

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

Stay-at-home father's reasons for not working in labor force		
	1989	2012
Wanted to care for kids/family	5%	21%
Unable to find work	15%	23%
Ill or disabled	56%	35%
Other	24%	21%

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

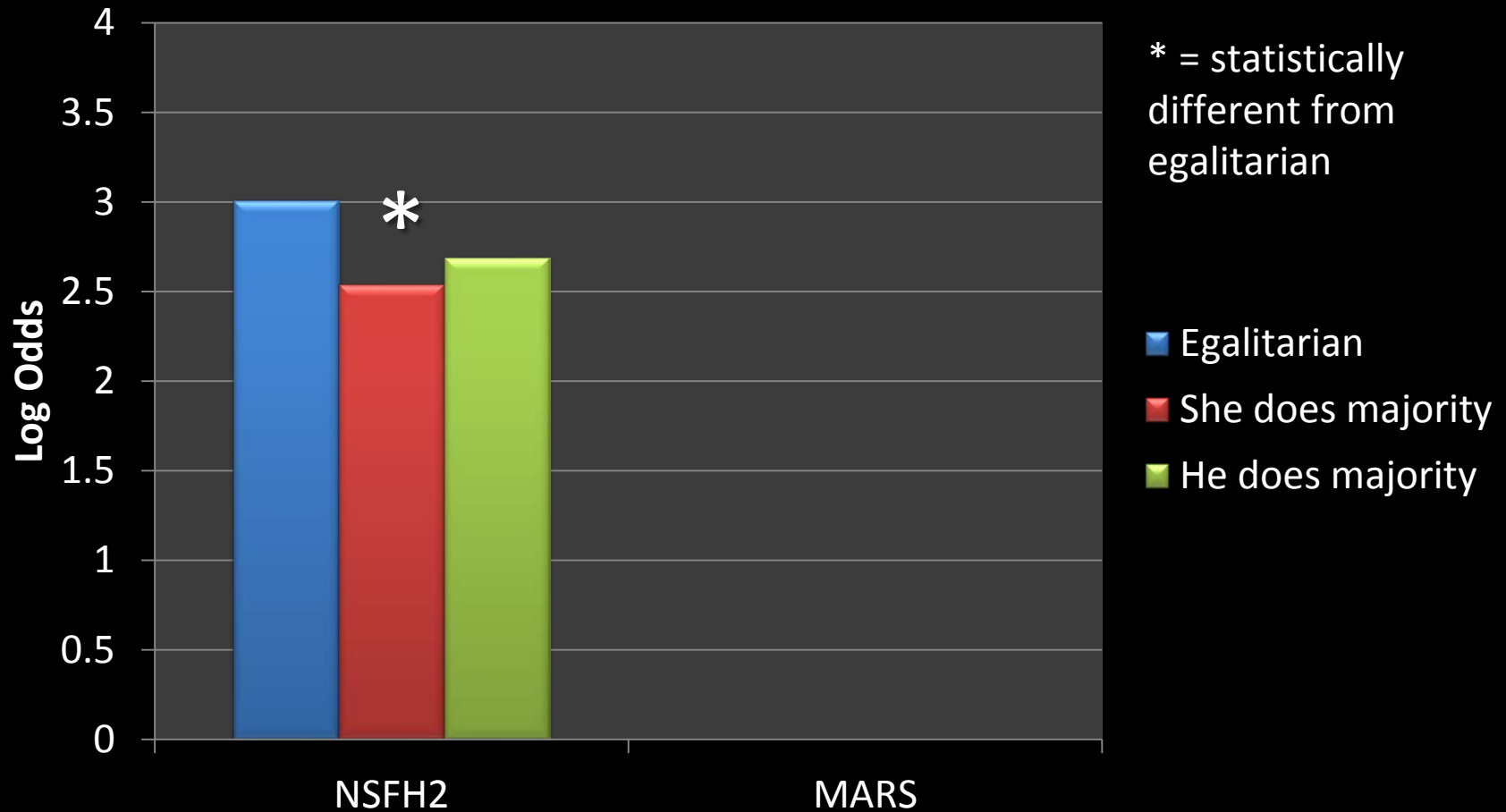
- Housework Arrangement is Fair (1 = yes)
 - Satisfaction with Housework Arrangement
 - Relationship Satisfaction
 - Relationship in Trouble (1 = yes)
 - Discussed Separation (1 = yes)
 - Sexual Frequency
 - Sexual Satisfaction

- Controls

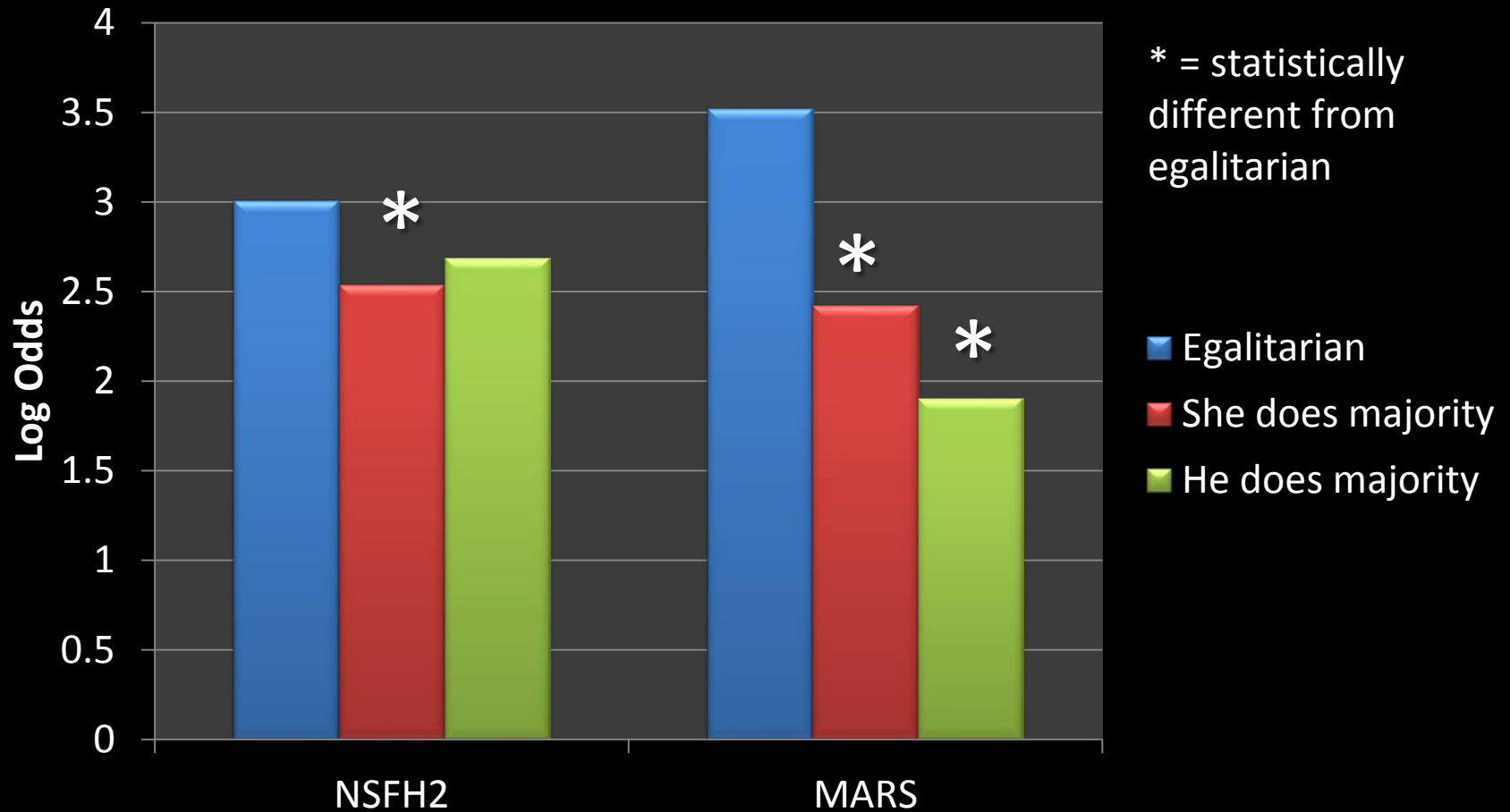
The Division of Housework

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

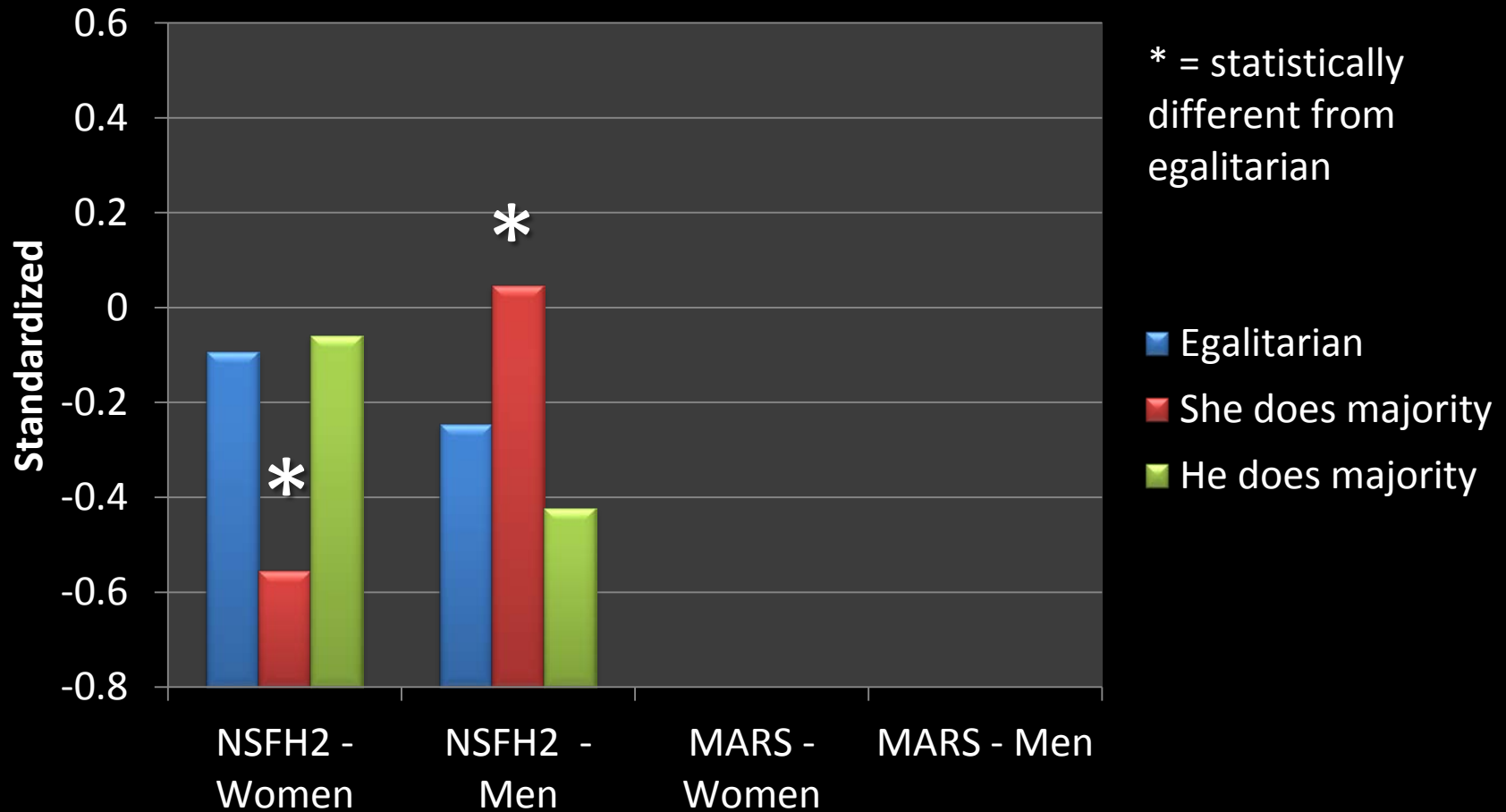
Division of Housework is Fair



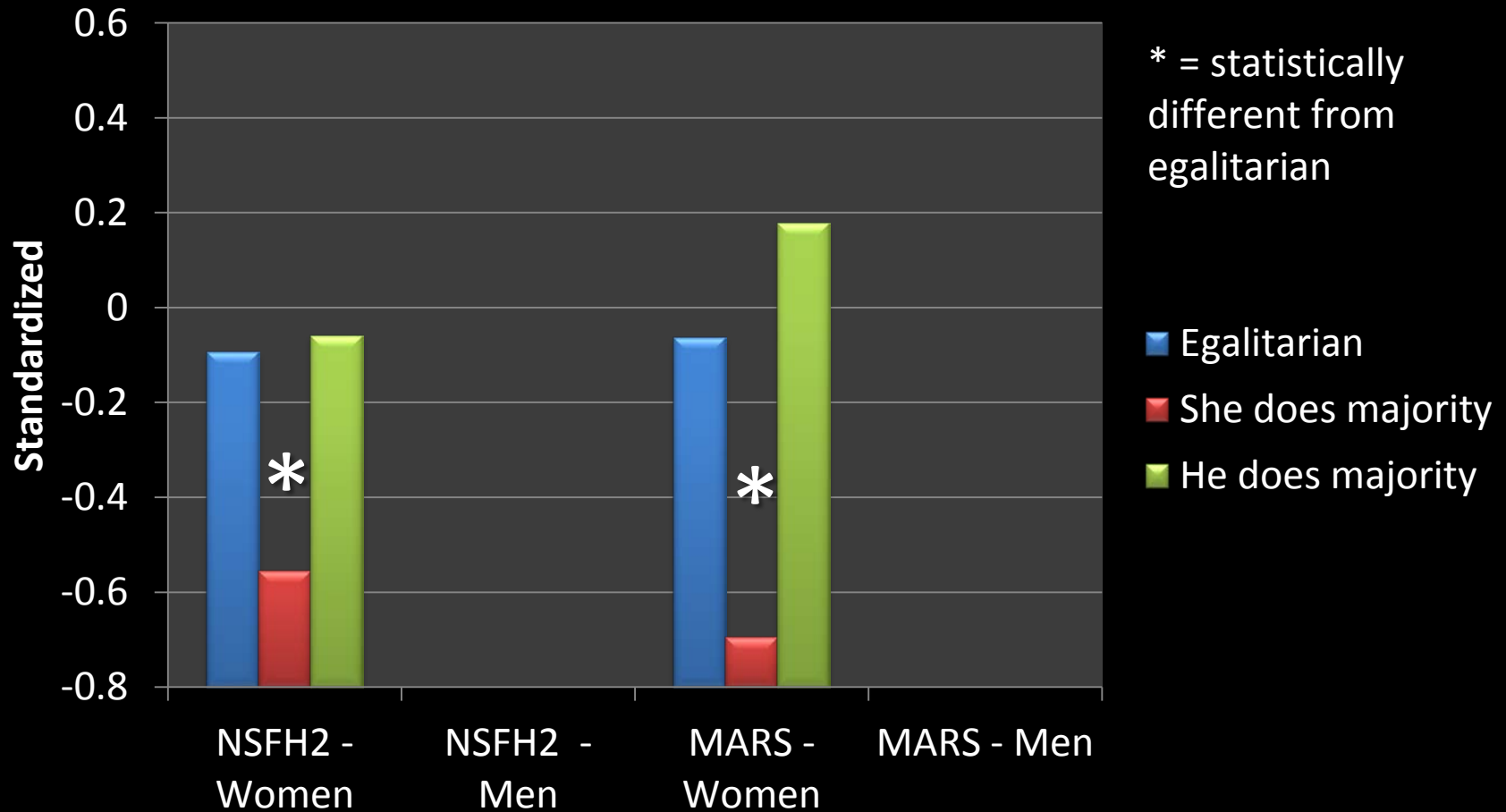
Division of Housework is Fair



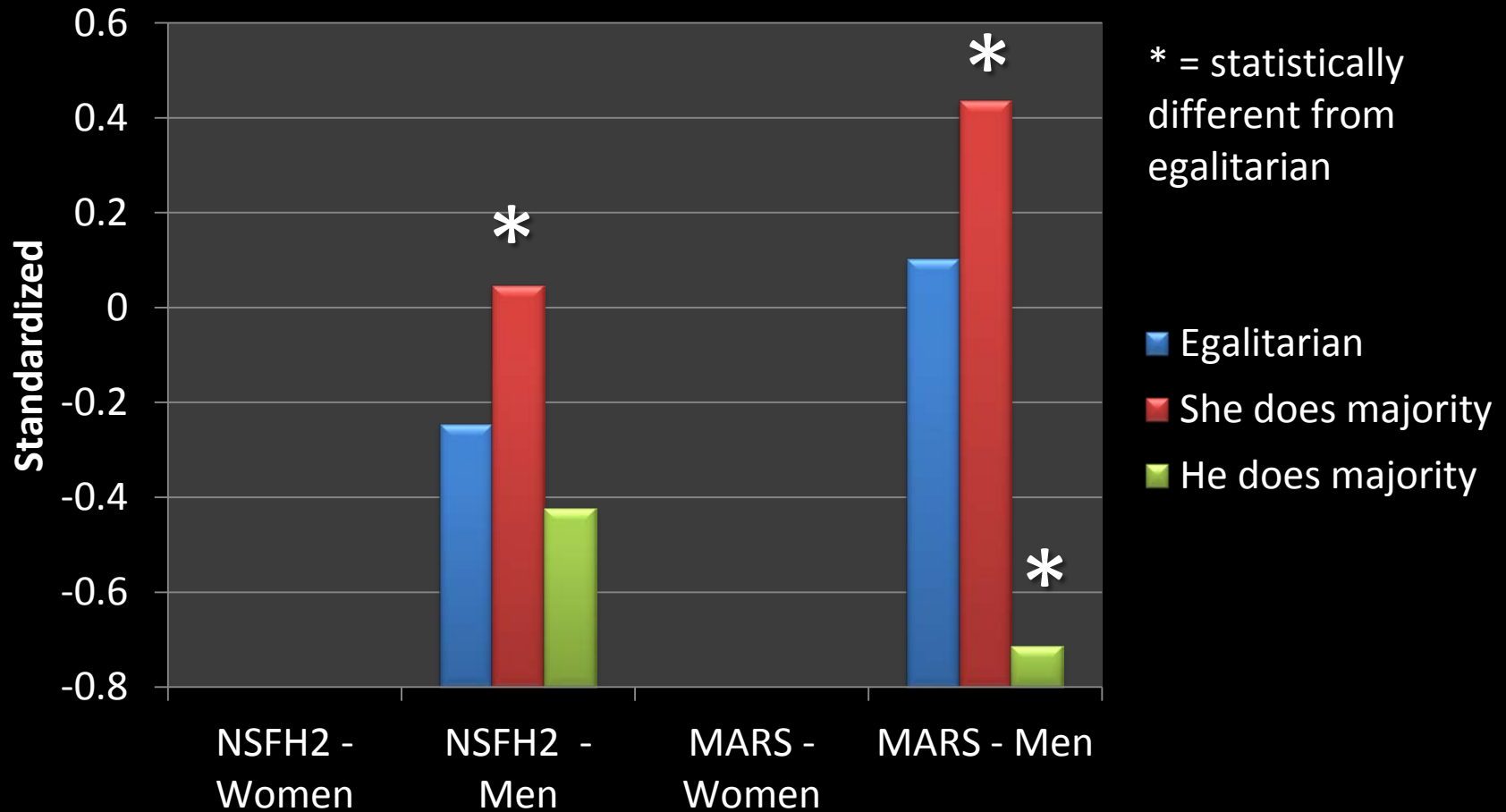
Satisfaction with Division of Housework



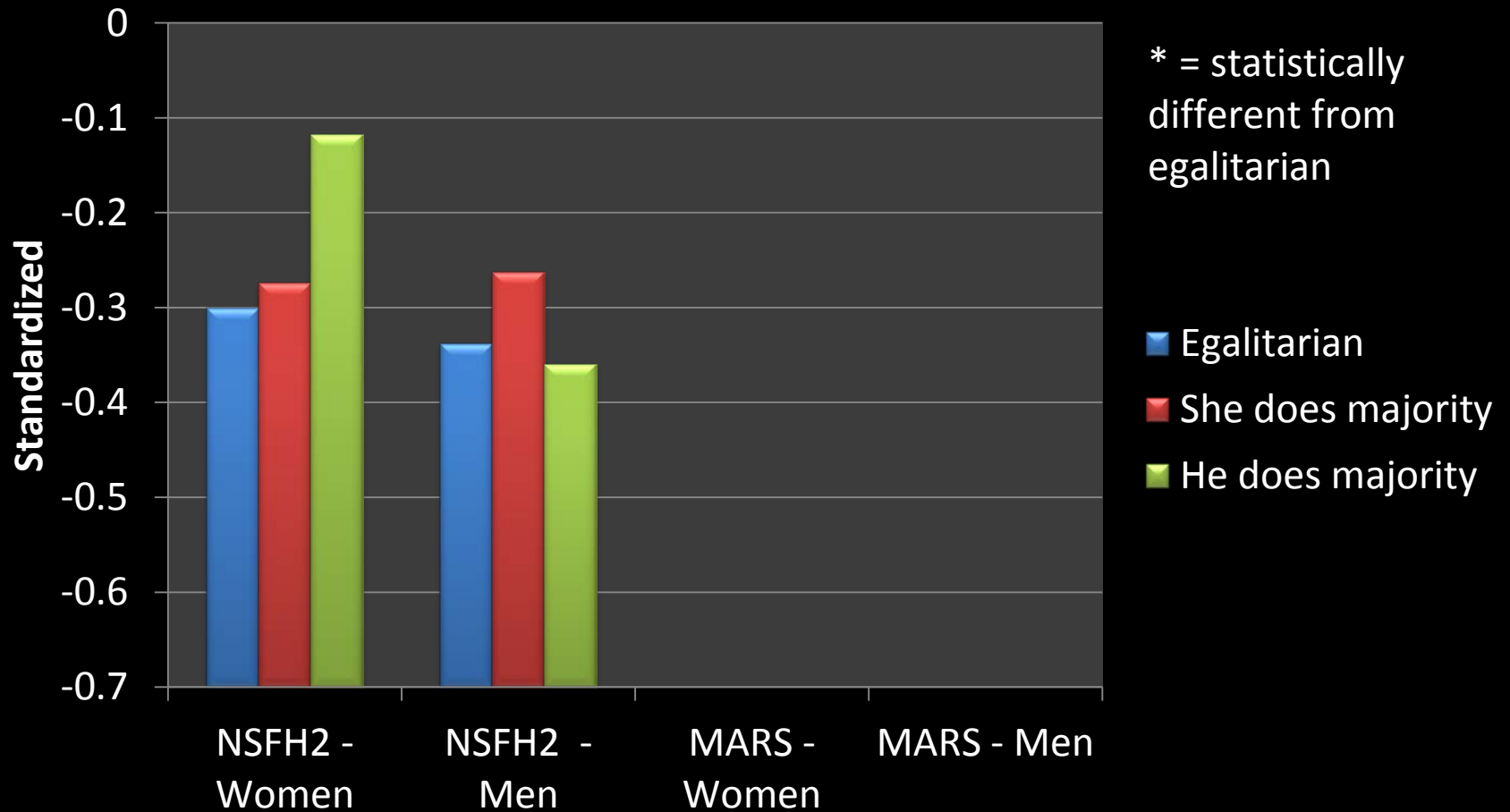
Satisfaction with Division of Housework



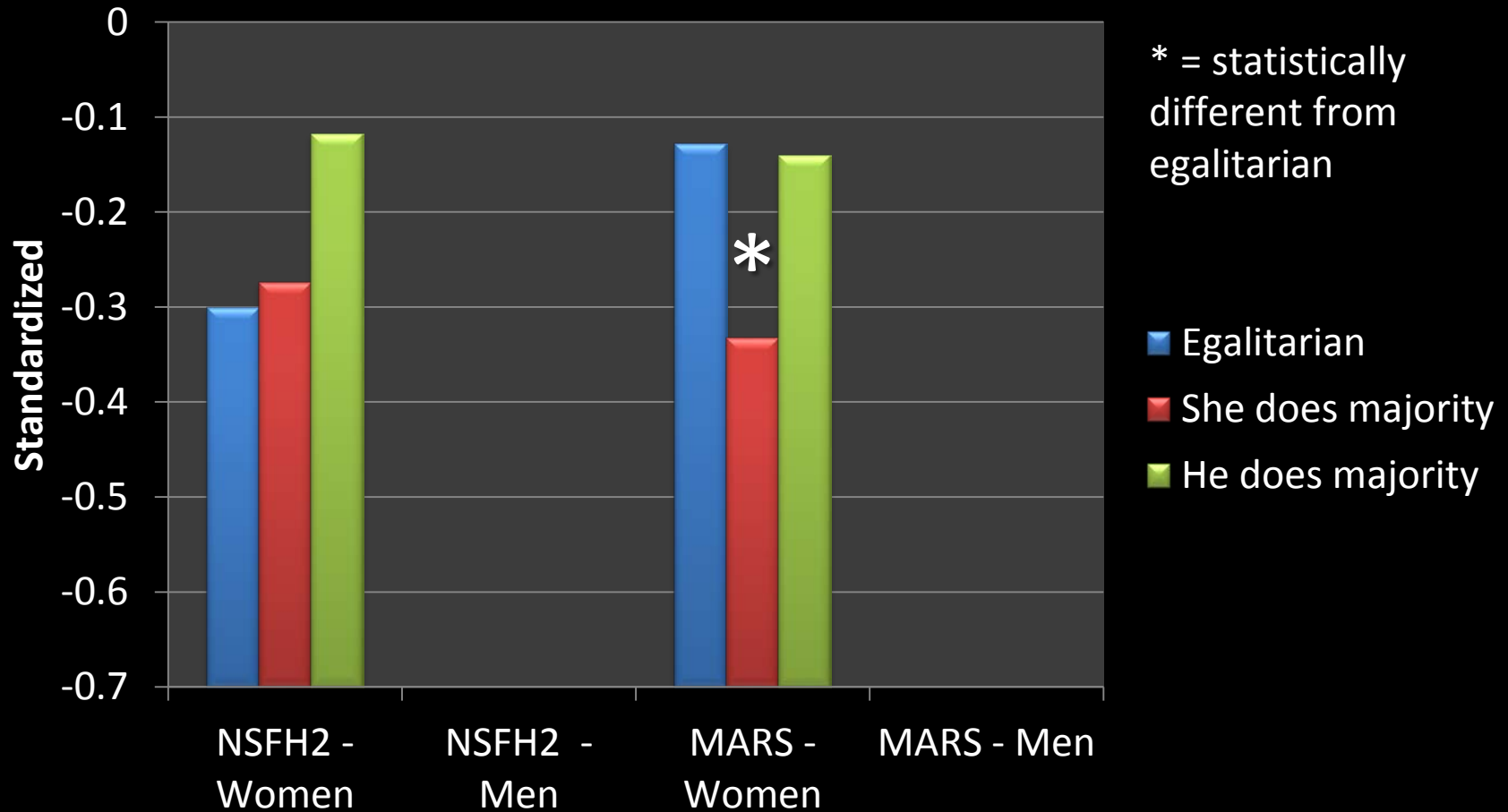
Satisfaction with Division of Housework



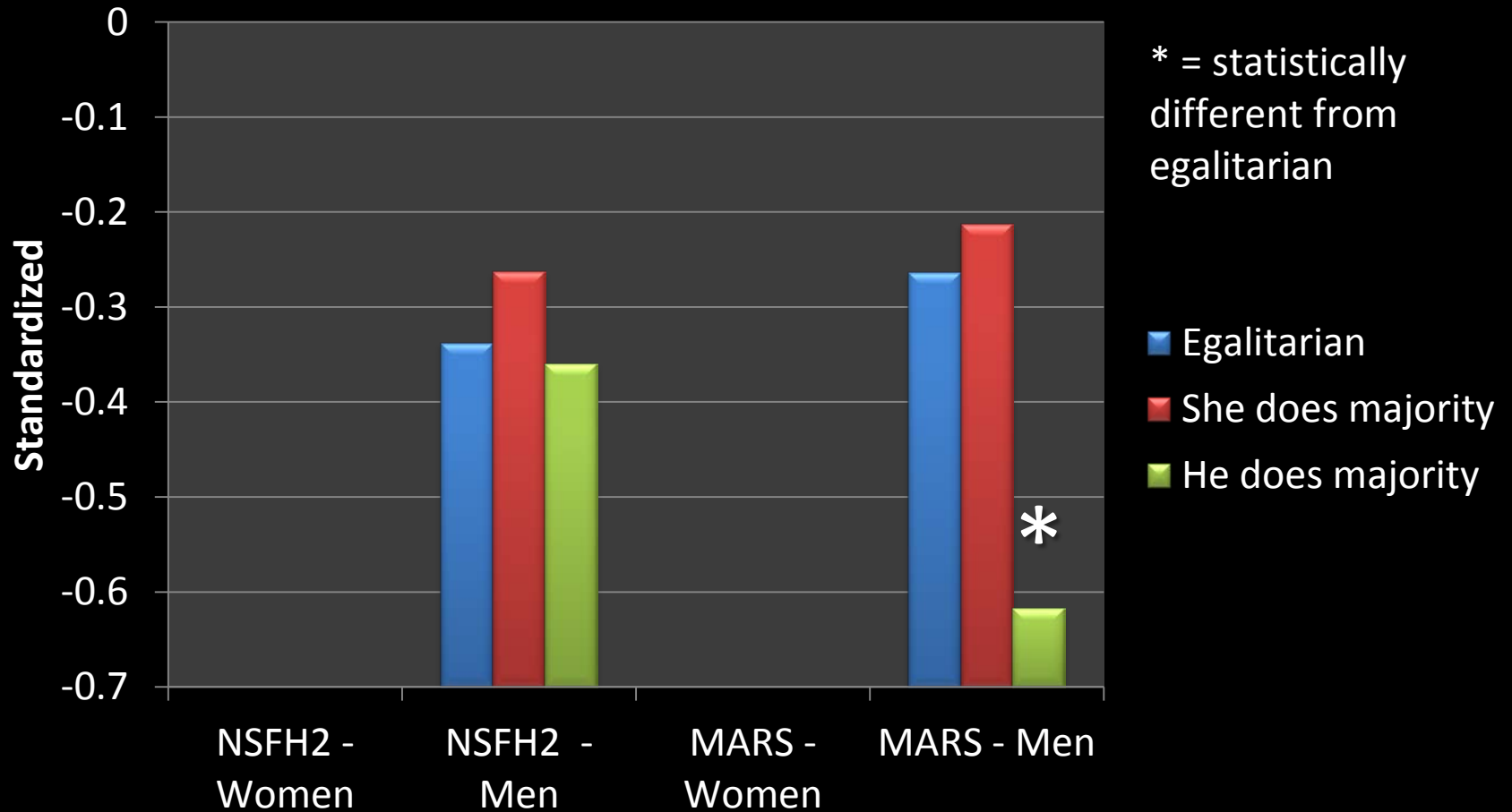
Relationship Satisfaction



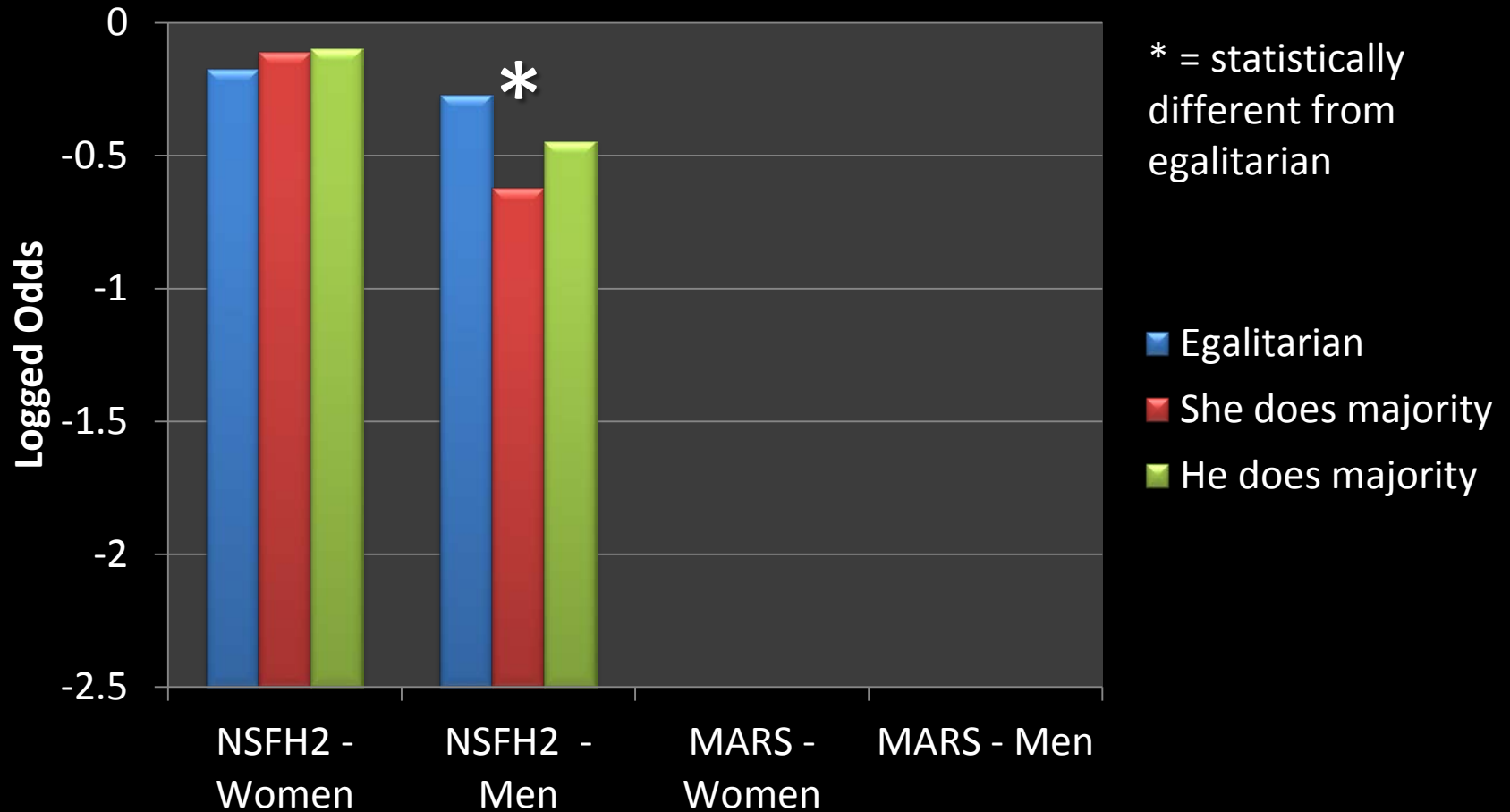
Relationship Satisfaction



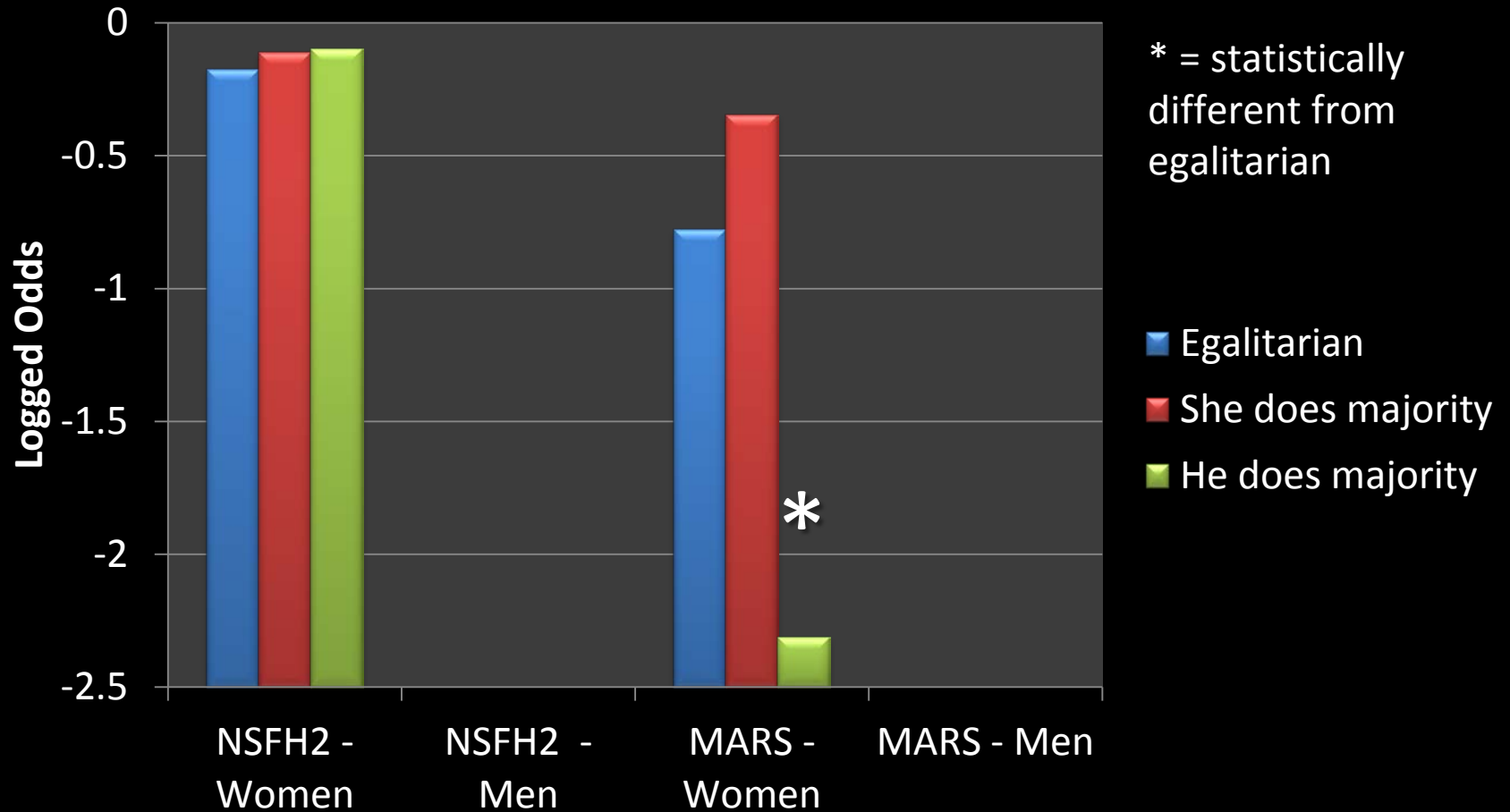
Relationship Satisfaction



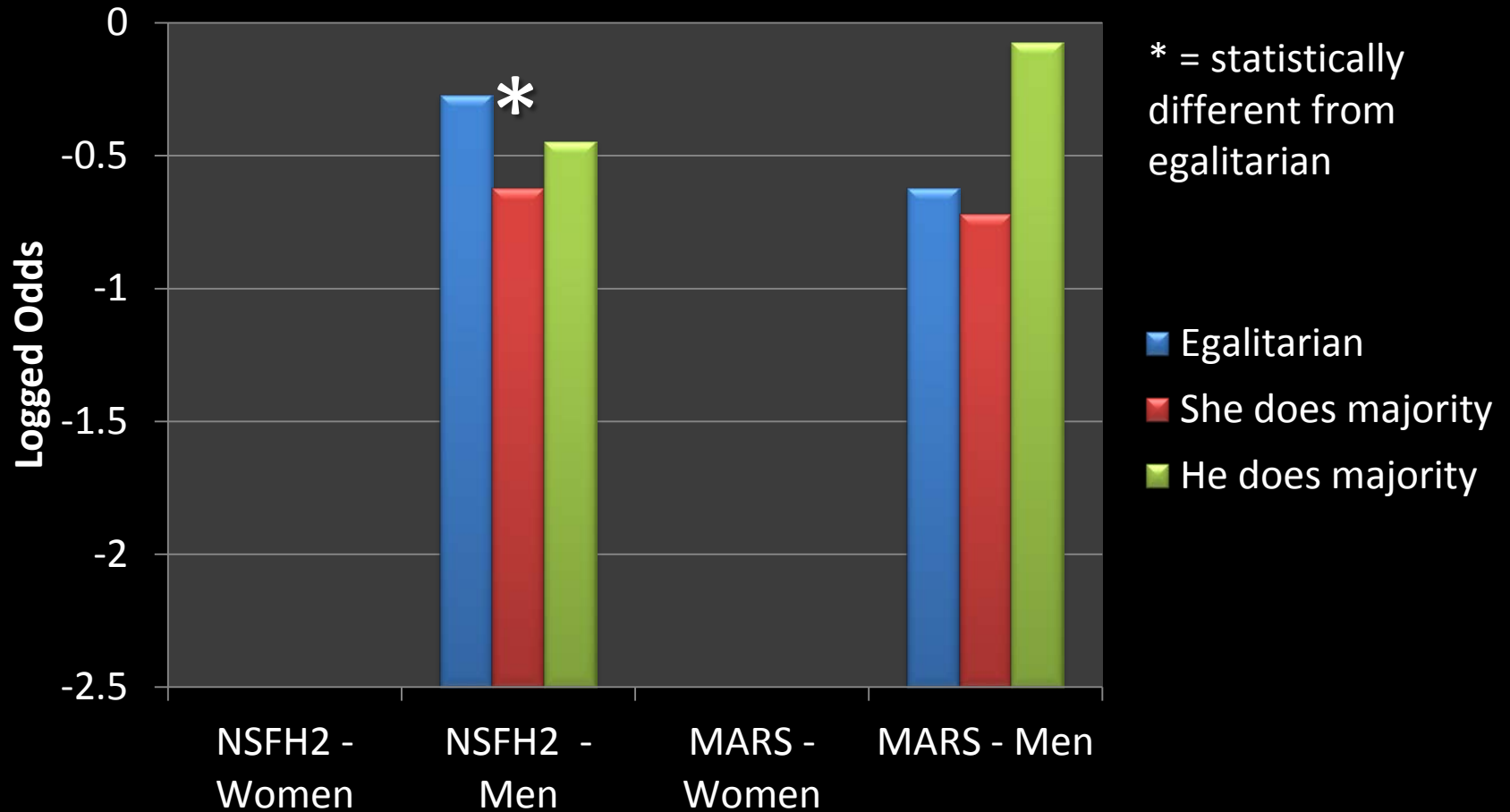
Relationship in Trouble



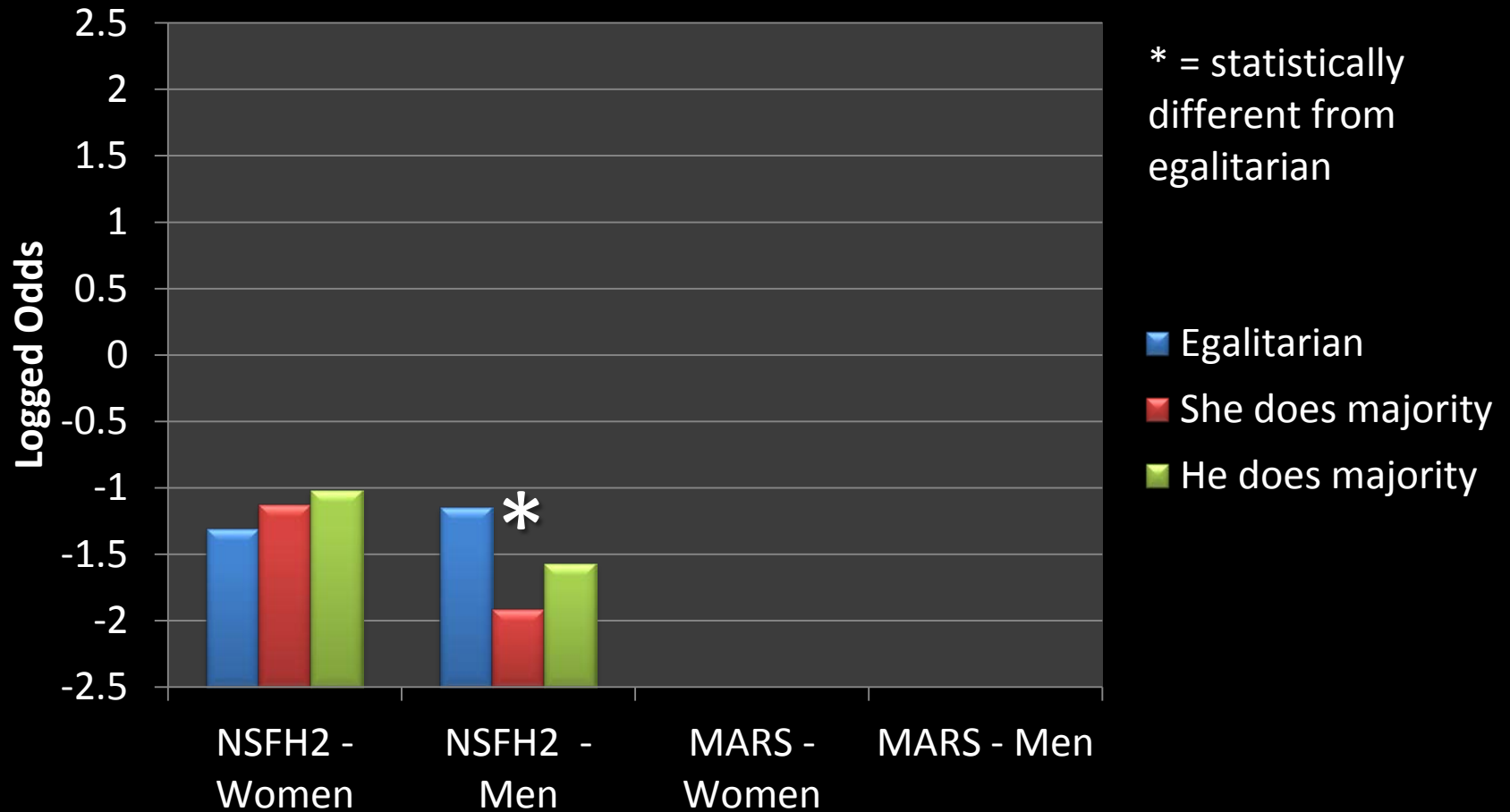
Relationship in Trouble



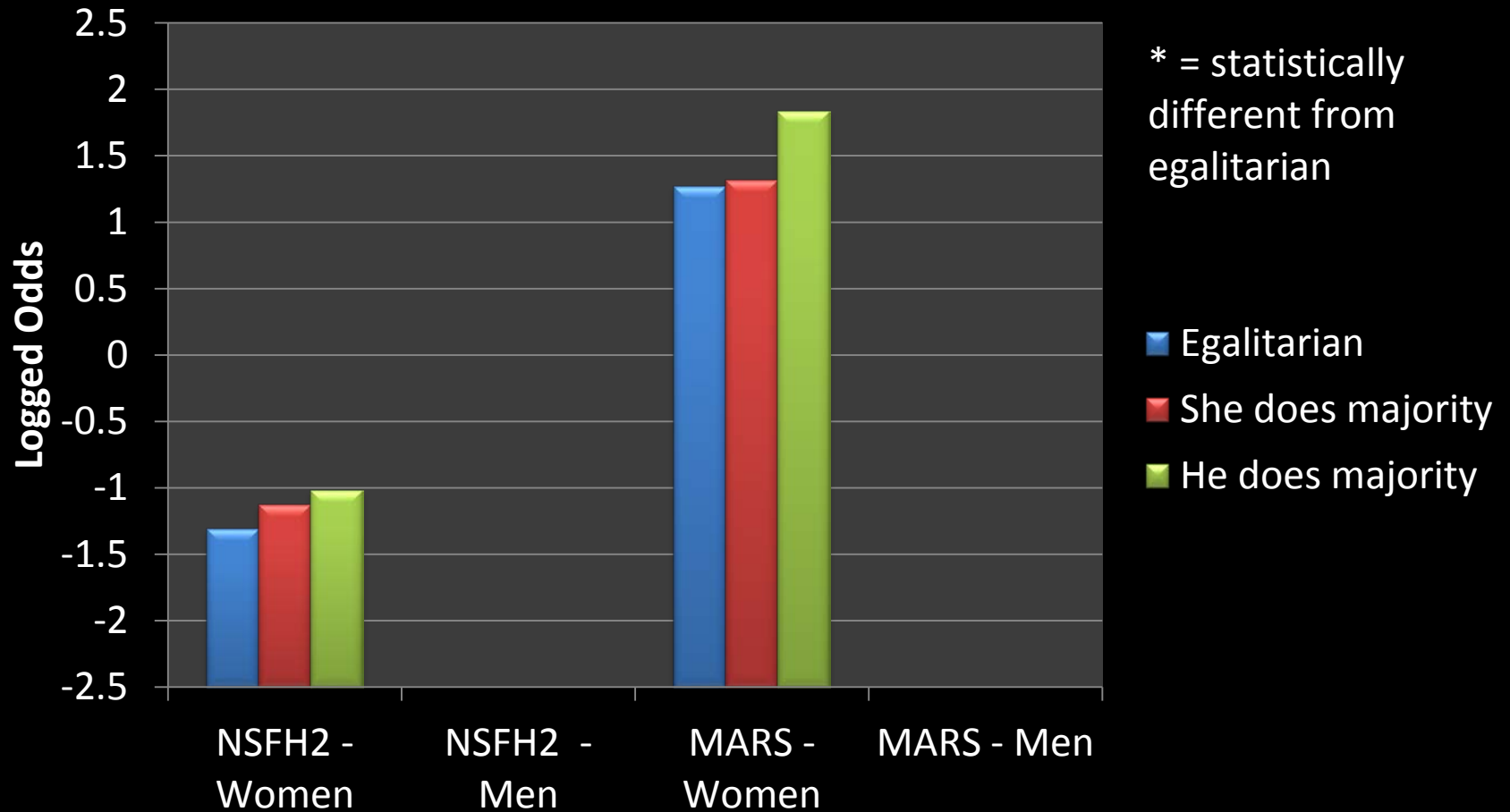
Relationship in Trouble



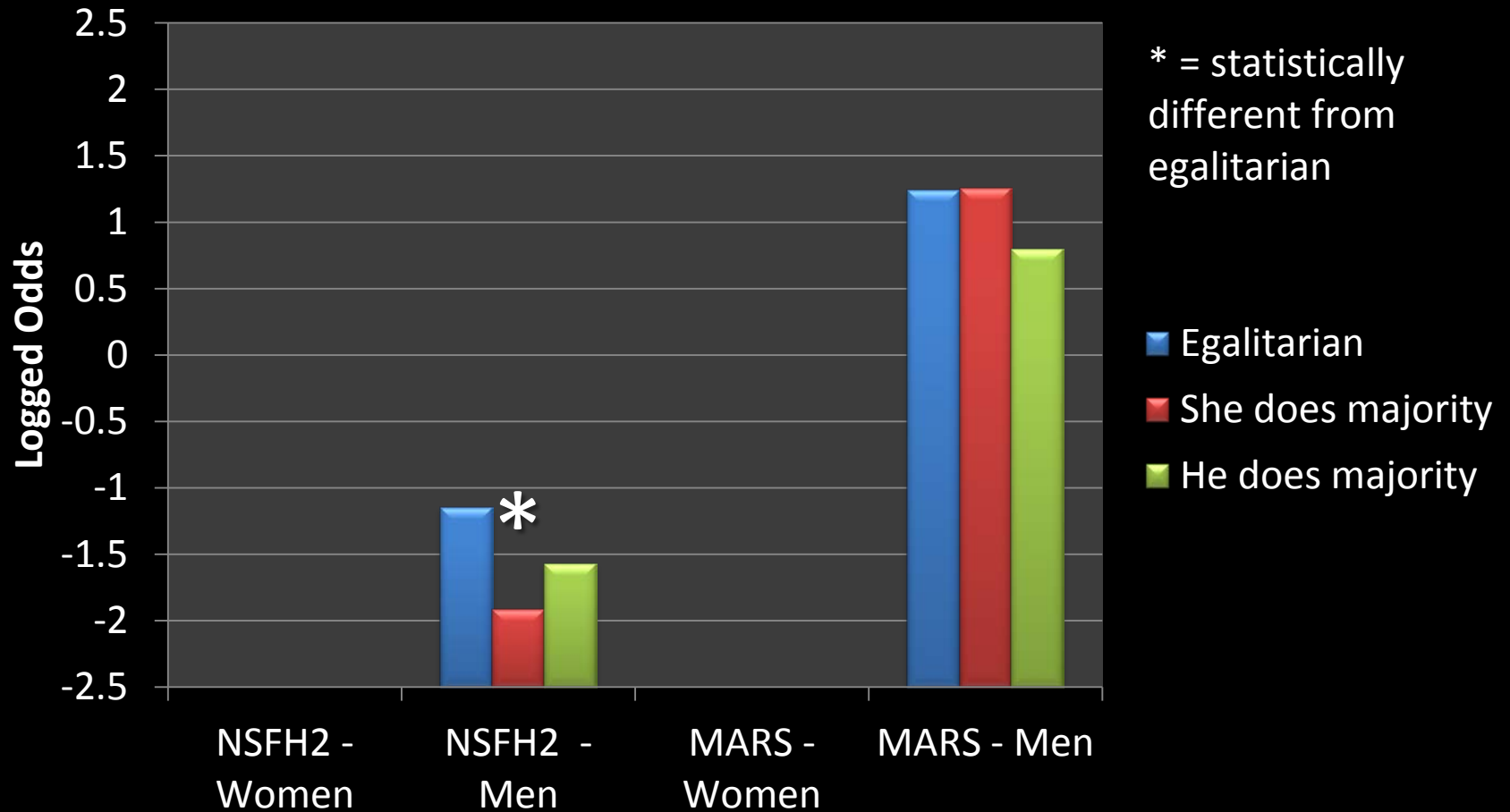
Discussed Separating



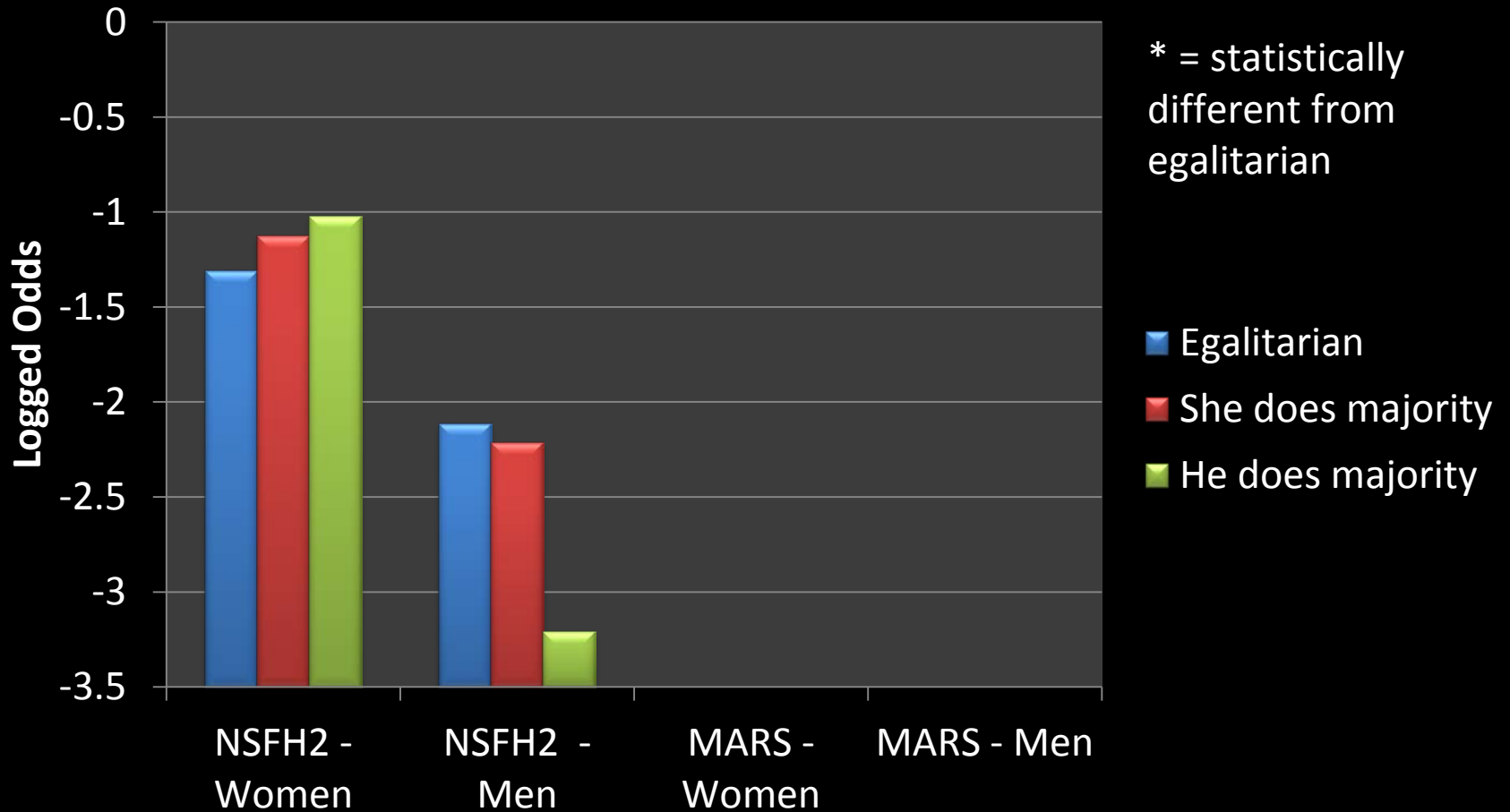
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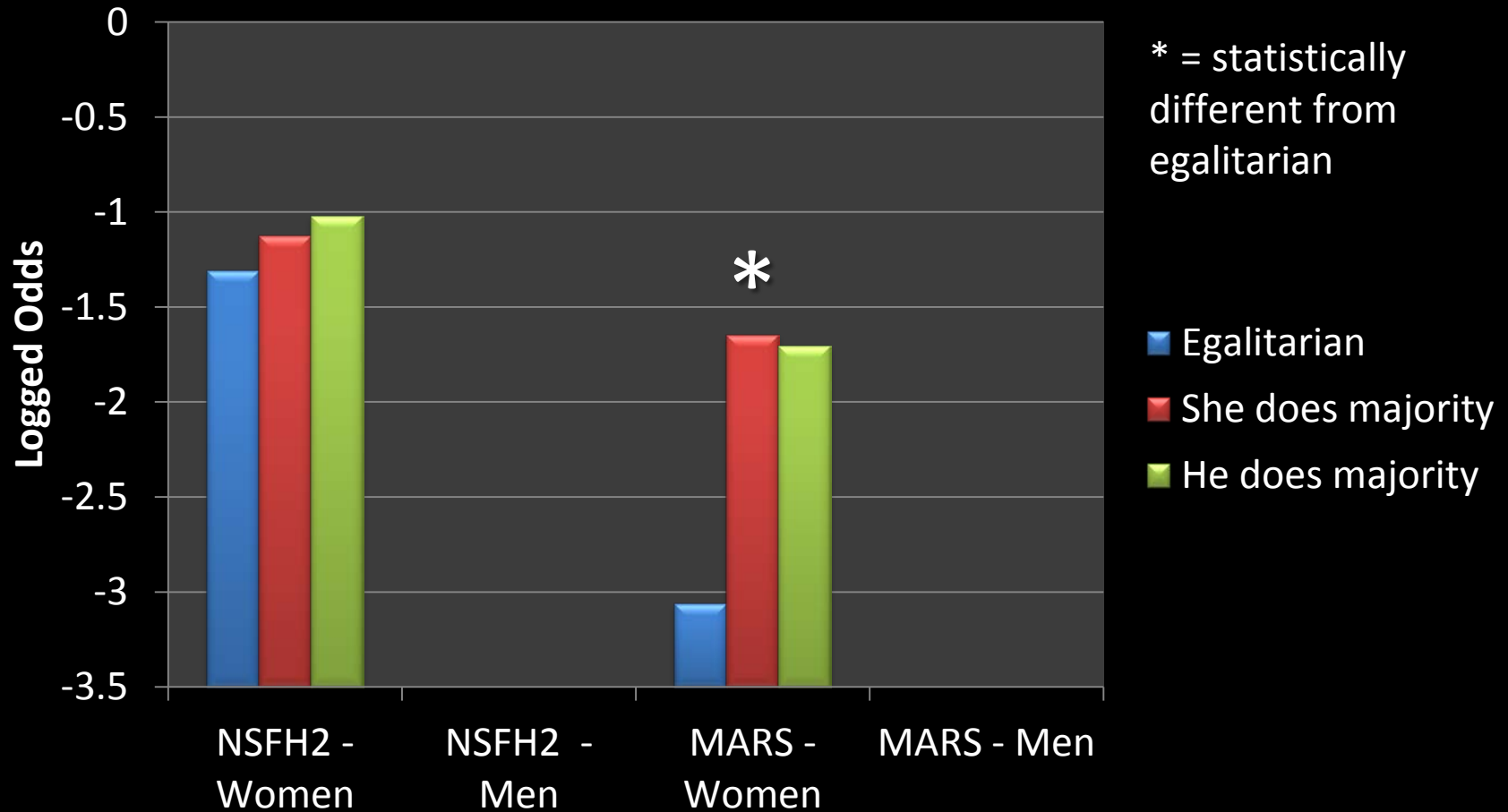
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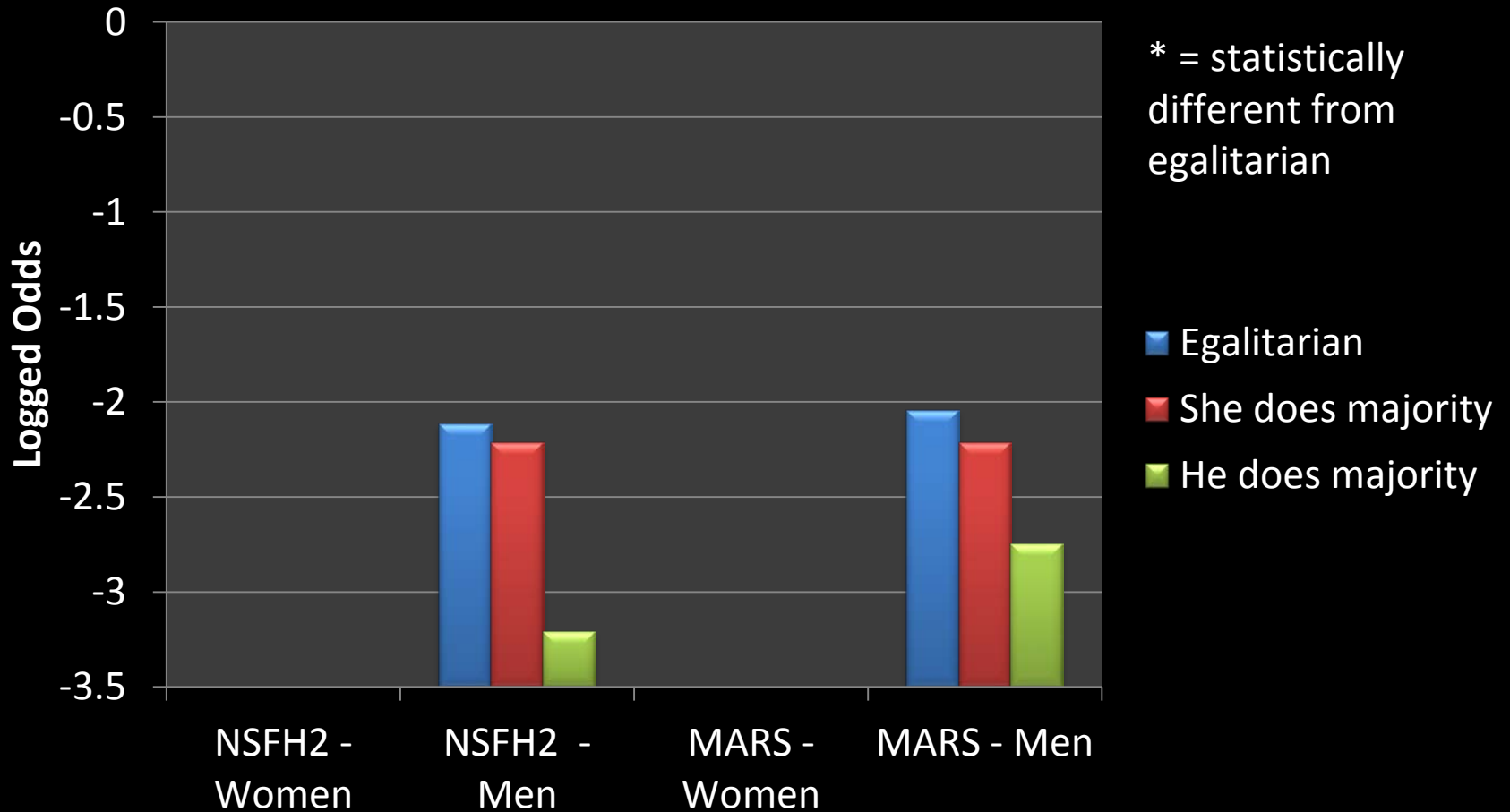
Physical Arguments



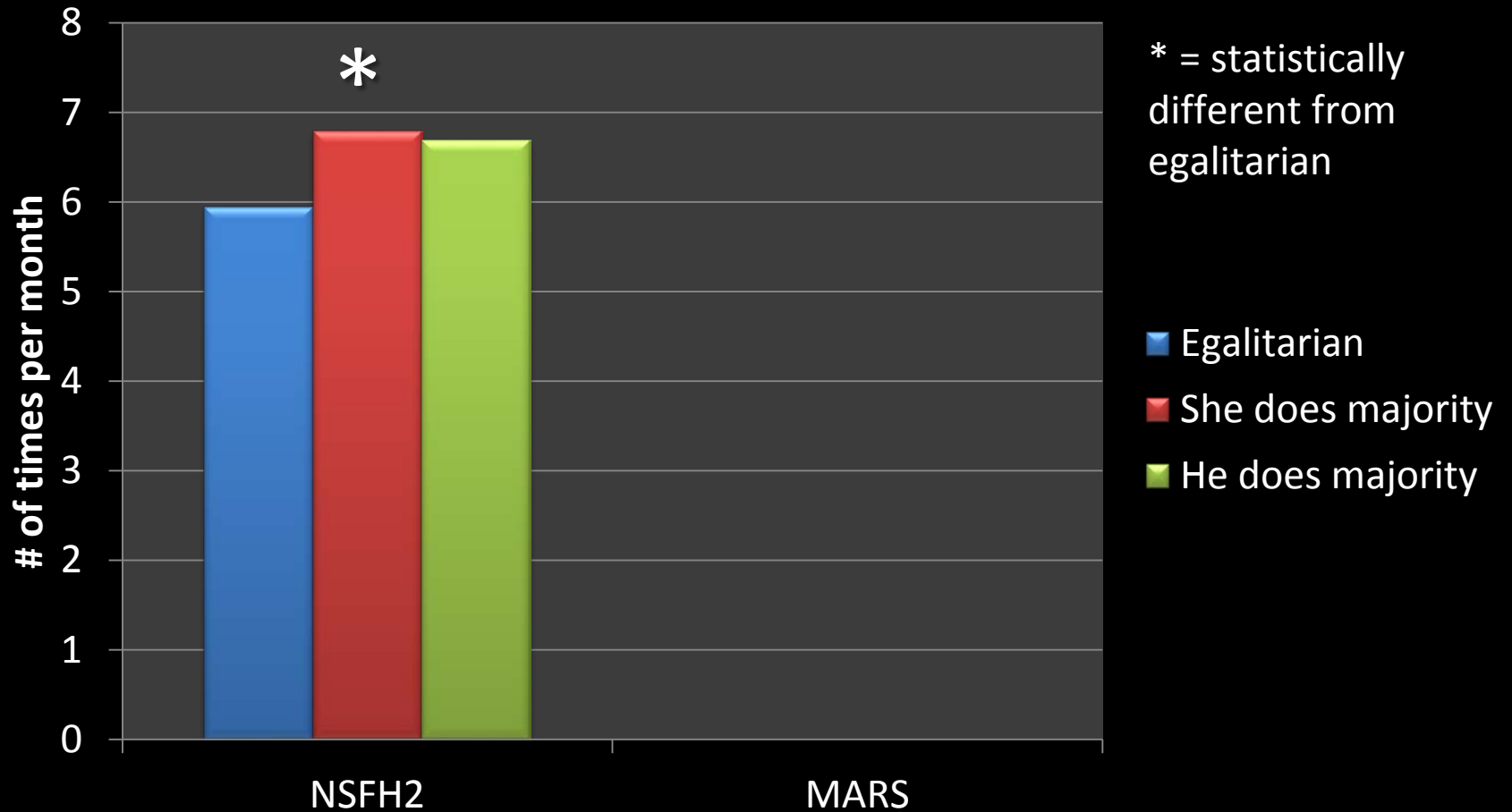
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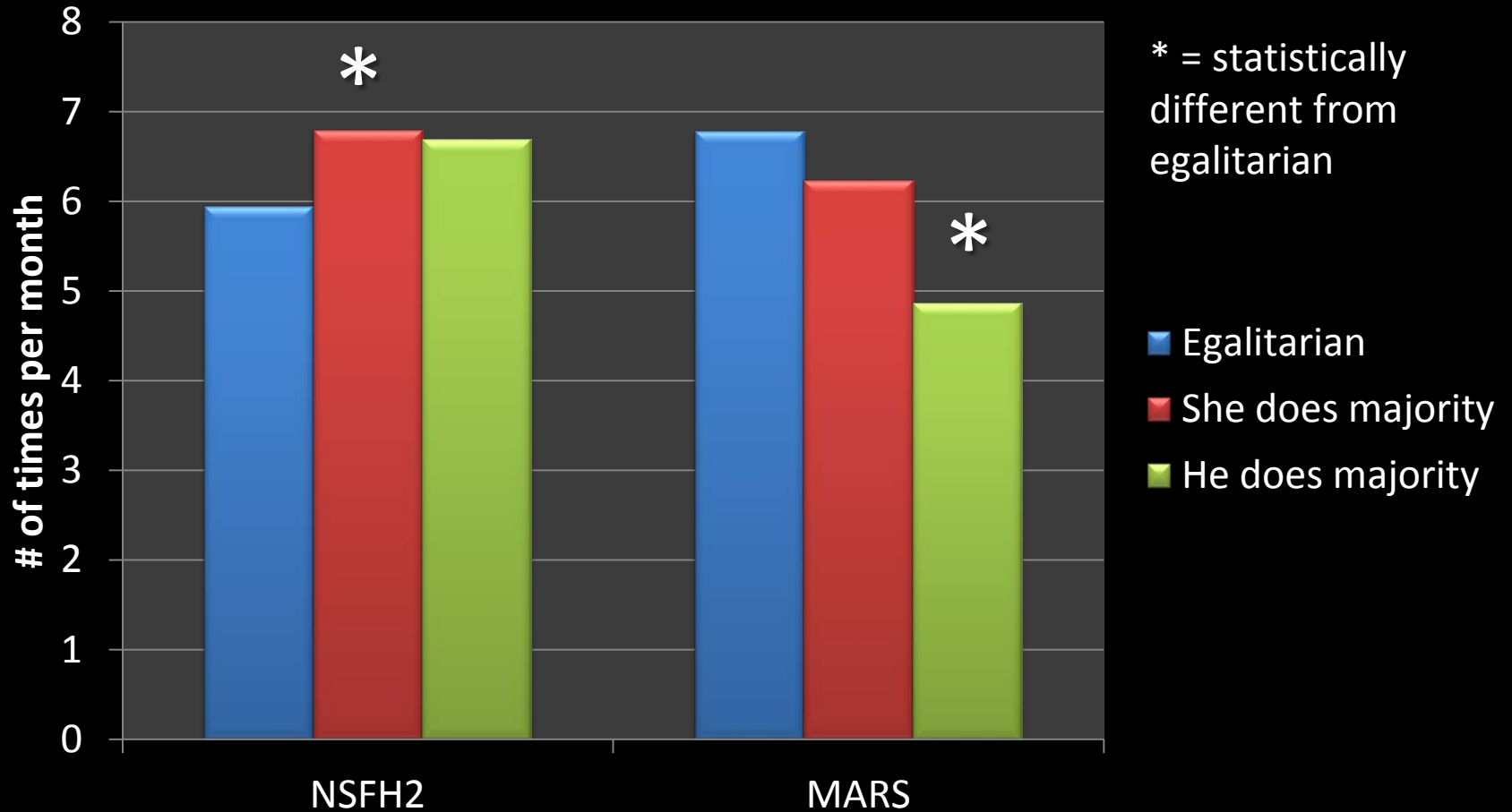
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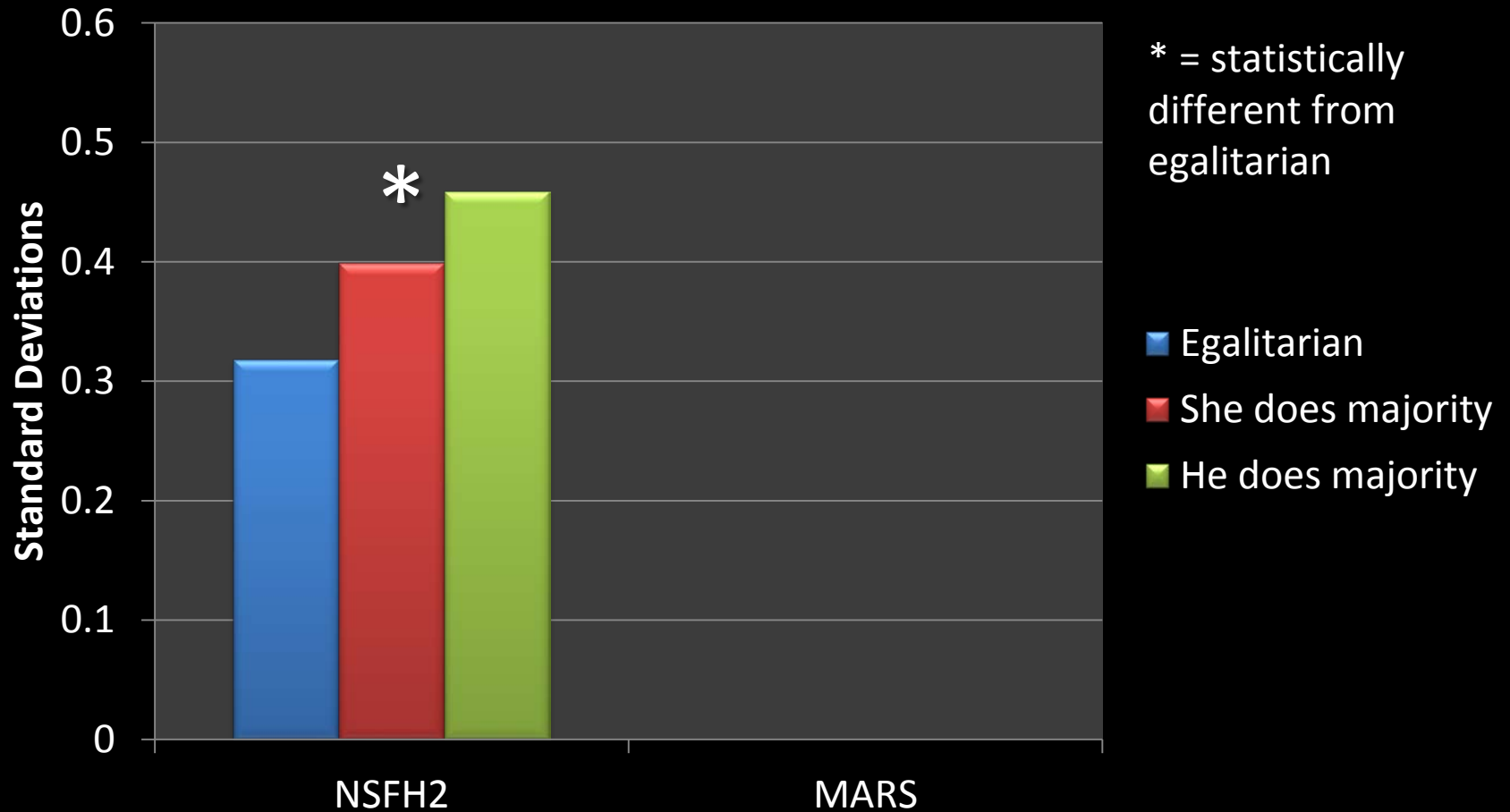
Sexual Frequency



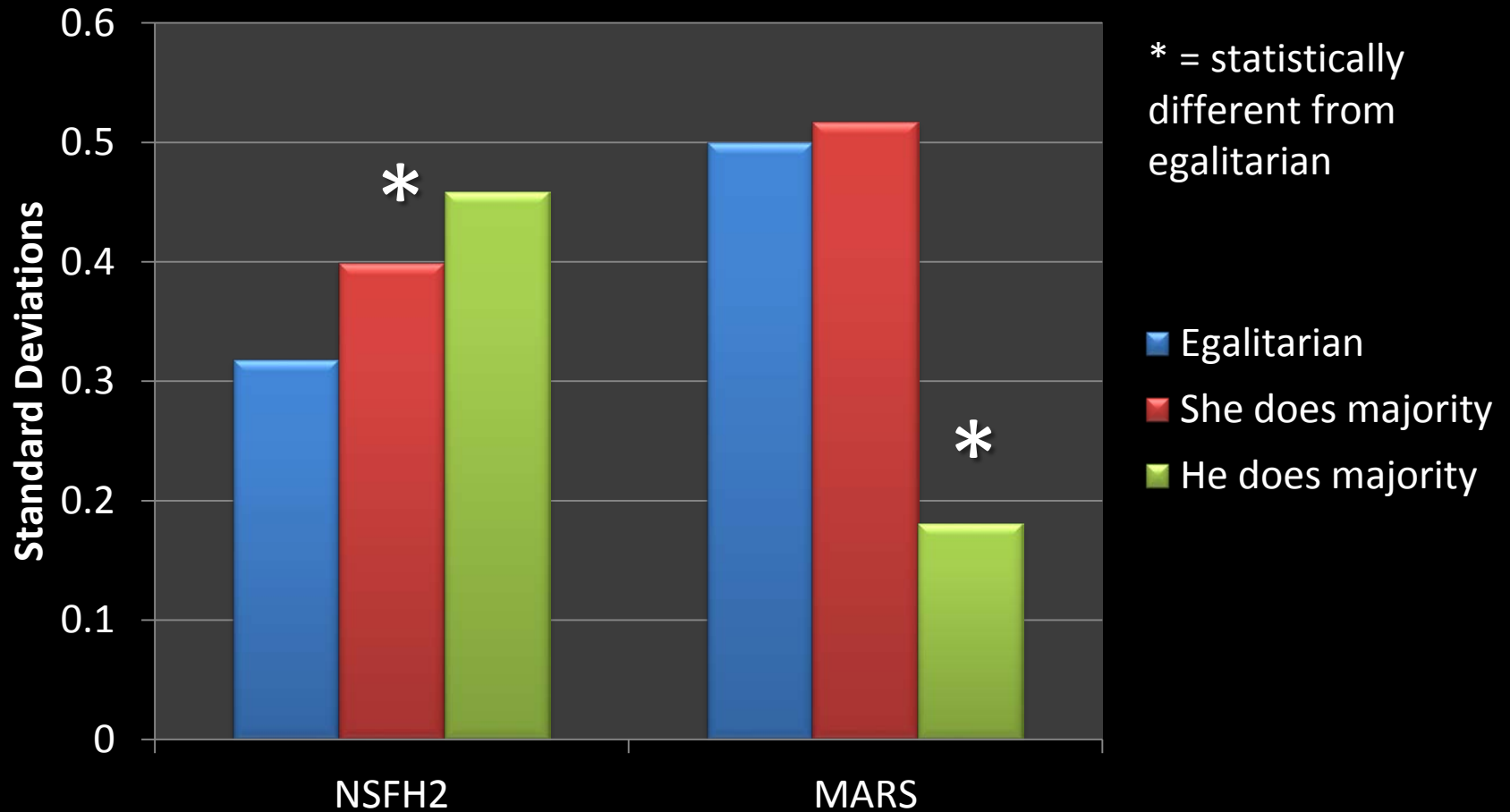
Sexual Frequency



Sexual Satisfaction



Sexual Satisfaction



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”.