were interested in the effects of parental gender role nontraditionalism in various offspring outcomes. Using data from a twelve-year national, longitudinal study, the authors obtained data from 471 parents and their children (whose ages at the time of interview ranged from 19 to 40) on numerous variables. Gender role nontraditionalism was operationalized using three indicators: the number of hours wives work for pay outside the home, the amount of housework done by husbands, and gender role attitudes. Of interest to this review are two findings in particular. First is that "daughters from nontraditional homes were more likely than those from traditional homes to cohabit" (873).² Second, Booth and Amato found "a significant association between parents' and children's gender attitudes" (873). It would logically follow that nontraditional parents would be more open to and supportive of the nontraditional choices (i.e., cohabitation) of their children. In addition, if we consider the two findings in conjunction with one another, and the fact that one component of the nontraditionalism measure was husbands' contribution to housework, a possible implication is that young cohabitators from nontraditional families may share household tasks in a more egalitarian fashion. The fact that the authors found a significant effect for daughters' propensity to cohabit but not for sons points to a need for further research to examine this gender differential in greater depth.

Moving away from studies which attempt to pinpoint connections between union formation behaviors and factors relating to the family of origin, I will next review some of the literature which looks at characteristics of those who cohabit. There is a fair bit of variety on this topic, including studies on educational attainment, religiosity, economic well-

² Note that traditional and nontraditional here refer to attitudes and values, not necessarily to family structure.

being, political activism, and many more possible factors in individuals' union choices. I include here a sampling of those studies which have some relevance to my research.

Clarkberg, Stolzenberg, and Waite (1995) use National Longitudinal Study of the High School Class of 1972 (hereafter: NLS-72) data to examine what factors affect first union type³. The authors use Likert scale items relating to attitudes toward marriage, familial closeness, career success, monetary interests, leisure time, and sex roles. Using data on union formation and type as dependent variables, the authors "find support for the hypothesis that the choice between cohabitation and marriage is affected by attitudes and values toward work, family, leisure time-use, money, and sex roles, as well as attitudes towards marriage itself" (622-623). In terms of attitudes toward family, the authors find that marriage is more likely than cohabitation for persons who highly value familial closeness. Sex role liberalism is found to have a "fairly sizable effect...on the probability that the union is a cohabitation" for both men and women who form unions.

Clarkberg and colleagues conclude from their results that "young men and women both see marriage as constraining" (624), and that many young couples choose cohabitation over marriage because it "allows for flexibility and freedom from traditional gender-specific marital roles" (623). This conclusion seems to indicate that cohabitation should be seen as an alternative to marriage, while much of the research takes the perspective that cohabitation serves as a precursor to marriage.

³ The subjects of this study were high school seniors in 1972. Considering findings reported here, it is entirely possible—and perhaps likely—that there may be cohort-based differences between these study respondents and more recent cohorts which may affect factors related to cohabitation. However, large-scale and/or longitudinal data simply have not caught up with the speed of the rise in cohabitation. Until more contemporary data are available and can be studied, we must keep in mind the possibility that cohort effects are present but undetected in this earlier research.

The next article I address examines cohabitation in the context of political activism. Wilhelm (1988), using data on three cohorts born between 1943 and 1964, finds support for her hypothesis that "left-oriented activists and individuals with more liberal political orientations might represent cohort segments that are more likely to cohabit" (303). This finding, and the finding of cohort-based trends in cohabitation, is placed in a theoretical context which asserts that "lifecourse deviations [i.e., cohabitation] began disproportionately among activists and gradually diffused from the structural locations of activism into more mainstream society" (290). The implication, then, is that for more recent cohorts, the decision to cohabit is much less radical than for previous cohorts, an implication which is borne out by demographic trends. Considering these findings in the context of this review, they build support for hypotheses that cohabitators may have less traditional gender ideologies and may be more likely, as a result, to have a more egalitarian division of household labor.

Also supportive of such hypotheses is Cunningham and Antill's (1994) comparative study of married and cohabiting Australian couples. They found that cohabiting men who did not subsequently marry over the longitudinal study time frame scored significantly higher on a feminism scale, performed more "feminine" household tasks, and were more likely to cite "greater equality" as a benefit of cohabitation than were men who married after cohabiting. In addition, men who cohabited prior to marriage were more likely to perform "feminine" household tasks than married men who did not premaritally cohabit. Similarly, Kaufman (2000) finds that over 2 waves of the NSFH, single men who held egalitarian views were more likely to cohabit than their counterparts who held more traditional gender views.

Further support for the connection between nontraditional gender ideology and cohabitation is found in the research of Mitchell (2001). While she was investigating attitudes toward cohabitation (i.e., its acceptability), it can be logically argued that accepting attitudes toward cohabitation would be positively related to actual cohabitation. She found that gender role traditionalism had a significant, negative effect on the acceptance of cohabitation.

Moving from the ideological to the material, Clarkberg (1999) studies the role of economic well-being in the first union formation process. Clarkberg points to a body of research suggesting many couples may defer marriage because of economic constraints. For example, the "economic burden of creating and maintaining a new household...typically borne by the young couple independently," (948-949) may serve as an impediment to marriage. Further, a couple may evaluate their own economic potential in terms of their parents' standard of living, which may be a tough standard to live up to for a pair of young adults, not yet established in their careers. Therefore, Clarkberg argues, "while a young couple may technically be able to survive on a meager income, they may still feel that they lack the resources to become *married*" (949).

Using this reasoning, the author asserts that cohabitation (as a less institutionalized union) carries fewer expectations for suitable incomes or standards of living, and should therefore not be associated empirically with earnings. Using NLS-72 data, Clarkberg finds that unions overall are more likely to be formed among "those who are doing better economically" (957), but that the effect of earnings is much larger for marriage than cohabitation. Gender-based differences are found: "for men, high earnings are much more important for their transition to marriage than in their transition to cohabitation...[but] women with high earnings appear to be relatively more attracted to cohabitation than to

marriage" (956-957). Clarkberg points to household economics theories for an explanation of this difference: given that women are generally expected to specialize in household labor and men in wage-labor, "to preserve their earnings, high-wage women may be looking for another type of bargain—a union with less specialized rules and expectations" (957). This speculation is directly relevant to questions about the division of household labor, and will be addressed below.

Rindfuss and VandenHeuvel (1990), using NLS-72 data, examined cohabiting couples in comparison to both singles and married couples. While they did find that for all comparisons made (childbearing and marriage plans, employment and education, finances and independence), "cohabitators are consistently intermediate between those who are single and those who are married" (721), their most cited finding appears to be that when it comes to fertility expectations, non-family activities, and owning a home, cohabitators more resemble singles than married couples. In a similar vein, Elizabeth's (2001) research on Australian cohabiting couples exposes a propensity toward independent, as opposed to joint, money-management practices, which can be conceptualized as resembling "single" behavior.

Cohabiting Relationships

Moving away from research which provides descriptive information about characteristics of individuals who cohabit, I now review findings relating to the dyadic, couple level of cohabiting relationships. As cohabitation is becoming more and more prevalent as a precursor to marriage, and considering Wilhelm's (1988) assertion that it is a trend moving from the fringe to the mainstream of society, there is reason to believe that there are similarities between the two types of relationships. However, considering the research which has demonstrated differences between individuals who are cohabiting and

individuals who are married, there is also reason to suspect that there are differences between the two. At this point, it is useful to consider that there may be significantly different types of cohabiting relationships, such as that which is a precursor to or trial type of marriage, and that which is a purposive alternative to marriage.

For example, the findings of Cunningham and Antill (1994) indicate differences between couples who did and did not cohabit before marriage, but also between cohabiting couples who did or did not subsequently marry. Elizabeth's (2000) qualitative study examines cohabiting couples who are critical of conventional marriage. She finds that her participants resist the attribution of positive values to marriage, instead assigning positive values to cohabitation. They cast cohabitation as a type of relationship characterized by freedom and individualism, in contrast to marriage, which they characterize as a constraint and as obscuring individual identity. Contrary to assertions (e.g., Brines and Joyner 1999) that commitment is lower in cohabiting than in marital relationships, Elizabeth finds that her participants see themselves as *more* committed than spouses, "because their relationships are held together by choice alone and not through the constraining impact of societal sanctions, religious dogma, or state regulations" (98). Brines and Joyner (1999) suggest that cohabiting and marital relationships may operate on different bases, cohabitation being based on individualism and equality, and marriage being based on joint investment and exchange.

Turning the focus to cohabitation which serves as a precursor to marriage and/or a period for evaluation of a potential spouse brings us to a type of relationship which may indeed be characterized by more uncertainty and less commitment than either long-term cohabitation or marriage. Cohabitation is not an institutionalized relationship and does not inherently involve any sort of legal contract or obligation. Cohabiting unions, therefore, are

easier to dissolve. Indeed, as previously noted, Thornton (1988) found among his sample that cohabitation was a relatively short-lived state. As Brines and Joyner (1999) assert, "when couples choose to cohabit, the choice signals uncertainty and a short time horizon, prescribing a cautious approach to the relationship" (335). Marriage, however, is generally accompanied by expectations of permanence, commitment, and external social support and endorsement of the union. Consistent with this perspective is Sahib and Gu's (2002) finding that "individuals are more discriminating when forming marital unions than when forming cohabiting unions" (262). Similarly, Blackwell and Lichter (2000) argue on the basis of their analysis of census data that mate selection processes are qualitatively different for cohabiting couples than for married couples. Brown and Booth (1996), using NSFH data, found that while cohabiting relationships were characterized by poorer relationship quality (using measures of disagreement, fairness, happiness, conflict management, and interaction) than marital relationships, there was an intervening variable among cohabitators: marriage intent. They found that the majority of cohabitators reported plans to marry and within that majority, couples seemed to more resemble married couples than other cohabiting couples with no reported intention of marrying. The question that arises from these findings, then, is whether the differences or the similarities between marriage and cohabitation will be more apparent when it comes to gender and the division of household labor. In addition, it is clear that more research is needed to more fully understand differences among cohabiting couples.

The Division of Household Labor

There are those inside and outside the field of sociology who would argue that the study of housework is unimportant. For feminist researchers interested in gender and power in intimate relationships, however, the division of household labor provides a window

through which perspective on such issues can be gained. As Deutsch, Servis, and Payne (2001) succinctly put it, "gender equality depends as much on the equal responsibility of men for family work as it does on equal opportunity for women in the public world of employment and politics" (1000).

There are several theories which have traditionally been applied to this field of study. Becker's New Home Economics presents the household as a unit working towards the goal of maximizing utility (well-being) through specialization and exchange of labor. However, among other problems, this theory supposes men and women are actors with equal opportunity, completely ignoring the sex-segregated labor market and the sex discrimination which happens therein. The resource allocation theory posits that household members with more resources will leverage their resources to avoid housework, forcing other household members with less power and resources to do it. This theory, too, has weaknesses: it presupposes that housework is distasteful and preferably avoided in all cases, which may not be so. In addition, in cases where wives earn more than husbands and therefore should be able to bargain their way out of housework, there is empirical evidence that they are still doing more (e.g., Brines 1993; Brines 1994). The time allocation theory explanation for the division of household tasks is that household members will split up tasks according to the amount of time they have available to do so. This explanation has not held up, however, in the face of empirical research showing full-time employed wives doing more housework than their husbands who work the same or fewer hours (e.g., Brines 1994).

Overall, the problem with these perspectives is that they presuppose gender-neutrality in situations which are *not* gender-neutral (the workplace, marriage, heterosexual intimate relationships). They assume that humans are rational actors, despite the

irrationality of the wage gap. From a feminist perspective, they do not problematize the gendered division of household labor.

Two other interrelated perspectives on the gendered division of household labor which seem to have more explanatory power are the justice or equity perspective, and the “doing gender” (West & Zimmerman 1987) approach. The justice perspective, applied to the division of household labor, posits that men and women will arrive at a division of tasks and time spent on them which may not be equal, but is seen as equitable by both parties. Perceptions are the key concept here. In order to perceive the division of labor as fair, comparison referents, outcome values, and justifications come into play. Comparison referents are what people look to to evaluate their own situations. These can take various forms: social comparisons, looking at other people who are like oneself; normative comparisons, which in this case often involve gender behavior norms and the perceived sanctions for deviating from them; and feasibility comparisons, evaluating the practicality of alternative arrangements. Justifications for the division of household labor, according to Major (1993), are those procedures, attributions, or rules that legitimize it. Finally, outcome values are essential in evaluating a situation’s fairness: people are often willing to make sacrifices (e.g., time which might otherwise be used for leisure) if they value the outcome (e.g., the satisfaction of a clean house, the emotional gratification of preparing a loved one’s favorite meal).

The crux of the matter at hand, however, as others have argued in the past (Greenstein 1996; Major 1993; Thompson 1991), is that gender and gender ideology play a significant role in all of the above processes. Gender ideology can affect what one sees as an ideal standard for comparison, whether it be a traditional homemaker-breadwinner structure or an egalitarian division of chores. This effect is seen in Buunk, et al’s (2000)

study which compared egalitarian and traditional women's satisfaction with their allocations of household labor. They found that egalitarian women were more likely to use their partners as comparison referents, as opposed to the traditional women, who were more likely to compare their own housework contributions with other women's. One's ideology can also certainly provide justifications for an unequal division of labor. Further, one's gender ideology may shape one's views of housework as an expression of care, responsibility, or even as expression of female or male identity. It is here that the perspectives of West and Zimmerman (1987) are applicable. They argue that gender should be understood "as a routine accomplishment embedded in everyday interaction" (125). Doing gender is an active process. Women and men are not passive conduits for their "true" masculine and feminine natures; men and women do gender to support their claims to membership in a sex category. Therefore, by doing more of the household labor, women are reinforcing their identities as wives and as women—both to themselves and to others. By doing less of the housework, or by only doing "masculine" chores such as taking out the trash, men reinforce both that they are men, and that they are *not* women, a point which is important when one considers the overall societal devaluation of women and "women's work."

Two examples of how gender is done in the context of the household are found in the work of Brines (1994) and Greenstein (2000). Brines found that for wives, reduced economic dependency on their husbands decreased their housework time—consistent with a relative resources type of theory—but for husbands, quite a different picture emerged. Specifically, she found that husbands who were unemployed for long periods of time—who would be expected to do more of the housework based on time allocation and relative resources theories—did no more housework than husbands who worked full-time. As Brines

puts it, "these results...are suggestive of particular resistance among the long-term jobless against any 'women's work'" (677).

Greenstein (2000) replicates and extends this study using NSFH data. Using proportional, as opposed to absolute, hours of housework, he finds that breadwinner wives actually contribute more, and their dependent husbands contribute less, to household tasks than would be expected under an economic dependency model. The implication is that in the face of non-normative gender situations (e.g., reversal of breadwinner-dependent roles), men and women will go beyond the bounds of practical behavior in order to affirm their gender.

Cohabitation and the Division of Household Labor

So considering what is known about cohabitation and characteristics of cohabitators, and considering what is known about gender and the division of household labor, we come to my particular area of interest: their convergence. In cohabiting households, there are men and women, and there is a joint living space in which housework must be done. Will cohabitators' resemblance to singles and less traditional gender ideologies lead to a gender-neutral division of household labor? Or is gender so salient, and housework so institutionalized as "women's work," that even in the uninstitutionalized union of cohabitation, women will still do more?

There is a small but growing body of research which directly addresses these types of questions. Lindsay (1999), in a qualitative study of 15 Australian cohabiting couples, found that while both male and female partners appeared to have very egalitarian views on the basis of close-ended questions, the division of household labor was far from equal. Only one of the 15 couples reported equal sharing of the tasks. Three of the 15 were "reverse inequality" couples, in which the man did more of the housework, and one couple was

“traditional,” in which the man did none of the housework. The remaining ten fell into what Lindsay referred to as the “transitional/dissonant category,” in which women did more of the housework than men did, but men did some. The majority of Lindsay’s respondents falling into this category is reflective of the patterns among married couples, as well.

Shelton and John (1993) use data from Wave 1 of the NSFH to compare housework among married and cohabiting couples. They find that married women spend over six more hours per week in household tasks than do cohabiting women, but they find no significant differences between married and cohabiting men. Their findings are consistent with the doing gender perspective—it is through the performance of household tasks that the identity of wife is partially formed. As the authors cleverly put it, “it is not simply the presence of a man that is associated with women’s spending more time on housework; it is the presence of a husband” (401).

South and Spitze (1994) also examine the differences in housework time across different household types. Drawing on the perspective of West and Zimmerman (1987), the authors hypothesize that married women will do more housework than women in any other household type. Using Wave 1 of the NSFH, they divide respondents into 6 household types: never married and living in the parental home, never married and living independently, cohabiting, married, divorced (not cohabiting), and widowed (not cohabiting). They analyze the effects of household type and gender on the reported hours spent in housework. There are, of course, overall differences in mean housework time between men and women, with women spending nearly twice as much time (32.6 hours) as men (18.1 hours) on housework. They also discovered that the gender differences in time spent doing housework varied by household type, with the largest gap between married men and women. Consistent with their hypotheses, married women spend more time doing

housework than women in any other household type. While there are differences by household type for men as well, they are much smaller than for women. Further, the authors find that cohabiting women spend more time on housework than never-married women, and that there exists a gender gap among cohabitators as well of about 12 hours (compared to 19 hours for married respondents). South and Spitze assert that these findings are consistent with the perspective of West and Zimmerman, as the gender gap is widest among respondents in couple households, and wider for married respondents than for cohabiting respondents.

Sanjiv Gupta's (1999) research analyzes men's performance of housework in the context of transitions in marital status, using both waves of the NSFH. Consistent with previous research findings, he finds that men who move from non-couple to couple households reduce their time spent in housework. Conversely, men who move from couple to non-couple households increase their housework hours. Not surprisingly, he finds the opposite is true for women making the same transitions. These findings are consistent with South and Spitze's (1994), as well as with the doing gender perspective.

The most recent empirical research concerning cohabitation and the division of household labor is Batalova and Cohen's (2002) cross-national study. Using data from 22 countries, the authors model couple-level and country-level factors' influence on the accomplishment (actually doing) and management (being responsible for) of traditionally "feminine" tasks within married couples. These tasks include doing laundry, shopping for groceries, and cooking and cleaning up after meals. Couple-level measures include whether the couple premaritally cohabited, age, education, which partner earns more, whether either partner works full-time, and a measure of "separate spheres ideology," on which higher scores indicate more liberal attitudes. The country-level measures are two contextual

variables: the cohabitation rate and the Gender Empowerment Measure. A country's cohabitation rate is determined by the proportion of adults who report having ever cohabited. The Gender Empowerment Measure is an index reported by the United Nations, and is derived from such information as the percentage of parliamentary seats held by women and women's share of earnings income, among other variables.

In analyzing the couple-level data the authors find (consistent with prior research) that women do more housework than men in all 22 countries studied. However, they also find that premarital cohabitation appears to contribute to a more egalitarian division of household labor. In addition, younger age, higher education, and liberal attitudes positively influence the equality of division of household labor. They also find support for their hypotheses that country-level contextual variables impact individual couples' division of household labor. Regardless of a particular couple's cohabitation history, the equality of their division of household labor is positively associated with both the cohabitation rate and the Gender Empowerment Measure for their country.

Recent findings, therefore, suggest that cohabitators have a more egalitarian division of household labor than do married couples, but that the division is still slanted in all (heterosexual) couple households, to men's advantage. It seems that gender is indeed still salient outside the formal roles of husband and wife, perhaps just not to the same degree. The focus of this research is the question, How salient is gender in the division of household labor for couples who transition from cohabitation to marriage? That is, is the formal donning of the titles 'husband' and 'wife' so powerful that even among couples who had a more egalitarian division of labor prior to marriage, gender will essentially become more important? This research will use longitudinal data to not only compare the division of household labor between different household types, but also to look at the transition from

one type (cohabitation) to another (marriage). This perspective allows us to essentially control for individual- and couple-level variables.

Hypotheses

There are two sets of hypotheses to be evaluated in this study. First, I hypothesize that cohabiting relationships will have a more egalitarian division of household labor than marital relationships. This is based on research discussed above (e.g., Batalova & Cohen 2002; South & Spitze 1994) which found such results. However, while a good deal of the prior research has examined *hours* spent in housework by each partner, I am specifically interested in the relative contributions of each partner; therefore, this research will examine the *proportion* of the total hours spent on various tasks by each partner, consistent with Greenstein's (2000) approach. I will evaluate this hypothesis by examining the proportional contributions to household labor across household types. Support for this hypothesis would indicate that cohabiting relationships should perhaps be seen as conceptually different than marital relationships.

Second, I hypothesize that the change in the division of household labor over time will differ by group status. I will control for race, age, gender, educational attainment, income (in thousands of dollars), the addition of children into the household, and ideology as well. I wish to explore the claim of Shelton and John (1993) that "it is not simply the presence of a man that is associated with women's spending more time on housework; it is the presence of a husband" (401). If this is the case, then the group of respondents who are cohabiting at the first wave and are married at the second wave should undergo a transformation in the allocation of household labor contributions, once the man becomes a husband—a transformation that should not occur in the other groups in which relationship status is ostensibly and legally unchanged over time. If support is not found for this

hypothesis, then the implication is that perhaps either more couple- and individual-specific variables, or larger, contextual variables such as those examined by Batalova and Cohen (2002) are more responsible for the allocation of household labor.

Data and Methods

The data for this analysis come from two waves of the National Survey of Families and Households. (Sweet & Bumpass 1996; Sweet, Bumpass & Call 1988). The first wave consisted of a national probability sample of 13,017 adults interviewed in 1987 and 1988, over-sampling cohabitators (as well as single-parent families, minorities, and newlyweds). In couple households, questionnaires were also administered to the respondent's spouse or partner. The second wave, administered during 1992-1994, re-interviewed all surviving members (N=10,007) of the original sample and their current spouse or cohabiting partner, as well as, when possible, the original spouse or cohabiting partner of the respondent if the relationship had ended between interviews. The sample pulled from these data for this study included all respondents who were either married or cohabiting at Wave 1 (and their partners) and who were still with the same partner at Wave 2. The final sample size for these analyses is 5,376.

Dependent Variables

Household Tasks

The phenomenon of interest in this study is the proportional equality of the division of household labor. For each wave of the survey, respondents, spouses, and cohabiting partners fill out a self-administered questionnaire which asks, among other things, "the approximate number of hours per week that you, your spouse/partner or others in the household normally spend" on 9 tasks. The tasks (preparing meals; washing dishes; cleaning house; outdoor/household maintenance tasks; shopping for groceries and

household goods; washing, ironing, and mending; paying bills; automobile maintenance and repair; and driving other household members to work, school, or other activities) were grouped into “feminine” (meals, dishes, cleaning, shopping, and laundry), “masculine” (outdoor/household maintenance and auto maintenance/repair) and “neutral” (paying bills and driving other household members) task composites. This is consistent with prior research (e.g., Lennon & Rosenfield 1994) and with my own analyses conducted (results not shown) which showed that women consistently did more of the “feminine” and men, more of the “masculine,” tasks. The “neutral” tasks were so grouped because the mean differences between men’s and women’s hours spent on them were less than one hour. So as to lose as few cases as possible to missing data while still preserving the integrity of the analyses, if respondents left 3 or fewer of the 9 tasks blank, a value of zero was substituted for the missing task values.

For those cases which were coded as “some amount of time/unspecified,” the mean value for that respondent’s gender and group status was substituted. This is a more stringent method for dealing with missing data than previous research (e.g., South & Spitze 1994). However, since I believe that there may be significant differences between men and women, and between cohabitators and marrieds, it seemed more appropriate to substitute the mean for each individual’s gender *and* group status for missing cases.

Since the concept of interest here is the relative equality of the division of these tasks, I focus on proportions of housework time. For each task grouping (feminine, masculine, and neutral) at each wave, variables were constructed to represent the number of hours male and female respondents reported they and their partners/spouses spent on them. The proportions were then calculated by dividing the total hours (by respondent, spouse/partner, and others in the household) spent on each grouping at each wave by the

number of hours male and female partners/spouses respectively spent on each grouping at each wave. Therefore, for each wave, I created variables which represented the proportional contributions of male and female partners to each task type. To examine changes over time in the division of household labor, I created variables which represent the difference in proportions between the two waves. See Appendix A for a more graphical explanation of variable construction.

Independent and Control Variables

Group Status

Group status is a categorical dummy variable based on the respondent's relationship statuses at Wave 1 and Wave 2. If the respondent was married at Wave 1 and still married to the same spouse at Wave 2, they were assigned to the "Continuously Married" group. The "Transitional" group consists of those respondents who were cohabiting at Wave 1 and married to their Wave 1 cohabiting partner at Wave 2. The "Continuously Cohabiting" group consists of respondents who were cohabiting at Wave 1 and still cohabiting with the same partner at Wave 2. To compare the groups with one another using t-tests, analyses were conducted separately for each of three pairings: Continuously Married / Transitional, Transitional / Continuously Cohabiting, and Continuously Married / Continuously Cohabiting. For the regression analyses, dummy variables were created for Continuously Married and Continuously Cohabiting, with Transitional as the reference group.

Ideology

Previous research (e.g., Greenstein 1996; Buunk et al. 2000) has shown that gender ideology plays a role in the division of household labor. In this study, the concept was operationalized as a summed scale in which higher values indicated more traditional

gender ideology (individual items were recoded as necessary to reflect this direction). The nine individual items included in the Wave 2 survey asked the respondent to indicate their agreement or disagreement on a 5-point scale with statements such as “It is much better for everyone if the man earns the main living and the woman takes care of the home and family.” At Wave 1, four of the items were phrased such that respondents indicated their approval or disapproval of behaviors on a scale from 1 to 7. The 7-point scales were converted to 5 point scales before being summed with the other items and then divided by 9 to create a final scale from 1 to 5. See Appendix B for a list of all items and exact wording. Cronbach’s alpha for these items was 0.71 for Wave 1, and 0.81 for Wave 2.

Gender

The respondent’s self-reported gender was operationalized with a categorical dummy variable, where Male = 0 and Female = 1.

Race/Ethnicity

While one of the unique qualities of the NSFH is its over-sampling of minority households, once I pulled my cases of interest from the data, there were not enough cases in the smaller groups (Transitional and Continuously Cohabiting) to perform reliable analyses broken down by an array of minority groups. Therefore, I created a dummy variable, NONWHITE, where White, non-Hispanic respondents were coded 0 and all others were coded 1.

Age

As age can be theoretically considered to be positively related to traditional gender ideology, it was important to include it in my models. In addition, age was used to further constrict the sample of respondents in the continuously married group. Prior to constricting the sample, continuously married group members had a mean age over 10 years higher

than the other two groups. In order to increase the comparability of the three groups, and keeping in mind that the number of respondents in the continuously married category was substantially larger than both other groups, I excluded from the analysis any continuously married respondents whose age was outside the widest range possible of the 10th and 90th percentile values of age for the transitional and continuously cohabiting groups.

Children

Children in the household can conceptually affect the division of labor. Three variables were constructed to address the presence of children in the household. Wave-specific numbers of children in the household were culled for use in the individual-wave analyses. In addition, I constructed a variable, ADDKIDS, which was coded 1 if the number of children in the household was greater at Wave 2 than at Wave 1, and coded 0 otherwise.

Income & Educational Attainment

Income and educational attainment are both included in these models as control variables. Household income, excluding interest, dividends, and investments, is expressed in thousands of dollars. Educational attainment is operationalized as years of completed education.

Analysis and Results

OLS regression using change scores as dependent variables was applied to these data. This technique was chosen because the aim of this study is to examine the change in equality of the division of household labor over time, and what factors affect that change. Alternative techniques, such as fixed- and random-effects models, would analyze the impact of factors on the actual extent of equality, which is not the focus of the current study.

Descriptive Statistics & Group Comparisons

Table 1 presents the means for each group (overall and by sex) at each wave.

[TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

One of the first observations to be made from this table is that, similar to prior research (e.g., Kamo 2000), respondents seem to report higher mean levels of contributions for themselves and lower levels for others. Male respondents consistently report the male partner does more of all types of tasks than female respondents report male partners do. Conversely, with only one exception (in the case of female partner's proportion of neutral tasks at Wave 2, where both male and female respondents report female partners do 58%), female respondents report that the female partner does more of all types of tasks than male respondents report female partners do. Consistent with prior research (e.g., Lennon & Rosenfield 1994), both males and females in all groups report—although to varying degrees—conformity with the gendered nature of household tasks; men are reported to do more of the masculine tasks than their female partners, and women are reported to do more of the feminine tasks than their male partners.

To evaluate the first hypothesis, t-tests for differences between group means on the proportions respondents reported they and their partners did of each type of task were conducted. In addition, t-tests were used to determine descriptive differences between the groups. Table 2 shows the results of group comparisons which were significant.

[TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]

Beginning with the more demographic and descriptive comparisons, Table 2 shows that members of the transitional group are significantly younger, and have fewer children at both waves, than both the continuously married and the continuously cohabiting. Mean scores on the gender ideology scale at each wave are not significantly different between the transitional group and the continuously cohabiting group. However, the continuously

married group has a higher mean score (indicating more traditional gender ideology) at both waves than both the transitional group and the continuously cohabiting group.

Moving on to the comparisons between groups on the household task variables, we see that male partners in the transitional group do a significantly larger proportion of the feminine task hours than their continuously married counterparts at both waves. At Wave 1, the mean proportion of feminine task hours for males in the transitional group was 8% higher than continuously married males, and 6% higher than continuously cohabiting males. At Wave 2, the difference between continuously married and transitional males shrinks to 5%, but is still significant. The difference between continuously cohabiting and transitional males is no longer significant at Wave 2, but the difference between continuously cohabiting and continuously married males' proportion of hours spent on feminine tasks (4%) is significant.

Turning to female partners and feminine task hours, the only significant difference is at Wave 1, when the transitional females' (who are cohabiting at this time) proportion of hours spent on feminine tasks is 8% lower than their continuously married counterparts.

Female partners in the continuously cohabiting group do a significantly smaller proportion of the masculine task hours at Wave 2 than either transitional-group females or continuously married females. Interestingly, the smaller of the two differences is between the continuously married and continuously cohabiting (4%), and not between the transitional group and the continuously cohabiting (7%). At Wave 1, significant differences are found between the continuously married and transitional groups when it comes to the proportion of time males and females spend on neutral tasks. Male partners in the transitional group have a mean proportional contribution which is 8% higher than their

continuously married counterparts; while females in the transitional group have a mean proportional contribution which is 7% lower than females in the continuously married group.

Before moving on to model what factors influence the change over time in partners' contributions to household labor, I also conducted t-tests between groups on the change scores themselves (see Table 2). From Wave 1 to Wave 2, while continuously married men actually increased their proportional contribution to feminine tasks by close to 2%, transitional men's proportional contributions decreased by 2.5%⁴. Correspondingly, women in the transitional group increased their proportion of time spent on feminine tasks by nearly 2%, while their continuously married counterparts decreased their contributions by 5.2%, and their continuously cohabiting counterparts decreased their contributions by 5.4%. While women in both the transitional and continuously married groups increased their proportional contributions to masculine tasks over time, the increase for women in the transitional group was significantly larger: 5.8% as opposed to 1.1% for the continuously married women.

Individual Wave Regression Analyses

Before going on to model the change in equality by group status, I first performed regression analyses on proportional contributions to feminine, masculine, and neutral task hours at each wave. The results of these models are in Table 3.

[TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE]

Wave 1 Models

Group status is significant at this wave only in terms of effects on feminine and neutral task hours. At this time, net of the effects of the other variables included,

⁴ It should be kept in mind, however, that at Wave 2, the transitional men's contributions were still significantly greater than the continuously married men's.

continuously married males contributed 4.7% less to the feminine task hours than the transitional males. Further, both continuously married and continuously cohabiting females contributed significantly more to the feminine task hours than transitional females. Continuously married men contributed about 7% less than, and continuously married women contributed about 7% more than, their transitional group counterparts to neutral task hours.

Gender of the respondent is a consistently salient factor, but due to the way the variables are constructed, its impact is interpreted in terms of reporting differences rather than actual contributions. As such, the results are consistent with the prior discussion of the univariate statistics and with prior research. Women consistently report lower proportional contributions for their male partners and higher contributions for themselves (and vice versa for men) on all task types. For example, women report a proportional contribution of men to the feminine tasks that is 11% lower than men report, and they report their own contributions to feminine tasks as 16.1% higher than men report.

Age is significant—although the coefficients are small—in the models addressing feminine and masculine tasks. Increasing age decreases men’s and women’s contributions to feminine tasks, decreases men’s contributions to masculine tasks, and increases women’s contributions to masculine tasks, net of the other factors included in the models.

Gender ideology is significant only in terms of feminine task hour contributions, and the finding is both intuitive and consistent with prior research (e.g., Greenstein 2000; Buunk et al. 2000). Increasing conservatism of gender ideology is associated with male partners’ decreasing contributions, and with female partners’ increasing contributions.

The dummy variable for race, NONWHITE, has negative effects on women’s contributions to all task types, and positive effects on men’s contributions to neutral tasks.

The number of children in the household generally has a negative effect on contributions to household tasks, with the exception of men's contributions to neutral tasks, which increase as the number of children in the household increases. The magnitude of the effects, however, are generally quite small. For example, men's contributions to feminine tasks decrease about 2% and women's, less than 1%, for each additional child.

Educational attainment has small but positive effects on men's proportion of feminine and neutral tasks done, and small but negative effects on women's proportions of feminine and neutral tasks. This suggests that each additional year of education is associated with men contributing 1% more and women contributing 0.8% less to feminine task hours, and with men contributing 0.7% more and women contributing 0.5% less to neutral tasks. Income is only significant in the case of the proportion of neutral task hours done by men, where each additional thousand dollars of income is associated with a one-tenth of a percent increase in men's proportional contribution.

Of these models, the ones which examine the proportions of feminine task hours done by men and women have the most explanatory power (15.6% and 15.5%, respectively).

Wave 2 Models

In contrast to the Wave 1 models, the continuously married dummy variable has no significant impact on the proportional contributions to any task type by either partner. In other words, these two groups (continuously married and transitional) at this wave do not significantly differ from one another on any of the task variables once the other explanatory variables are included. The continuously cohabiting dummy variable does have effects on the proportion of masculine task hours done by women and neutral task hours done by men. The negative coefficients suggest that continuously cohabiting women do less of the

masculine tasks, and continuously cohabiting men doing more of the neutral tasks, in comparison to the transitional group. Gender has effects at Wave 2 which are identical in direction but smaller in magnitude to those at Wave 1.

Age has effects which are very small in magnitude (less than one percent), and only on men's contributions to masculine tasks and both partners' contributions to neutral tasks. Ideology is only significant in its effects on the feminine task contributions, with increasing traditionalism decreasing men's contributions and increasing women's by almost the same magnitude. Comparing the effects of ideology at this wave to Wave 1, we see that the magnitude of its impact decreases over time. However, it should be noted that the ideology scores are wave-specific, and in all groups, univariate and bivariate analyses indicated that ideology became increasingly conservative over time (see Table 2).

Nonwhite respondents report smaller women's contributions than white respondents to all task types, and larger men's contributions to feminine and neutral tasks. Number of children in the household, net of the effects of other variables in the models, decreases men's and women's contributions to feminine tasks, decreases men's contributions to masculine tasks and neutral tasks, and increases women's contributions to neutral tasks. Increasing educational attainment is associated with men's increasing contributions to feminine and neutral tasks and with women's decreasing contributions to these tasks.

The models addressing contributions to feminine tasks have the most explanatory power among these comparisons (12-14%), but the power is not as great as in the Wave 1 models.

Change Score Regression Analyses

The main goal of this research is to determine the power of the normative constraints associated with being a husband or a wife. I want to see if, to paraphrase

Shelton and John (1993) it is the presence of not just a man, but a *husband* that determines the amount of housework a woman does. To do this, I am controlling for couple-level dynamics by looking at the same couple over time, and in the case of the transitional group, over a transition in union type. In this group, the presence of both 'just a man' and a husband is found, over time, within the same couple.

See Table 4 for all results from the change score regression models. Change scores are to be interpreted such that positive values indicate increased contributions over time, and negative values, decreased contributions over time.

[TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE]

The first thing to note from this table is that group status is a significant factor only when comparing continuously married to transitional respondents. Change score values for men's contributions to feminine task hours, net of the effects of the other variables in the model, are predicted to be 3.5 percentage points higher for continuously married men than for transitional men. Conversely, change score values for women in the continuously married group are predicted by this model to be nearly 7 percentage points lower than for their transitional counterparts. The only other model in which group status has a significant impact is in the case of masculine task contributions by women, in which case change scores for continuously married women are predicted to be 4.7 percentage points lower than for transitional group women.

Gender, net of the effects of other variables in the models, is significant as well, although in directions which are counterintuitive on the surface. For example, women are predicted to report men's contributions to feminine tasks as increasing 2%, and their own as decreasing 2%. Considering the comparison of the individual wave regression models above, though, it was found that the tendency to report higher levels for own-gender

contributions and lower levels for partner-gender contributions *decreased* from Wave 1 to Wave 2. Therefore, it is logical for the coefficients for gender in these models to have opposite directions than in the individual ones. While the tendency is still there, it is reduced, which impacts the directionality of effect. This is consistent with Kamo's (2000) finding that interspouse discrepancies in reports of household labor contributions decreases with length of marriage.

Increasing age is associated with very small increases in men's contributions to all task types and with very small decreases in women's contributions to masculine and neutral task hours, and with similarly small increases in men's contributions to all task types. In considering the impact of the change in ideology, we find that a shift towards more conservative ideology is associated with a negative shift in men's contributions to the feminine task hours. In a somewhat anomalous finding, a shift towards more conservative ideology is also associated with a predicted increase in women's contributions to the masculine tasks.

The addition of children to the household between waves is associated with women contributing less to the feminine tasks, and with men contributing less to the masculine tasks. Educational attainment is associated with men taking on less of and women taking on more of the feminine tasks, although the magnitude of these coefficients is very small.

Discussion and Conclusion

As significant results were generally clustered in the models examining contributions to feminine task hours, and these models consistently yielded higher R^2 values, I will focus on these results in my discussion. Further, there are conceptual reasons for focusing on these models. I would argue that contributions to the feminine task hours are of utmost importance for two reasons. First, they comprise the majority of all household task hours:

the feminine task composites were made up of five tasks, and the masculine and neutral composites, of two tasks each. Second, men have more to lose by taking on feminine tasks than do women who take on masculine tasks. There are psychological and social risks to rejecting privilege and taking up with the devalued. Therefore, these tasks represent an important site for examining difference and change.

My first hypothesis was that cohabiting couples would have a more egalitarian division of household labor. The results indicate partial support for this hypothesis. In the case of comparisons between the transitional group and the continuously married group, the most substantively significant finding from the t-tests is that males in the transitional group contributed more to the feminine household task hours than continuously married men, *at both waves—across the transition*. As previously noted, while the proportion hovers around 25% (by no means equal), and while that proportion does decrease over the transition to marriage, these men are contributing more to the feminine tasks than continuously married men.

Therefore, the fact that the men in the transitional couples do more of the feminine tasks than the men in the continuously married couples is of substantive significance. These results suggest to me a protective or buffering effect: while the transitional men did decrease their contribution to feminine tasks over the transition, their final contributions were still greater than the continuously married men's. However, when looking at the individual-wave regression analyses, when the control variables are included, the effect of group membership disappears at the second wave. This indicates that the other variables have more of an impact on men's contributions to feminine tasks at this wave. I will further address this finding in the context of my second hypothesis, which addresses changes over time.

Considering the female partners of these men, the finding that transitional women contribute a smaller proportion of the feminine task hours than continuously married women at the first wave is supportive of my hypothesis. At the first wave, the transitional women are cohabiting and as such, their significantly smaller contributions to feminine tasks is consistent with prior research (e.g. South & Spitze 1994). What is not supportive of my first hypothesis, however, is that the continuously cohabiting women also do significantly more of the feminine tasks than transitional women—with whom, at Wave 1, they share a common status. Similar to the case of men, however, these differences are also lacking in the second wave analyses. Again, I will address these changes in the context of the second hypothesis.

The second hypothesis addresses the questions: does the change in task allocations over time differ by group status, and what other factors have an impact on the change? Specifically, I hypothesized that this change would differ by group status. In the case of the comparisons between the transitional and continuously married groups on the allocation of feminine task hours, this hypothesis is supported, in a direction which suggests that the normative constraints of being a husband or wife are in fact salient for the transitional group. There are differences between transitional and continuously married men and women at Wave 1 that are not present at Wave 2. Continuously married men are predicted to have *higher* change scores on feminine task hours than transitional men—indicating increased contributions in comparison to transitional men. Indeed, in this sample, continuously married men increased their contributions between waves, and transitional men decreased theirs, by a similar margin. For the transitional men, the indication is that the allocation of feminine tasks becomes more gendered across the transition in relationship status.

The unexpected finding is that continuously married men increase their contributions over time. One possible explanation for this is based on the finding of a positive association between age and men's contributions to all tasks. Considering that the continuously married men were older to begin with than the transitional men, there may be life-course mechanisms at work.

For women, being continuously married is associated with a predicted change score on feminine tasks that is lower in comparison to transitional women. However, it could be argued that the lack of significance at the second wave is not just because transitional women are conforming to the normative constraints of marriage (although their contributions do increase), but at least partially because continuously married women decrease their contributions over time. In effect, there is a convergence. The *magnitude* of continuously married women's shift (.052) is more than three times the magnitude of transitional women's shift (.017). As above, however, the unexpected finding here is that continuously married women decrease their contributions over time.

The lack of significant differences between groups at Wave 2 where there had been at Wave 1 would lead me to believe that the additional factors in the Wave 2 models are more salient. Indeed, there are other, significant variables in the Wave 2 models. However, the interesting thing is that the magnitude of all these coefficients is smaller at Wave 2 than at Wave 1, and the R^2 values, which decrease from Wave 1 to Wave 2, bear this out. One possible explanation for this and for the unexpected findings mentioned above is that there are effects which are duration-dependent. Each of these relationships, regardless of categorical assignment, has lasted about five years. Certainly, any couple relationship will undergo changes over the course of five years, and the results of such changes may have an impact on the division of household labor. Future research could, for

example, construct relationship duration variables to include in analyses of housework allocation.

Future research could also include variables which address respondents' family of origin. Booth and Amato (1994) found an association between parents' and children's gender attitudes, which may then be associated with egalitarian practices within the households the children go on to establish. The scope of the NSFH—which does include continuing interviews with children of main respondents—may allow for future examination of such factors.

The discussion thus far has centered on the comparisons between continuously married and transitional respondents. This is largely due to the fact that the findings for comparisons involving the third group, continuous cohabitators, are largely inconsistent. There is not support for the hypothesis that they have the most egalitarian division of household tasks of all three groups. On the contrary, it seems in several instances that they more closely resemble the continuously married respondents—with whom they at no point have a common status—than the transitional ones—with whom at Wave 1 they share a common status. However, the demographic comparisons may shed some light on this matter. The continuously cohabiting respondents overall more closely resemble the continuously married respondents when it comes to age and number of children (at least at Wave 1).

This leads me to one of the weaknesses of this research, which is directly related to implications for future research. The continuously cohabiting group is small ($n = 125$), and, I believe, very heterogeneous, which has negative implications not only for generalizability, but for finding clear-cut or consistent results. As discussed in the literature review, couples' motivations for cohabiting may vary widely. There are those for whom cohabitation is a

relatively short-lived, transitional state to marriage; I believe the transitional group in this study is a fair representation of couples with this mindset. Keeping in mind that prior research has found cohabitation to be a largely transitional state (Thornton 1988), it may be reasonable to assert that most members of the continuously cohabiting group do not share such a mindset—statistically, the prediction is that if they were going to get married, they would have already done so.

However, I do not believe that the continuously cohabiting group in this study as a whole closely approximates Elizabeth's (2000) cohabitators, either. While their gender ideology scores indicate less traditionalism than the continuously married group, the ideological difference does not consistently match up with the allocation of household tasks. The demographic comparisons suggest that some of these cohabitators might, for example, be previously married, with children from previous marriages. In such cases, the experience of divorce may result in reluctance to marry again, but not in reluctance to conform to more traditional allocations of household tasks. Future research could address the heterogeneity of this group by including additional variables such as marital history and future marital plans or intentions. Such factors, in addition to gender ideology—perhaps an individual measure and a between-partner comparison—could be used to further delineate types of long-term cohabitators.

An additional, related limitation imposed by the relatively small sample sizes of two of the three groups is that missing data prohibited the inclusion of additional variables, such as perceived fairness of the division of household labor. While the NSFH does include such survey items, inclusion of them in this research would have drastically reduced the number of useable cases.

A theoretical implication of this research, which is consistent with the findings of research on parenting and entry into parenthood, is that ideology may not always translate into action, especially in the face of normative constraints (e.g., getting married), or practical constraints (e.g., becoming parents). The transitional group—and the continuously cohabiting group—was significantly less conservative than the continuously married group at both waves. At the first wave, the couples faced less defined expectations both from the outside world (by not being “husbands” and wives”) and likely from each other as well (Brines & Joyner 1999; Sahib & Gu 2002; Blackwell & Lichter 2000). Further, they were likely to have fewer children, and, considering their age, were probably less likely to have other large, long-term commitments (e.g., a mortgage). Under such circumstances, it may not be difficult to act in accordance with one’s egalitarian ideals. However, by the second wave, a great deal had changed for these couples. They were now likely facing normative constraints from others and themselves, their gender ideology had become more conservative, they were more likely to have children, and so on. Future analyses could include interaction effects to more deeply probe the factors affecting the division of household labor. Age and gender ideology, age and number of children, education and gender ideology—these and other variables might prove more elucidating when examined in conjunction as opposed to separately. In addition to these factors which very plausibly affect the division of household labor, I believe, as I mentioned previously, are effects of relationship duration.

However, I do not believe that the indications of this research are completely dismaying for feminist researchers. First, the finding that continuously married men increase their contributions over time indicates that even within marriage, there may be mechanisms at work which result in a shift away from strict sex-segregation of household

tasks. Second, if cohabitation continues to grow as a demographic trend, and cohabiting couples continue to have a more egalitarian division of household labor, then there is potential for the egalitarianism to be maintained—at least to some degree—over time. If, as Wilhelm (1998) argues, “lifecourse deviations [begin] disproportionately among activists and gradually [diffuse] from the structural locations of activism into more mainstream society” (290), perhaps egalitarianism in household tasks can be perceived as such a lifecourse deviation. If more and more men can begin taking on as much as a quarter of the feminine task hours, perhaps more radical, more egalitarian men can begin contributing more at the fringes, a practice which can then become more acceptable among mainstream men.

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Table 1. Group and Gender Means on Reported Proportion of Household Task Hours, Waves 1 and 2. (Ns are the same at both waves.)

Wave 1						Wave 2							
Group / Status		Task Type	Mean			Group / Status		Task Type	Mean				
			All	Male	Female				All	Male	Female		
0 / Married	Male Partner	Masculine	.70	.75	.66	0 / Married	Male Partner	Masculine	.68	.72	.65		
		Feminine	.18	.23	.13			Feminine	.19	.24	.15		
		Neutral	.37	.42	.33			Neutral	.37	.41	.34		
	Female Partner	Masculine	.20	.17	.22		Female Partner	Masculine	.21	.19	.23		
		Feminine	.71	.63	.79			Feminine	.66	.59	.73		
		Neutral	.60	.55	.64			Neutral	.59	.55	.62		
	N			5035	2368		2667						
	1 / Cohabiting	Male Partner	Masculine	.71	.72		.70	1 / Married	Male Partner	Masculine	.71	.76	.66
			Feminine	.26	.35		.19			Feminine	.24	.30	.18
Neutral			.45	.52	.39	Neutral	.40			.41	.40		
Female Partner		Masculine	.17	.15	.20	Female Partner	Masculine		.23	.20	.26		
		Feminine	.63	.53	.73		Feminine		.65	.56	.73		
		Neutral	.53	.46	.60		Neutral		.58	.58	.58		
N			216	99	117								
2 / Cohabiting		Male Partner	Masculine	.70	.80	.60	2 / Cohabiting		Male Partner	Masculine	.66	.70	.61
			Feminine	.20	.28	.12				Feminine	.23	.29	.17
	Neutral		.41	.51	.31	Neutral		.34		.42	.26		
	Female Partner	Masculine	.16	.13	.18	Female Partner		Masculine	.16	.14	.17		
		Feminine	.68	.57	.80			Feminine	.63	.56	.70		
		Neutral	.56	.46	.64			Neutral	.60	.53	.66		
	N			125	62	63							

Table 2. Selected Means for which t-tests Yielded Significant Differences Between Groups.

Variable	Groups being compared		
	Continuously Married / Transitional	Transitional / Continuously Cohabiting	Continuously Married / Continuously Cohabiting
Age	34.2 / 30.1 *	30.1 / 33.0 *	—
Ideology, Wave 1	3.1 / 2.7*	—	3.1 / 2.7 *
Ideology, Wave 2	3.3 / 2.8 *	—	3.3 / 2.9 *
Number of Children, Wave 1	1.6 / .74 *	.74 / 1.3 *	—
Number of Children, Wave 2	2.1 / 1.5 *	1.5 / 1.9 *	2.1 / 1.9 *
Proportion of Feminine Tasks Done by Male Partner, Wave 1	.18 / .26 *	.26 / .20 *	—
Proportion of Feminine Tasks Done by Male Partner, Wave 2	.19 / .24 *	—	.19 / .23 *
Proportion of Feminine Tasks Done by Female Partner, Wave 1	.71 / .63 *	—	—
Proportion of Masculine Tasks Done by Female Partner, Wave 2	—	.23 / .16 *	.20 / .16 *
Proportion of Neutral Tasks Done by Male Partner, Wave 1	.37 / .45 *	—	—
Proportion of Neutral Tasks Done by Female Partner, Wave 1	.60 / .53 *	—	—
Change in Proportion of Feminine Tasks Done by Male Partner	.017 / -.025*	—	—
Change in Proportion of Neutral Tasks Done by Male Partner	—	—	.0003 / -.073*
Change in Proportion of Feminine Tasks done by Female Partner	-.052 / .017*	.017 / -.054*	—
Change in Proportion of Masculine Tasks Done by Female Partner	.011 / .058*	—	—
Change in Proportion of Neutral Tasks Done by Female Partner	-.007 / .050*	—	—

*significant at or beyond $p < 0.05$

Table 3. Wave-Specific Regression Models for Proportions of Household Tasks Done by Each Partner.

Explanatory Variables	Model 1 dv = Proportion of Feminine Task Hours done by Men	Model 2 dv = Proportion of Feminine Task Hours done by Women	Model 3 dv = Proportion of Masculine Task Hours done by Men	Model 4 dv = Proportion of Masculine Task Hours done by Women	Model 5 dv = Proportion of Neutral Task Hours done by Men	Model 6 dv = Proportion of Neutral Task Hours done by Women
Wave 1						
Continuously Married	-0.047*	0.069*	0.027	0.027	-0.071*	0.074*
Continuously Cohabiting	-0.39	0.052*	0.015	0.004	-0.054	0.052
Gender	-0.110*	0.161*	-0.094*	0.052*	-0.090*	0.092*
Age	-0.002*	-0.001*	-0.005*	0.002*	-0.001	0.000
Ideology	-0.052*	0.056*	0.003	-0.0002	0.003	-0.009
Nonwhite	0.015	-0.038*	0.021	-0.048*	0.075*	-0.094*
Number of Children	-0.021*	-0.008*	-0.018*	-0.003	-0.015*	0.010*
Educational Attainment	0.010*	-0.008*	0.002	0.002	0.007*	-0.005*
Income (in thousands)	0.0002	-0.0002	0.000	-0.001	0.001*	-0.0002
Adjusted R ²	0.156	0.155	0.040	0.016	0.032	0.029
Wave 2						
Continuously Married	-0.017	0.010	0.003	-0.018	-0.037	0.032
Continuously Cohabiting	-0.004	0.001	-0.041	-0.056*	-0.076*	0.047
Gender	-0.090*	0.139*	-0.069*	0.043*	-0.058*	0.057*
Age	-0.001	-0.001	-0.003*	0.0003	0.001*	-0.003*
Ideology	-0.038*	0.037*	-0.010	0.0002	0.006	-0.006
Nonwhite	0.013*	-0.073*	0.015	-0.057*	0.056*	-0.069*
Number of Children	-0.018*	-0.015*	-0.025*	-0.005	-0.017*	0.008*
Educational Attainment	0.008*	-0.005*	0.003	0.002	0.007*	-0.004*
Income (in thousands)	0.0001	-0.0002	0.0002	-0.0002	0.001*	-0.001*
Adjusted R ²	0.124	0.144	0.031	0.019	0.027	0.026

*significant at or beyond $p < 0.05$

Table 4. Regression Models for Change in Contributions to Household Tasks.

Explanatory Variables	Model 1 Change in Proportion of Feminine Task Hours done by Men	Model 2 Change in Proportion of Feminine Task Hours done by Women	Model 3 Change in Proportion of Masculine Task Hours done by Men	Model 4 Change in Proportion of Masculine Task Hours done by Women	Model 5 Change in Proportion of Neutral Task Hours done by Men	Model 6 Change in Proportion of Neutral Task Hours done by Women
Continuously Married	0.035*	-0.069*	-0.033	-0.047*	0.037	-0.044
Continuously Cohabiting	0.034	-0.050	-0.055	-0.061	-0.021	-0.008
Gender	0.020*	-0.021*	0.026*	-0.009	0.031*	-0.035*
Age	0.003*	0.0005	0.003*	-0.001*	0.003*	-0.003*
Change in Ideology	-0.014*	0.012	-0.017	0.019*	-0.011	0.010
Nonwhite	-0.0007	-0.036*	-0.006	-0.009	-0.019	0.023
Addition of Children to the Household	-0.011	-0.015*	-0.031*	0.007	-0.011	0.003
Education	-0.003*	0.004*	0.001	0.0004	-0.0003	0.0004
Income in thousands	-0.001	0.000	0.0001	0.000	0.0002	-0.0004
R ²	0.014*	0.010*	0.007*	0.002*	0.006*	0.007*

*significant at or beyond $p < 0.05$

APPENDICES

Appendix A.
Construction of Variables.

For each wave,

	If respondent is...	
	Male	Female
Hours man spent on masculine tasks =	Hours reported that "I" spent on masculine tasks.	Hours reported that "spouse/partner" spent on masculine tasks.
Hours woman spent on masculine tasks =	Hours reported that "spouse/partner" spent on masculine tasks.	Hours reported that "I" spent on masculine tasks.

Proportion man did of masculine tasks = $\frac{\text{hours man spent on masculine tasks}}{\text{total hours spent on masculine tasks}}$
(sum of main respondent, spouse, and others in hh)

Proportion woman did of masculine tasks = $\frac{\text{hours woman spent on masculine tasks}}{\text{total hours spent on masculine tasks}}$
(sum of main respondent, spouse, and others in hh)

Change in man's contributions to masculine tasks across waves (change score) = proportion man did of masculine tasks at Wave 1 — proportion man did of masculine tasks at Wave 2

Appendix B.

Items Used to Construct Gender Ideology Scale.

1. It is much better for everyone if the man earns the main living and the woman takes care of the home and family.
2. It is all right for children under three years old to be cared for all day in a day care center.
Wave 1 wording: indicate approval/disapproval on 7-point scale of "children under three years old being cared for all day in a day care center."
3. Marriage is a lifetime relationship and should never be ended except under extreme circumstances.
4. Preschool children are likely to suffer if their mother is employed.
5. It is all right for a couple with an unhappy marriage to get a divorce when their youngest child is under age 5.
Wave 1 wording: indicate approval/disapproval on 7-point scale of "a couple with an unhappy marriage getting a divorce when their youngest child is under age 5."
6. It is all right for an unmarried couple to live together even if they have no interest in marriage.
7. It is all right for mothers to work full-time when their youngest child is under age 5.
Wave 1 wording: indicate approval/disapproval on 7-point scale of "mothers who work full-time when their youngest child is under age 5."
8. It is all right for a woman to have a child without being married.
Wave 1 wording: indicate approval/disapproval on 7-point scale of "women who have a child without being married."
9. It is all right for an unmarried couple to live together as long as they have plans to marry.