The Shifting Consequences of the Division of Household Labor

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Introduction

• Adults want egalitarian relationships
  – In fact, they want the “total package”

• Despite this, achieving egalitarian arrangements remains difficult

• Egalitarian arrangements pose problems
  – Negatively associated with happiness, relationship stability, and sexual intimacy

• Yet, much of what we know about the consequences of couples’ divisions of labor come from data that is decades old and from one source in particular – National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH).
  • Given shifts in preferences and attitudes we might expect these associations to have changed.
Aim

• The aim of this study was to explore how the division of household labor is associated with couples’ well-being in the early years of the 21st century compared to couples initially surveyed 20 years earlier.

• We accomplished this by comparing data from the 2006 Marital and Relationship Survey (MARS) to the 2nd wave of the NSFH (1992-1994)
The Link between Egalitarianism and Couples’ Outcomes

• Egalitarian arrangements are problematic
  – Marriages require specialization and dependence (e.g., Rogers 2004)
  – Violate gender scripts (Kornrich et al. 2013)

• Egalitarian arrangements are ideal
  – More satisfying and fair (Frisco and Williams 2003; Sprecher and Cate 2004)

• Gender differences?
Counter-Conventional Arrangements

- Counter-conventional arrangements where men do the majority of housework have increased (Pew Research 2014)
  - Between 1989 and 2012 the number of stay-at-home dads doubled from 1.1 million to 2 million
- Due to: embracing of caregiving role and economic difficulties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stay-at-home father’s reasons for not working in labor force</th>
<th>1989</th>
<th>2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wanted to care for kids/family</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unable to find work</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ill or disabled</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Pew Research (2014)
Method

• Data
  – Marital and Relationships Survey (MARS)
  – 2nd Wave of National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH2)
    • Limit NSFH2 to match demographics of MARS
    • Minor child in household; female partner age 45 or younger; middle to low income

MARS: n = 932 respondents
NSFH2: n = 2,628 respondents
Method

• Measures
  – Independent Variable
    • Division of Routine Housework
      – 3 Dummy variables – She does most; Egalitarian; He does most
  – Dependent Variables
    • Housework Arrangement is Fair (1 = yes)
    • Satisfaction with Housework Arrangement
    • Relationship Satisfaction
    • Relationship in Trouble (1 = yes)
    • Discussed Separation (1 = yes)
    • Sexual Frequency
    • Sexual Satisfaction
  – Controls
## The Division of Housework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Housework Measures</th>
<th>NSFH2</th>
<th></th>
<th>MARS</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Men (n = 1314)</td>
<td>Women (n = 1314)</td>
<td>Men (n = 466)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Routine housework shared equally</td>
<td>18.9%</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td>37.0%</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She does most of the routine housework</td>
<td>79.5%</td>
<td>84.3%</td>
<td>56.4%</td>
<td>69.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He does most of the routine housework</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Division of Housework is Fair

![Bar chart showing the division of housework for NSFH2 and MARS. The chart indicates that the division is statistically different from egalitarian.](image)
Division of Housework is Fair

* = statistically different from egalitarian

- NSFH2
- MARS

- Egalitarian
- She does majority
- He does majority
Satisfaction with Division of Housework

* = statistically different from egalitarian

- NSFH2 - Women
- NSFH2 - Men
- MARS - Women
- MARS - Men

- Egalitarian
- She does majority
- He does majority
Satisfaction with Division of Housework

* = statistically different from egalitarian

- NSFH2 - Women
- NSFH2 - Men
- MARS - Women
- MARS - Men

Standardized

Egalitarian
She does majority
He does majority
Satisfaction with Division of Housework

- NSFH2 - Women
- NSFH2 - Men
- MARS - Women
- MARS - Men

* = statistically different from egalitarian

- Egalitarian
- She does majority
- He does majority
Relationship Satisfaction

NSFH2 - Women
NSFH2 - Men
MARS - Women
MARS - Men

Standardized

0
-0.1
-0.2
-0.3
-0.4
-0.5
-0.6
-0.7

Egalitarian
She does majority
He does majority

* = statistically different from egalitarian
Relationship Satisfaction

* = statistically different from egalitarian

- Standardized

- NSFH2 - Women
- NSFH2 - Men
- MARS - Women
- MARS - Men

- Egalitarian
- She does majority
- He does majority
Relationship Satisfaction

* = statistically different from egalitarian

- NSFH2 - Women
- NSFH2 - Men
- MARS - Women
- MARS - Men

- Egalitarian
- She does majority
- He does majority
Relationship in Trouble

Logged Odds

* = statistically different from egalitarian

- NSFH2 - Women
- NSFH2 - Men
- MARS - Women
- MARS - Men

Egalitarian
She does majority
He does majority
Relationship in Trouble

Logged Odds

NSFH2 - Women
NSFH2 - Men
MARS - Women
MARS - Men

* = statistically different from egalitarian

Egalitarian
She does majority
He does majority
Relationship in Trouble

Logged Odds

NSFH2 - Women  |  NSFH2 - Men  |  MARS - Women  |  MARS - Men

* = statistically different from egalitarian

- Egalitarian
- She does majority
- He does majority
Discussed Separating

Logged Odds

* = statistically different from egalitarian

- Egalitarian
- She does majority
- He does majority

Graph showing logged odds for different groups and gender distinctions.
Discussed Separating

Logged Odds

-2.5
-2
-1.5
-1
-0.5
0
0.5
1
1.5
2
2.5

NSFH2 - Women
NSFH2 - Men
MARS - Women
MARS - Men

* = statistically different from egalitarian

Egalitarian
She does majority
He does majority
Discussed Separating

Logged Odds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NSFH2 - Women</th>
<th>NSFH2 - Men</th>
<th>MARS - Women</th>
<th>MARS - Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Egalitarian</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>She does majority</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>He does majority</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = statistically different from egalitarian
Physical Arguments

Logged Odds

NSFH2 - Women
NSFH2 - Men
MARS - Women
MARS - Men

* = statistically different from egalitarian

- Egalitarian
- She does majority
- He does majority
Physical Arguments

Logged Odds

* = statistically different from egalitarian

- NSFH2 - Women
- NSFH2 - Men
- MARS - Women
- MARS - Men

Egalitarian
She does majority
He does majority
Physical Arguments

Logged Odds

* = statistically different from egalitarian

- Egalitarian
- She does majority
- He does majority

NSFH2 - Women
NSFH2 - Men
MARS - Women
MARS - Men
Sexual Frequency

* = statistically different from egalitarian

**Egalitarian**

**She does majority**

**He does majority**
Sexual Frequency

* = statistically different from egalitarian

- NSFH2
- MARS

- Egalitarian
- She does majority
- He does majority
Sexual Satisfaction

- **NSFH2**
- **MARS**

* = statistically different from egalitarian

- Egalitarian
- She does majority
- He does majority
Sexual Satisfaction

* = statistically different from egalitarian

- NSFH2
  - Egalitarian
  - She does majority
  - He does majority

- MARS
  - Egalitarian
  - She does majority
  - He does majority
Conclusions

• Egalitarian divisions of housework have become increasingly positive for couples.
  – Previous advantages over conventional arrangements have grown
  – Deficits have been eliminated

• Counter-conventional arrangements are now generally associated with worse outcomes for couples
  – Why?
    – Labor force participation profile of couples has changed
      • 57% of male partners are unemployed in NSFH2; 44% in MARS
      • 25% of couples have neither partner working in NSFH2; 8% in MARS
      • 9% of NSFH2 couples = male partners working full-time/female partner unemployed; 27% in MARS
      • MARS men are more likely to be pulling a “second shift”.