

The Effect of Cohabitation on Egalitarianism in Marriage

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(ABSTRACT)

This study examines the relationship between premarital cohabitation and egalitarianism in marriage using data from the two waves of the National Survey of Families and Households (N = 13,017). Multiple regression and path analysis techniques are used to test this effect. Cohabitation is viewed as an experience in which patterns of behavior and attitudes are formed that influence later marriages. It is hypothesized that this experience leads to a more egalitarian household division of labor and less traditional gender ideologies among married individuals who cohabited premaritally, as compared to those that did not. Path models test the extent to which cohabitation's effect on later marriages is explained by the household division of labor and gender ideology at time-1. Based on attitude-behavior research, 1) a higher correlation between household division of labor and gender ideology is expected for premarital cohabitators than for non-cohabitators; and 2) a measure of attitude toward sharing housework should better predict household division of labor than does general gender ideology. The analysis showed that premarital cohabitation does have a positive effect on household division of labor and gender ideology in marriage through indirect (and possibly direct) paths. The attitudinal and behavioral measures were not more closely linked for cohabitators, and the specific attitude-toward-the-behavior measure was not a better predictor of household division of labor than general gender ideology. I conclude from this analysis that the experience of cohabitation leads to more egalitarian marriages and that this is largely due to household labor during cohabitation.

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“The American family is changing, and men are dragging their feet.”

— Hunt & Hunt

The last three decades have brought profound changes to the structure of intimate relationships in America. These include rising numbers of unmarried cohabitators, dual-earner families, and egalitarian marriages. These new behavioral patterns mirror structural and cultural changes in American society as a whole, including: the shift from an industrial to a service-based economy, a high demand for labor, decreasing real wages, the women’s movement, and the sexual revolution. These changes have not occurred simultaneously or harmoniously, nor has the transposition of new societal patterns to individual behavior and attitudes been complete. American couples attempting to build a life together are confronted with the often harsh reality of these contradictions. For example, although the majority of married women now work outside the home, even women who work full-time do far more household labor than their husbands (Hochschild, 1989). This gender gap is both a result of gender inequality and a social problem itself. In an effort to understand how the growth in one social institution (cohabitation) may affect another (marriage), this study will identify how and why couples may change toward greater egalitarian attitudes and behaviors by looking at the effect of premarital cohabitation on later marriages. Does the experience of cohabitation establish patterns of relating that are different from those of non-cohabiting people?

This analysis is important for three reasons: 1) it takes advantage of newly available panel data from a large national sample; 2) it will empirically test arguments in the attitude-behavior relationship debate, and 3) it is the first study to investigate cohabitation’s effect on the pattern of household labor and gender ideology.

The first section of this study will outline the development and persistence of the ideology of separate spheres which surrounds the issue of gender roles in society and in the family. This background is necessary to understand the macro-level forces acting upon individuals in intimate relationships. Next, I will review the sociological studies on cohabitation with reference to both the influences on entry into cohabitational unions and cohabitation’s effects on subsequent marriages. Research on gender roles and household division of labor will be discussed next, followed by a review of the literature concerning the attitude-behavior relationship, which is relevant to the main dependent variables in the study: gender ideology and household division of labor.

Chapter 1: BACKGROUND

The Ideology of Separate Spheres

In order to understand current patterns of, and ideas about, American marriages, we need to understand the structural and cultural forces acting on these marriages from outside. The sheer variety of intimate relationships today emphasizes that these ideas and patterns are not genetically determined but socially constructed. For example, why is that women are expected to be the primary caregivers and men the primary breadwinners? Some argue that women are biologically predisposed to the care of children, not merely because they have a womb, but because they are naturally kind and nurturing. Similarly, men are viewed as more rational and aggressive and thus more suited to the demands of the public world of work and politics. In other words, men and women are naturally different. This explanation is the justification for men and women having different activities and areas of influence — or separate spheres. It is this cultural belief in separate spheres, more than any other, that shapes what it means to be a man or woman in our society (Coltrane 1996: 25). Yet these biologically-justified notions are in fact shaped by our culture, and are subject to change as the social and economic factors that produced them undergo changes of their own. Gender roles are socially constructed and variable, and the persistent ideology of separate spheres is actually a fairly recent development. (For evidence from other cultures, see for example Margaret Mead's *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies*.)

One of the most important reasons for the rise of the ideology of separate spheres in America was the economic shift from production in the home to a market economy. Prior to the industrial revolution, production was organized primarily through the family household (as typified by the farm or small artisan shop). With the emergence of industrialization and commercial markets (especially after 1870), increasing numbers of fathers left the home each day to work for wages, leaving their wives at home to tend to the household and the children. In 1871, two-thirds of the American population was employed, but by the turn of the century, the majority were dependent on wage-labor to support their families. Although women also worked outside the home, these were predominately unmarried women, and by 1900 less than 5 percent of married white women worked outside the home (Coontz 1988:256).

With this new gendered division of spheres came a greater emphasis on women's responsibility over children and the home. Women's place in the home came to be glorified by the "cult of domesticity" — women were seen as the moral and emotional antidote to the sins and stresses of the outside world. This ideology placed motherhood on a pedestal and justified the new arrangement. Concurrently, ideas regarding children began to change. Prior to industrialization, children were valued primarily for the economic contributions (e.g., as free farm labor) they could make to the family. But childhood began to be considered as a special time of life that was sentimentalized and protected. They were to be shielded from the outside world by an attentive and moral mother. This period marked the beginning of what Sharon Hays (1996) calls the "ideology of intensive mothering."

Although economic and social conditions fluctuated, the ideology of separate spheres remained intact. While there was an increase in female labor-force participation between 1940 and the mid-1960s, it was predominately older married women (aged 45-64 yrs) who accounted for this increase (Bose 1987:280). In fact, the ideology of separate spheres intensified in the 1950s. Almost 80 percent of households were married couples, and most young women with children were full-time housewives (Bose; Crispell, 1992). The American housewife was idealized in the 1950s with what Betty Friedan (1963) has called the “feminine mystique.” With a rapidly expanding economy, many American families could afford to live off the “family-wage” earned by the husband.

The next decade brought profound changes to American society through the civil rights movement, the women’s movement, and the sexual revolution. The women’s movement in particular expanded the expectations of women as well as the possibilities open to them by focusing attention on the sex-based assignment of tasks, authority, and status (Thornton and Freedman 1979). The feminist discourse altered the way many people view marriage. Marriage was portrayed as a central instrument of patriarchy in which women are materially dependent on men for their well-being. In the light of this competing ideology, the traditional housewife was taken down from the pedestal on which she had been placed and was shown as essentially powerless to shape her own life. Feminists argued not only that it need not be this way, but that it should not be this way. They urged women to view themselves as full, equal human beings.

At the same time, a related social change was occurring in the late 1960s, the sexual revolution. The younger generations no longer believed that women (and to a lesser degree men — though a double standard on this point was long standing) should abstain from sex until they were married. Sex was something that need not be sanctified by the holy, legal bonds of matrimony. The liberation of sexuality opened up a range of new possibilities for living arrangements. Individuals increasingly began living alone or with roommates. Intimate couples now had a number of options to chose from, including cohabitation. Individuals could avoid the dependency and commitment that marriage implied by just living together.

Another important cause of recent changes in the American family is the slowing of the post-World War II economic boom. Since the 1960s real wages have declined, further motivating women to enter the work force to contribute to household income. The standard of living that could be maintained by a single earner in the 1950s is no longer possible for most families today. A recent survey found that over 80 percent of Americans agreed that “it takes two paychecks to support a family” (Wilkie 1993). Now, three out of four mothers of school-aged children are in the labor force.

The Persistence of Separate Spheres

With all these structural and cultural forces consistently acting to disintegrate the distinction of separate spheres, why is that women still do far more housework than men? The answer lies in the fact that this ideology serves to maintain men’s power over women. This ideology of fundamental differences between the sexes serves to justify the historic dominance of

men (as a group) over women — it is a means of social control. Not only are men able to exploit women's labor at home, but the ideology also justifies unequal treatment in the workplace. Today, women make just 73 percent of what men make. Although women have made significant gains, there is still a great deal of both structural (e.g., lack of available child care and parental leave) and cultural reluctance to change in the direction of gender equality — a fact that is true of both men *and* women . An important site of this reluctance is in the institution of marriage, where women continue to work a second shift — doing housework and caring for children.

Sociologists suggest different explanations for this gender gap in household labor. The first is the “cultural-lag view” which derives from a cultural or normative understanding of gender roles. The artificial dichotomies in personality and activity imposed by culturally constructed gender roles are viewed as denying both males and females opportunities to fully develop their human potential. As the traditional conception of gender roles becomes obsolete due to the accumulated trends of the last century (e.g., female labor-force participation), we are moving toward more symmetrical families and more androgynous personalities. The cultural-lag view emphasizes that this change has benefits for both men and women — “more balanced and integrated lives and a more complete or whole sense of personhood” (Hunt and Hunt 1987:194).

However, because of the male-supremacist themes of the old gender culture, men will be slower to discover the advantages of change. They will be threatened by a sense of erosion of traditional manly privileges and virtues, suffer a loss of identity associated with the breadwinner role, and feel diminished by the loss of claims to perform indispensable tasks (Hunt and Hunt 1987). Women will be over-burdened until men catch up, but this perspective assumes that the eventual re-equilibration will bring about a less gendered society of happier and more fully actualized people. “All men need is a little more time and enlightenment.” Hunt and Hunt (1987) note that this scenario is based on a narrow band of the population for whom the dual-income arrangement has been voluntary and work has been rewarding. It implies an agenda of education and androgynous socialization that will not by itself help the less advantaged.

The second explanation is the “social-structural” approach, which has a less benign interpretation of gender roles than the cultural-lag view. This approach assumes that women have been differentially oppressed by the social construction of gender. Women's work inside and outside the home has been consistently devalued. This approach explains that women's greater satisfaction with the dual-earner arrangement, despite overload, reflects the higher status of work outside the home versus inside. Women moving into the work force reduce the status of men and their sole claim to the breadwinner role. Men's reluctance to change can be seen as a rational response to real power loss. Goode (1980) notes that current economic and technological trends tend to weaken men's position relative to women, a fact that helps explain men's resistance to change. Hunt and Hunt interpret this approach as indicating that there is a strong economic component to equity in marriage that will not easily yield to normative pressures alone (1987: 196). That is, men still make more on average than their wives, even if those wives work full-time. Therefore, men continue to wield more economic power in negotiations over housework.

Neither of these explanations alone fully explains the phenomenon. The cultural lag approach ignores the structural barriers to equality (e.g., unequal access to market resources,

child-care, and the demands of the workplace). The social-structural approach does not explain why some men share housework even when they have more power resources. A full account of the gender gap must include both approaches. Culture and structure interact over time in social change.

In summary, the research on separate spheres illuminates the macro-level forces that structure intimate relationships. The industrial revolution changed everything. It relocated production outside of the home, dividing men from their families. Much later, economic necessities brought women into the system as a cheap workforce. Social movements, such as the women's movement and the sexual revolution, challenged the ideology, yet the separate spheres distinction has failed to disappear. This research has identified marriage as a primary locus of resistance to a more gender-equal society. The gender gap in household labor is best explained as due to both cultural lag and social-structural constraints.

Chapter 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Research on Cohabitation

The rate of cohabitation has risen greatly in recent years. In December 1996, the U.S. Census Bureau reported that there are 3.7 million American households made up of heterosexual, unmarried couples. This marked an 85 percent increase in cohabitation over the past decade and a sevenfold increase since 1970 (Vobejda 1996). Census demographer Arlene Saluter attributed this change to a greater opportunity to have this type of living arrangement and the growing acceptance of this practice by society. This enhanced opportunity is attributed to young people delaying marriage, combined with continuing high divorce rates. While only about 4 percent of all households are made up of unmarried couples at any point, as many as one-sixth of those 19 and older say they cohabited at some time in their lives (Vobejda 1996). Larry Bumpass is cited in the same article as saying that more than a quarter of college graduates have cohabited.

A primary focus of sociological research on cohabitation has involved factors that influence cohabitation behavior and experience. A recent study found that parental attitudes toward cohabitation influence children's behavior after controlling for the children's own attitudes. Interestingly, this study also showed that children's behavior influences their parents' attitudes (Axinn and Thornton 1993). Thornton (1991) also has found that the experience of parental marital dissolution increases children's nonmarital cohabitations but has little effect on their marriages. That is, parental pregnancy status and experience with a marital dissolution had no statistically significant effect on marriage following cohabitation, although mother's earlier age at marriage was strongly associated with an increased likelihood for cohabiting women, but not men, to marry. In an earlier study, Thornton (1985) found effects for attitudes toward marital dissolution that may have important consequences: although attitudes toward separation and divorce have little influence on subsequent marital dissolution, the *experience* of a marital dissolution influences *attitudes* significantly.

Religion also was found to influence cohabitation and marriage. Those from less religious families had higher rates of entering intimate co-residential unions and a tendency to substitute cohabitation for marriage. Analyses of the reciprocal influences of cohabitation and marriage on religiosity indicate that cohabitation decreases religiosity while marriage tends to increase religious participation (Thornton, Axinn, and Hill 1992). These tendencies follow from the argument that cohabitators are less traditional in their behaviors and attitudes.

Clarkberg et al. (1995) also looked at factors affecting entrance into either cohabitational or marital unions. Using data from the National Longitudinal Study of the High School Class of 1972, they found that 1) career-oriented women were much more likely to cohabit than marry if they entered a union, while the opposite was true for men; 2) men who value leisure are more likely to cohabit; and 3) men and women with liberal sex-role attitudes are more likely to cohabit. Clarkberg et al. argue that "cohabitation as an institution allows for flexibility and freedom from traditional gender-specific marital roles, at least temporarily" (623).

Previous studies have also looked at the effect of cohabitation on a number of different marital outcome variables. Researchers who have compared cohabitators to noncohabitators regarding marital stability have yielded conflicting results. Newcomb and Bentler (1980) found no significant differences in divorce rates or degree of marital satisfaction between the two groups. There were, however, major differences in the personality and demographic factors that predicted marriage success between the two groups. Another study, using data from the National Longitudinal Study of the High School Class of 1972, found that premarital cohabitation increases the risk of subsequent marital instability. Although once total time in union together (cohabitation and marriage) was accounted for, this difference disappeared (Teachman and Polonko 1990). They caution, however, that their sample did not include individuals with less than a high school education.

Booth and Johnson (1988) found that cohabitation was related negatively to marital interaction but related positively to marital disagreement, proneness to divorce, and the probability of divorce in nonminority populations. A study that analyzed data from Sweden, where the cohabitation rate is higher than in the United States, found that women who cohabit premaritally have almost 80 percent higher dissolution rates than those who do not (Bennett, Blanc, and Bloom 1988). This same study found that women who cohabit for over three years have 50 percent higher dissolution rates than those who cohabit for shorter durations. More importantly, it established that cohabitators and noncohabitators whose marriages have remained intact for eight years appear to have identical dissolution rates after that time.

DeMaris and Leslie (1984) studied the influence of cohabitation on marital satisfaction and communication. Previous cohabitation was associated with significantly lower perceived quality of communication for wives and significantly lower marital satisfaction for both spouses. Although part of this effect was accounted for by differences in sex-role traditionalism, church attendance, and other sociocultural variables between the two groups, having cohabited was still associated with slightly lower satisfaction for husbands and wives.

A study of the effect of cohabitation on marital adjustment originally found higher mean adjustment scores among the noncohabitators (Watson 1983). This finding was contradicted by a replication and follow-up of the original study (Watson and DeMeo 1987). The second study found that courtship mode, either traditional or cohabitation, does not appear to have any long-term effect on the marital adjustment of intact couples.

An important issue to remember in interpreting any study of the effects of cohabitation on marriage is selection bias. The “type” of people who cohabit may be markedly different than those who do not cohabit, *before* the unions ever begin. For example, because cohabitation is nontraditional, those with more liberal attitudes are more likely to cohabit than those with traditional attitudes — people with liberal attitudes are *selected* into the sample of cohabitators. It is possible that any effect of cohabitation on marriage may have nothing to do with cohabitation per se, but rather about the type of people that cohabit.

Summary of Cohabitation: Sociologists have investigated factors influencing entry into cohabitation and cohabitation's effect on marital variables, including satisfaction and stability. Taken together, the studies indicate that cohabitation either has a negative or nonsignificant effect on subsequent marriages (if divorce and disagreement, for example, are taken as undesirable). Thornton's (1985) finding that the experience of a marital dissolution significantly influences offspring's attitudes points to the importance of experiences in the formation and change of attitudes. Studies of the effect of cohabitation on marriage must contend with the question of selection bias.

Research on Egalitarianism, Gender Role Attitudes, and the Household Division of Labor

American marriages can be viewed on a spectrum from traditional, where patriarchy is more or less accepted and gender roles are split along the lines of separate spheres, to egalitarian. Hochschild defines egalitarian as a balance of spheres and equal power (1989:34). An egalitarian marriage is "founded on the couple's shared belief that men and women are equal partners in all spheres of life and that their roles, including those of marriage, are completely interchangeable" (Wallerstein and Blakeslee 1995:155). Thus, egalitarianism as discussed here is composed of two parts: beliefs and roles (which are sets of behavior). In both parts, the greater equality between the sexes is stressed or achieved, the more egalitarian is the relationship.

The trend toward greater egalitarianism in general and in marriage particularly has been well documented. For example, Thornton and Freedman (1979) found noticeable changes in the sex-role attitudes of women from 1962 to 1977. Shifts toward egalitarian attitudes among women were associated with additional education, work for pay outside the home, and exposure to divorce. A continuation of this analysis revealed that a trend toward more egalitarian conceptions of women's roles continued into the 1980s and showed no signs of slowing (Thornton, Alwin, and Camburn 1983). Reciprocal effects of attitudes with labor-force participation were cited, and mothers' sex-role attitudes and experiences were found to play an important part in shaping the attitudes of their offspring. Not surprisingly, church attendance and fundamentalist protestant religious identification tend to preserve more traditional outlooks. Similarly, in a comparative study of Sweden and the United States, Reiss (1980) stressed the importance of the disengagement of organized religion from Swedish culture as a major reason that Swedes are freer to choose definitions of gender roles that contradict the "segregated, nonegalitarian views of the church" (p. 195).

In a study that examined factors influencing college students preference for traditional versus egalitarian marriages, it was found that male students preferred traditional marriages while female students preferred egalitarian marriages (Kassner, 1981). With traditional marriage preference coded zero and egalitarian coded one, the mean for males of .38 was significantly different ($p \leq .01$) from the mean for females of .61. These results were interpreted in a similar manner as those of Strong (1978), who suggested a series of evolutionary changes with women's sex-role ideologies regarding egalitarian marriages changing faster in the direction of egalitarian marriages than men's. Concerning one factor that she investigated, Kassner (1981:341) suggests:

If a female wants high job involvement, she may feel that an egalitarian marriage with shared household duties and equally valued careers for both spouses would allow her the time and spouse's support necessary for her desired high job involvement.

Regarding only the variable of job involvement, the move to egalitarian marriages would be a relative improvement for women, while traditional marriages provide husbands time and support to advance their careers. Therefore, many men may view egalitarian marriages as a threat to their status inside and outside the home.

In comparing black and white families, Beckett and Smith (1981) found that black husbands in dual-income families are more likely to share domestic and child-care roles traditionally assigned to the wife, although husbands generally spend little time on such chores. They argue that there is little intrafamilial reorganization when the wife works; the major change is that the wife reduces the time she spends on child care and housework, although she is still mainly responsible for them. They also found that the husband's attitude is not a good indicator of his behavior in terms of chores.

Hiller and Philliber (1986), studying the division of labor in marriage, had a similar finding. While 58 percent of husbands say housework should be shared, except for two tasks out of 20, not more than a third of the husbands actually share or do regular household tasks, even by their own estimates. Hiller and Philliber also found that perceptions of partners' expectations strongly influence spouses' behavior. Also husbands' expectations were more powerful predictors of performance than wives', indicating that male prerogatives in marital role bargaining are still strong.

In a study by Coltrane (1996), he found that wives in marriages where household labor was shared tended to delay marriage and childbearing because of educational pursuits, commitment to employment, and other personal reasons, which enhanced their job prospects and increased the likelihood of continuous employment after giving birth (131). In general, Coltrane found that the timing of first birth was a significant predictor of egalitarianism in marriage: in over two-thirds of families in which the women was over the age of 27 years when she first gave birth, couples rated housework as relatively equally shared, while in families who had children earlier, this number was only one in four (126). Coltrane offers an explanation for this phenomenon, noting that,

early entry into parenthood appeared to create barriers to future role sharing by contributing to women's exclusive reliance on the mother role for a sense of self-worth and by limiting her earning potential. Delaying the transition to parenthood, on the other had, *changed the couple dynamics by allowing for firm establishment of a job-related identity in women and encouraging men to value the father role* (132, italics mine).

Another finding from the same study was that couples with more distant kinship ties and more cosmopolitan social networks tended to have more egalitarian marriages. This conclusion is echoed by Clarkberg et al.'s (1995) finding that less attachment to one's parents and other kin increases the propensity to cohabit.

A major trend that seems to emerge from these studies is that there is a sizeable gap between women and men concerning equality in marriage. The shift toward egalitarian marriages is occurring unevenly; women have become markedly more egalitarian in their attitudes than men. This phenomenon is reflected in Goldscheider and Goldscheider's (1992) study on gender roles, marriage, and residential independence. They found that young women with egalitarian attitudes toward the division of labor within marriage are much less likely to marry, rather than achieve residential independence through a different route, than young women expecting a gender-segregated marriage. They speculate that,

if young women have become considerably more egalitarian in their attitudes than young men, it is likely that one reason they are deferring marriage is not a rejection of marriage, per se, but of the sort of marriage offered them by more traditional young men (Goldscheider and Goldscheider 192:694).

This lack of agreement on the key roles men and women are to occupy, can only serve to strain the relationships of those involved.

Although Blair (1993) found that egalitarian-oriented men report higher marital quality than traditional men, this is contrasted by the finding that wives with traditional husbands report lower marital quality as their own earnings increase. Blair argues that husbands may maintain traditional role expectations for themselves and their wives, despite the dual-earner status of their marriage. This incongruence between expectations and reality appears to have harsh consequences on the well-being of wives and the quality of marriages.

In a study of women and stress, Mirowsky and Ross (1989) found that:

the best arrangement appears to be employment and motherhood, coupled with easily arranged and shared participation by the husband in care for young children. The next best arrangement is employment and no children. The third best is employment, motherhood, and shared participation by husbands in child care, even if the couple has difficulty arranging child care (105).

The most stressful situation for wives is one in which they are employed, have young children, and have difficulty arranging and sole responsibility for child care. Wives who work a significant second shift without much help from their husbands are the most distressed. Taken together, the studies by Blair (1993) and Mirowsky and Ross (1989) show that working women with husbands

who do not share household responsibilities are more subject to depression and are less happy with their marriages.

Greenstein (1996) and DeMaris and Longmore (1996) conducted two recent studies of household division of labor using data from the first wave (1987-1988) of the National Survey of Families and Households (Sweet, Bumpass, and Call 1988), which will be used in the current analysis along with its follow-up. Using a model based on relative deprivation theory, Greenstein suggests that gender ideology acts as a moderator variable in a process through which inequalities in the division of household labor come to be seen as inequities. He found that inequalities in household division of labor are more strongly related to perceptions of inequity for egalitarian than for traditional wives, and that perceptions of inequity are more strongly related to perceived quality of the marital relationship for egalitarian than for traditional wives. He also argues that “wives’ *perceptions* of the fairness of the division of household labor are better predictors of marital conflict than the *actual* extent of inequality” (1040, italics in original). Greenstein’s study supports the argument that it is egalitarian wives’ repudiation of the cultural doctrine of separate spheres that lies behind their displeasure with unequal sharing of household tasks.

DeMaris and Longmore tested the relative influence on the perception of fairness of household labor of 1) partners’ adherence to a traditional gender-role ideology, 2) wives’ alternatives to the marriage, and 3) equity across key domains of the relationship (net of actual contributions to “female-typed” housework). Equity is said to be achieved in an exchange whenever each partner’s outcomes are proportional to their inputs (DeMaris and Longmore 1996:1047). Echoing Greenstein, they found most support for the effect of ideology and considerations of equity and relatively little for wives’ alternatives (measured in terms of wives’ general human capital).

Summary of Egalitarianism, Gender Role Attitudes, and Household Division of Labor: Research has shown that 1) women’s views on gender roles are becoming egalitarian faster than men’s; 2) men’s attitudes toward sharing housework do not predict their behavior; 3) women who work or postpone the transition to the role of wife/mother tend to have more egalitarian marriages; 4) working mothers with husbands who are unsupportive with child care and who have trouble arranging child care are highly distressed; and 5) women with more egalitarian gender-role ideologies view inequality in the household labor as unfair and distressing¹.

¹While this last finding is important, I must differ with Greenstein’s suggestion that we “shift our focus from the *objective* level of inequality in the division of household labor to the *subjective* or cognitive processes by which these inequalities come to be perceived as inequities” (p.1041, italics in original). This is appropriate for studying fairness but not for untangling the processes through which changes occur in intimate relationships. The objective level of inequality is absolutely important, for it is a social-structural fact with profound implications, not only for individual couples, but for society.

Attitudes, Behavior, and Roles

Because an essential part of the present analysis looks at the interrelationship of an attitudinal component (gender ideology) and a behavioral component (household division of labor), it is important to review current developments in this area. Previous sociological research has found a notoriously small relationship between attitudes and behaviors. Wicker (1969) examined 33 studies assessing this relationship and concluded that:

Product-moment correlation coefficients relating the two kinds of responses are rarely above .30 and often are near zero. Only rarely can as much as ten percent of the variance in overt behavioral measures be accounted for by attitudinal data (p. 65).

Schuman and Johnson (1976) are more optimistic, arguing that there is something to this relationship and that attitudes and behaviors are related under a variety of conditions and over a range of substantive areas. They point out that there are no more than moderate-sized correlations between such well-known relationships as father's and son's occupational status in America and academic aptitude scores and college grades.

Other sociologists have progressed in the analysis of behaviors and attitudes. Liska (1984) has developed a model of the attitude-behavior relationship that conceives of the variables as being reciprocally related. He explicitly includes aspects of social structure, "which allocates resources and creates opportunities for engaging in behavior," as a set of background variables (Kiecolt 1988). Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) emphasize that if we wish to predict a particular behavior, then the attitude toward the behavior itself, not simply toward the object must be assessed. Fazio (1988) argues that the attitude-to-later-behavior relationship is stronger when the attitude is grounded in and based on previous experience rather than indirect experience. Direct experience strengthens the attitude-behavior bond.

Developments in the attitude-behavior relationship may help explain related findings in the area of social roles and role transition. Adaptation to life events involves patterns of subjective restructuring. Waite et al. (1986) found that young women who live away from home prior to marriage become more favorable toward nontraditional gender roles than those who live with their parents. The relationship is strongest for attitudes relating to women's employment and traditional roles in the household (Huber and Spitze 1983; Smith 1985). Kiecolt (1988) explains Waite et al.'s findings by suggesting "that young adults who live away from home may diverge from their parents' attitudes as their parents' control over their activities lessens, or they may grow to prefer independence as they gain new social and domestic skills" (390). There is something about their living arrangements that is helping to shape their identities. Mason (1974) argued that a "role hiatus" between the role of daughter and traditional mother gives young women an opportunity to develop "tastes" for employment. The status of "sales clerk" or "accountant" can become an important element of their identities. Clearly the concept of role — gender roles, wife, husband, worker— is central to an explanation of the link between cohabitation and egalitarianism in marriage.

Summary of Attitudes, Behavior, and Roles: Research on the attitude-behavior relationship has found an historically low correlation, but this connection is greater when we assess attitudes toward particular behaviors rather than toward an object. The attitude-behavior relationship should be conceived of as reciprocal. Also, the attitude-to-later-behavior relationship is enhanced when the attitude is grounded on direct previous experience. Role transition research suggests that when women live away from home before marriage, they tend to have more egalitarian attitudes and have more egalitarian marriages.

The Problem

The gender gap in household labor is due to an incomplete normative shift and continued structural barriers to gender equality. It is therefore important to investigate why some couples have been more successful at creating egalitarian marriages than others. Are they fundamentally different from more traditional couples? Certainly, a substantial part of cohabitation's effect on later marriages is due to the type of people who cohabit (selection bias), but I am arguing that the process of cohabiting has an independent effect on marriage. We have seen that actual experiences can have a major impact on both attitudes and behavior. Research also has shown that women who experience a "role hiatus" before the transition to marriage are more egalitarian. That is, those with nontraditional *experiences* tend to have marriages that are more egalitarian. Here, cohabitation is conceived of as just such a direct experience — in which patterns of behavior will be established and attitudes will be transformed. This experience should have a significant influence on attitudes and behavior in later marriages. Cohabitation should have an effect on both men and women and may act to shrink the gender gap.

Four hypotheses are suggested by the literature and by my conceptualization of cohabitation. First, premarital cohabitation will have a positive causal effect on the egalitarianism of marriage (as indicated by household division of labor and gender ideology). Those couples that lived together before getting married learned to relate to one another more as equal, independent individuals rather than in the roles proscribed by traditional marriage. This will also be true because cohabitation serves as a "role hiatus" for women. Second, this effect will occur primarily through gender ideology and household division labor at time-1. Cohabitation's effect on marriage should be largely accounted for by the household division of labor and gender ideology established in that relationship. These two variables should capture why cohabitators are more egalitarian later on. The more that time-1 gender ideology explains the time-2 variables, the more the self-selection argument is confirmed. If time-1 household division of labor has an independent effect on time-2 gender ideology, then this supports the idea that sharing behavior heightens egalitarian gender attitudes at a later date. If cohabitation's effect is not fully explained by its indirect paths through time-1 gender ideology and household division of labor, then this would suggest that there is something else about the experience of cohabitation (e.g., heightened individualism) that is responsible for the effect and would need to be explored.

The third hypothesis is that the relationship between gender ideology and household division of labor will be stronger for cohabitators than for noncohabitators. Cohabitators will be more self-conscious of the reasons for their behavior because they are in a relationship that has far

fewer proscriptions for correct behavior than marriage, and as Blumstein and Schwartz note, cohabitators “are likely to invoke the rule of doing one’s fair share” (1983:327). This “rule” can be seen as a justification (reflecting an attitude) for the behavior of sharing household labor.

The fourth hypothesis is a test of Fishbein and Ajzen argument that we should look to attitudes that directly relate to behaviors rather than to objects. Therefore, attitude toward the sharing of housework should be a better predictor of household division of labor than general gender ideology.

Chapter 3: DATA AND METHODS

Data Set:

This analysis will use data from both waves of the NSFH conducted in 1987-88 and again in 1992-94. The NSFH is a national probability sample of 13,017 adult respondents. The main sample of 9,463 respondents represent the noninstitutional United States population aged 19 and older (at time of original interview). Among other groups, cohabitators and those recently married were double sampled. The original survey is cross-sectional with several retrospective sequences including questions concerning previous cohabitations. To best understand cohabitation's effect on marriage, it is important to have longitudinal data. To have any idea of *how* this effect works, we need data for those who were cohabiting at time-1 and married at time-2. Causality can be argued much better in this situation, as we are able to control for important effects (such as gender ideology and household division of labor at time-1) and can see both direct and indirect effects on the dependent variables. The combined surveys provide this longitudinal data for analysis.

Variables:

Dependent Variables: 1) *Gender ideology* will be tapped through a scale composed of five items asked of all respondents in both waves of the NSFH. Respondents were asked to rate how much they agreed or disagreed with the following statements (on a 5-point scale from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree"):

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. Preschool children are likely to suffer if their mother is employed.
3. It is all right for a couple with an unhappy marriage to get a divorce when their youngest child is under age 5.
4. It is all right for mothers to work full-time when their youngest child is under age 5.
5. It is all right for an unmarried couple to live together even if they have no interest in marriage.²

The item scoring was adjusted so that higher scores indicate more liberal gender ideology attitudes. These questions were chosen partly because they appear in essentially the same form

²Because this item directly refers to cohabitation, there is a possibility that responses to this question might be highly correlated to whether or not the individual cohabited. This, however, was not found and responses were similar regardless of cohabitation history.

on both waves of the NSFH. This scale is similar to those used by Demaris and Longmore (1996) and Greenstein (1996) in previous studies of the NSFH-1 data.

A factor analysis of the scale was conducted which yielded a single factor. The reliability of the scale was also assayed. The scale was found to be acceptable, with a Cronbach's alpha of .66 (standardized alpha = .69) for time-1 and .71 (standardized alpha = .71) for time-2. The factor pattern was the same at both times. Tests indicated that reliability would not be improved by the deletion of any items.

Separate factor and reliability analyses were conducted for male and female subsamples, and there were no appreciable differences between the groups. The factor analysis was then used to create a factor score for the scale which weighted each item according to its contribution to the underlying component.³

A single measure of *attitudes toward sharing housework* was also selected in order to get at an attitude that specifically referred to the behavior in question: household labor. Respondents were asked to answer on a 5-point scale if they agreed or disagreed with the statement: "A husband whose wife is working full-time should spend just as many hours doing housework as his wife." Because the responses to this item were so skewed (82 percent of respondents either "strongly agreed" or "agreed" with this statement), it was dichotomized into a dummy variable with a one indicating "strongly agree" and zero being all other responses⁴.

2) *Household division of labor* is gaged by individuals' estimates of their own and their partners' weekly contribution in hours to five "female-typed" household tasks:

1. Preparing meals
2. Cleaning house
3. Washing dishes
4. Shopping
5. Washing, ironing

Only "female-typed" tasks were used for two reasons. First, housework is highly gendered. Woman traditionally do the routine and continual chores (e.g., washing dishes, cleaning the

³Regression analyses using unweighted sums of the five gender ideology items yielded results that were not significantly different from those using the factor scores.

⁴When this item was included in the factor analysis of the gender ideology scale above, it separated as a factor of its own. Therefore, it was not included in that scale.

laundry), while men do tasks that are more sporadic and less time-consuming (e.g., fixing the toilet, trimming the hedges). This is a pattern that has been consistently identified in the literature (see Coltrane 1996:63-69; DeMaris and Longmore 1996:1044; Greenstein 1996:1030; Hochschild 1989:43-45). Second, this pattern was confirmed by factor analyses of the current data which indicated two factors⁵. The items that are not included are auto maintenance, outdoor tasks, paying bills, and driving. The degree to which men perform these “female-typed” tasks is a better indicator of deviation from the traditional, gendered division of household labor than is total household labor.

Factor analyses and reliability tests indicated that the scale was strong and reliable for all eight subgroups (two estimates for each member of a dyad, time-1 and time-2) and for both males and females. Reliability analyses yielded alphas that ranged from a high of .8677 to a low of .8114. The estimates for each individual were averaged, and the difference in hours per week spent on these tasks was calculated. In order to avoid distorting the results, for those cases where the male partner did more than the female partner (136 cases out of 4,255), the difference is set to zero to indicate an equal division of household labor.

Independent Variables: 1) *Cohabitation* is coded as a series of dummy variables, one for each of the four sets of groups that will be analyzed. For the cross-sectional analysis, married individuals were categorized as having cohabited or not having cohabited according to their answers to the following question:

Nowadays, many unmarried couples live together, sometimes they eventually get married and sometimes they don't. Did you and your (first) husband/wife live together before you were married?

This item is also used to distinguish premarital cohabitators from noncohabitators who were continuously married at time-1 and time-2 (variable name: **PRECH**). The second set of groups for comparison are those single at time-1 and married at time-2 compared to those cohabiting at time-1 and married at time-2. These groups are identified by marital status at time-2 and the status of time-1 union variable on the NSFH2 (variable name: **CHSINGLE**). The third set of groups is those cohabiting at time-1 and married at time-2 versus those continuously married as indicated by the status of time-1 union variable (variable name: **CHDUM**).

The fourth set of groups are all cohabitators, those cohabiting at time-1 and married at time-2 and those continuously cohabiting (variable name: **CHMAR**).

2) *Gender ideology* and 3) *household division of labor* at time-1 will also serve as independent variables for the panel analysis.

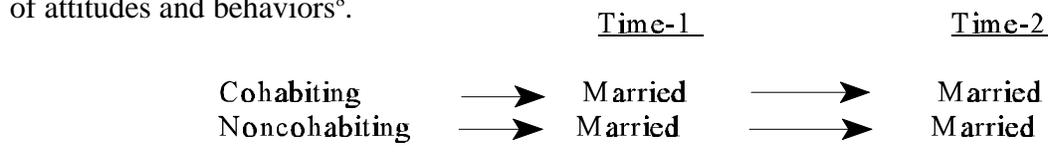
⁵Another incidental benefit of the “female-typed” task scale is that it yields more usable cases do to missing data in the full scale (2,107 vs. 1,890 at time-1 and 4,255 vs. 4,018 at time-2).

Control Variables: Social-structural measures are included as control variables. Dummy variables are used for gender (1 = female), race (black = 1, white = 0), and education (1 = some college are more, 0 = no college). Interval measures are used for age, total couple income, difference in income (positive difference indicates male makes more), and religious participation (in services attended per week). These variables will be used to create interaction terms with cohabitation to test if cohabitation mediates the effect of any of these variables.

Analysis:

The data analysis consists of five parts. First, means, standard deviations, and correlation coefficients will be obtained for all variables. Next, I found the zero-order correlations of the important cohabitation predictor variables with the dependent variables. These tests show the basic significance and strength of cohabitation’s influence without controlling for other possible causes.

The third part includes a series of path analyses involving cohabitation and the control variables as the exogenous variables and household division of labor and gender ideology at time-1 and time-2 as the endogenous variables. Techniques appropriate to this type of linear panel analysis are used (Kessler and Greenberg 1981)⁶. Cohabitation has paths both to the time-1 variables and to the time-2 variables⁷. The path analyses allow a test of the relative influence of the direct and indirect effects of the independent variables. We can determine if cohabitation’s effect on time-2 gender ideology and household division of labor is explained by time-1 gender ideology and household division of labor. We also can determine the cross-lagged effects of gender ideology and household division of labor on one another to test the direction of influence of attitudes and behaviors⁸.



⁶Change due to time variables will not be needed because the time-2 variables’ scores at time-1 are controlled for in the regression equations.

⁷Cohabitation is conceived of in these models as having a unidirectional effect on gender ideology at time-1. Although there is evidence that the effect is reciprocal (i.e., gender ideology also affects the choice to cohabit), I am interested only in the *effects* of cohabitation. The presence of the control variables should aid in this argument.

⁸The influence of most of the control variables on the time-2 variables will be set to zero, as any influence should be accounted for by their paths through time-1 gender ideology and household division of labor. For example, the effect of total income (at time-1) and education should not have any lagged effects. These factors certainly influence attitudes, mate selection, and social contacts, but it is difficult to argue that a *direct* effect on time-2 variables is important. As a precaution, time-2 variables were regressed on all the control variables. Religious participation continued to have a direct influence on the dependent variables.

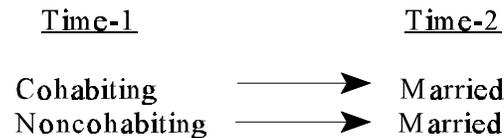
To get a complete picture of the influence of cohabitation on marriage using this data, a number of separate analyses were conducted. The first model includes only individuals who were continuously married through both interviews. They are compared on the basis of whether or not they cohabited with their spouse before they were married (before time-1) as identified by the variable PRECH.

Although not controlling for gender ideology and household division of labor during cohabitation, this model does allow us to see the effect of cohabitation over time by tapping premarital cohabitation retrospectively (time-(-1)). In the second path model, individuals who are cohabitators at time-1 and married at time-2 are compared to individuals who are single at time-1 (not cohabiting) and married at time-2 using the CHSINGLE variable.



Because the single individuals could not provide household division of labor data at time-1, only gender ideology will be tested at time-1.

The third path model compares individuals who were cohabiting at time-1 and married at time-2 with individuals who were continuously married through both interviews using the dummy variable CHDUM.



Full data are available for both groups at both times. Any continuously married individuals who cohabited before time-1 are excluded from the analysis. Unlike the previous model, here we can completely control for time-1 gender ideology and household division of labor.

The last model, comparing those cohabiting at time-1 and married at time-2 with those continuously cohabiting using the variable CHMAR, is included to test for significant differences in the two groups.



This tests if Blumstein and Schwartz (1982) were correct in saying that cohabitators that later marry are more traditional than other cohabitators.

The fourth part tests competing path models and use interaction terms for cohabitation with time-1 gender ideology and with household division of labor to test whether time-2 household division of labor and gender ideology are more highly linked with the time-1 variables for cohabitators than for non-cohabitators. This is a way to test the hypothesis that cohabitators' real-

life experiences will bring their behaviors more closely in line with their attitudes than non-cohabitators (based on Fazio's (1988) assertion).

The last part will test whether *attitudes toward sharing housework* has a stronger association with household division of labor than the more general gender ideology scale. According to Fishbein and Ajzen, the more specific item, which taps the attitude toward the behavior itself, should be the better predictor. Logistic regression techniques and partial correlations will be used to test the argument that this association should be stronger.

Chapter 4: FINDINGS

The zero-order correlations of the cohabitation variables with the time-1 and time-2 gender ideology and household division of labor variables are presented in Table 1. Note that the strongest effects are found for the PRECH variable (premarital cohabitation before time-1) and both gender ideology variables ($r = .2269$ ($p = .0000$) and $.2055$ ($p = .0000$), respectively). This indicates a moderate but highly significant zero-order correlation which is consonant with my prediction. Because PRECH is a retrospective variable, it refers to cohabitation that temporal precedes time-1 gender ideology and household division of labor. Therefore the effect of PRECH is unidirectional. Four correlations failed to achieve significance (at the .05 level): CHMAR and both gender ideology variables, CHMAR and time-1 household division of labor, and CHSINGLE and time-2 household division of labor. A complete matrix of correlations among variables is presented in Appendix 1.

TABLE 1:
Means and Standard Deviations

| Variables | Means | Standard Deviations |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|----------------------------|
| PRECH | .1572 | .3630 |
| CHSINGLE | .0301 | .1708 |
| CHDUM | .0405 | .1972 |
| CHMAR | .5951 | .4917 |
| Gender Ideology (time-1) | .0000 | 1.0000 |
| Household Division of Labor (time-1) | 22.8318 | 18.7669 |
| Gender Ideology (time-2) | .0000 | 1.0000 |
| Household Division of Labor (time-2) | 23.3742 | 18.4824 |
| Female | .5984 | .4902 |
| Age | 42.8524 | 17.4277 |
| Black (white) | .2025 | .4018 |
| College (no college) | .2131 | .4095 |
| Religious participation (per week) | .8766 | 2.6678 |
| Sharing housework (time-1) | 4.1897 | .7654 |

| Variables | Means | Standard Deviations |
|----------------------------------|----------|---------------------|
| Sharing housework (time-2) | 3.7710 | .9732 |
| Total income | \$38,643 | \$45,571 |
| Income difference | \$19,133 | \$38,541 |
| Difference in housework (time-1) | 21.1534 | 18.6893 |
| Difference in housework (time-2) | 21.5515 | 19.5280 |

TABLE 2:
Zero-Order Correlations between Key Variables

| Variables | GI ₁ | HDL ₁ | GI ₂ | HDL ₂ |
|-----------|-----------------|------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| PRECH | .2269*** | -.1217*** | .2055*** | -.0799*** |
| CHSINGLE | .0965** | | .1255*** | -.0445 |
| CHDUM | .1365*** | -.1612*** | .1371*** | -.0742*** |
| CHMAR | .0037 | -.1828 | -.0110 | -.1476* |

* p <= .05 ** p <= .01 *** p <= .001

PATH ANALYSES

Model One (continuously married, compared on the basis of whether or not they cohabited with their spouse before they were married, PRECH):

The path models (Appendix 2) and the multiple regression analyses (Tables 3-6) with the full set of control variables yielded mixed results. Results of regressions of the time-2 variables showed that while PRECH continued to have a direct effect on gender ideology when controlling for time-1 variables with a beta of .0572 ($p = .0291$), the direct effect of PRECH on time-2 household division of labor was not significant. Religious participation (as measured at time-1) continued to have a small effect on time-2 gender ideology.

The cross-lagged effect of time-1 household division of labor on gender ideology was significant, though small, at $-.0637$ ($p = .0364$). The effect of time-1 gender ideology on household division of labor was not significant. In sum, premarital cohabitation prior to time-1

had both direct and indirect (through time-1 household division of labor) effects on time-2 gender ideology.

TABLE 3
Model 1: Regressions of Gender Ideology and Household Division of Labor
on Cohabitation and Background Variables (N = 1,067)

| Variables | GI ₁ | HDL ₁ | GI ₂ | HDL ₂ |
|---|-----------------|------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Cohabiting (PRECH) | .1238*** | -.0577* | .0573* | -.0232 |
| Religious Participation (time-1) | -.0722** | .0086 | -.0692** | |
| Age | -.2122*** | -.0260 | | |
| Black (white) | .0072 | -.0262 | | |
| College (no college) | .1031*** | -.1498*** | | |
| Female | .0952*** | .0020 | | |
| Total couple income | .0785** | -.0294 | | |
| Income difference | -.0606* | .0763** | | |
| Gender Ideology (time-1) | | -.2795***^ | .6284*** | -.0354 |
| Household Division of Labor (time-1) | -.2526***^ | | -.0637* | .4737*** |
| Gender Ideology (time-2) | | | | -.0781* |
| Household Division of Labor (time-2) | | | -.0730* | |
| R ² | .2126 | .1290 | .5057 | .2771 |

* p <= .05 ** p <= .01 *** p <= .001 (one-tailed tests)

^ These coefficients should not be interpreted as causal effects; they are included in the regressions to serve as controls.

TABLE 4
Model 2: Regressions of Gender Ideology and Household Division of Labor
on Cohabitation and Background Variables (N = 448)

| Variables | GI₁ | GI₂ | HDL₂ |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Cohabiting (vs. Single) | .0760 | .0370 | -.0133 |
| Religious Participation | -.2436*** | -.1500*** | |
| Age | -.1300** | | |
| Black (white) | -.0052 | | |
| College (no college) | .0893* | | |
| Female | .2594*** | | |
| Total income | .1469*** | | |
| Income difference | | | |
| Gender Ideology (time-1) | | .4738*** | -.0008 |
| Gender Ideology (time-2) | | | -.1636***^ |
| Household Division of Labor (time-2) | | -.1098***^ | |
| R ² | .1656 | .3172 | .0277 |

* p <= .05
(one-tailed tests)

** p <= .01

*** p <= .001

^ These coefficients should not be interpreted as causal effects; they are included in the regressions to serve as controls.

TABLE 5
Model 3: Regressions of Gender Ideology and Household Division of Labor
on Cohabitation and Background Variables (N = 1,183)

| Variables | GI ₁ | HDL ₁ | GI ₂ | HDL ₂ |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Cohabiting (CHDUM) | .0319 | -.1282*** | .0309 | -.0024 |
| Religious Participation | -.0823** | .0049 | -.0744* | |
| Age | -.3225*** | -.0256 | | |
| Black (white) | .0280 | -.0053 | | |
| College (no college) | .0928*** | -.1651*** | | |
| Female | .1108*** | -.0105 | | |
| Total couple income | .0857** | -.0059 | | |
| Income difference | -.0685* | .0718* | | |
| Gender Ideology (time-1) | | -.2482***^ | .6222*** | -.0350 |
| Household Division of Labor (time-1) | -.2192***^ | | -.0695* | .4867*** |
| Gender Ideology (time-2) | | | | -.0741^ |
| Household Division of Labor (time-2) | | | -.0727*^ | |
| R ² | .2279 | .1255 | .4840 | .2829 |

* p <= .05

** p <= .01

*** p <= .001 (one-tailed tests)

^ These coefficients should not be interpreted as causal effects; they are included in the regressions to serve as controls.

TABLE 6
Model 4: Regressions of Gender Ideology and Household Division of Labor
on Cohabitation and Background Variables (N = 85)

| Variables | GI ₁ | HDL ₁ | GI ₂ | HDL ₂ |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Cohabiting (CHMAR) | -.1637 | -.1980 | -.0975 | .0252 |
| Religious Participation | -.0883 | -.0058 | -.1159 | |
| Age | -.3667*** | -.0624911 | | |
| Black (white) | -.0245 | .0494 | | |
| College (no college) | .0994 | -.1434 | | |
| Female | .1181 | .0016 | | |
| Total income | .0955 | .0056 | | |
| Income difference | -.0676 | .0779 | | |
| Gender Ideology (time-1) | | -.2822* [^] | .4719*** | -.0695 |
| Household Division of Labor (time-1) | -.2471* [^] | | -.0820 | .5564*** |
| Gender Ideology (time-2) | | | | -.2106 [^] |
| Household Division of Labor (time-2) | | | -.2018 [^] | |
| R ² | .2485 | .1416 | .3497 | .3990 |

* p <= .05

** p <= .01

*** p <= .001 (one-tailed tests)

[^] These coefficients should not be interpreted as causal effects; they are included in the regressions to serve as controls.

Model Two (those single at time-1 and married at time-2 compared to those cohabiting at time-1 and married at time-2, CHSINGLE):

An analysis of gender ideology at time-1 regressed on the controls found that the strongest effects were for gender (.2594) and religious participation (-.2436). Time-1 household division of labor data were not available.

Cohabitation had no significant effect on time-2 gender ideology or household division of labor. Religious participation had a negative impact on time-2 gender ideology (-.1500). The cross-lagged effect of time-1 gender ideology on household division of labor was nonsignificant. This analysis showed no evidence for a causal influence of cohabitation on egalitarianism in marriage. While there are significant zero-order correlations between CHSINGLE and the two gender ideology scales, this relationship disappears when the control variables are added. The lack of household division labor at time-1 may account for these findings, although household division of labor is not relevant to singles.

Model Three (those cohabiting at time-1 and married at time-2 compared to those continuously married, CHDUM):

All the control variables had significant relationships with gender ideology, while only race, education, and income differential had significant effects on household division of labor.

Cohabiting (versus married) at time-1 had no direct effect on either time-2 variable. Religious participation continued to be influential. As in the analysis of group one (above), the cross-lagged effect of time-1 household division of labor had a weak effect on time-2 gender ideology with a beta of -.0695 (significant at the .05 level). The other cross-lagged effect was not significant. These findings suggest that cohabitation has a significant impact on later marriages. Although there were no direct effects of cohabitation on the time-2 variables, it is noteworthy that there were significant *indirect* effects. For example, all of the indirect effects from CHDUM1 to time-2 gender ideology were significant and in the correct (i.e., agreeing with prediction) direction, and the zero-order correlation ($r = .1371$) of the two variables was slightly *higher* than for CHDUM1 with time-1 gender ideology ($r = .1365$).

Model Four (those cohabiting at time-1 and married at time-2 compared to those continuously cohabiting):

The last group was compared to test if cohabitators who marry are significantly different in terms of gender ideology and household division of labor than those who continue to cohabit. Multiple regression analyses found no significant relationships between the dummy variable (CHMAR) and any of the time-1 or time-2 variables. The number of usable cases in these analyses was very small, so these findings should be interpreted with caution. However, the only zero-order correlation that was significant was between CHMAR and time-2 household division of labor ($r = -.1476$, $p = .041$, $N = 192$).

INTERACTION ANALYSES⁹

Multiple regressions were performed for each of the four models above using interaction terms for cohabitation (cohabitating to married for Model Four) with time-1 gender ideology and household division of labor. In no instance was the effect of the interaction term significant. The only situation in which the interaction term neared significance was in Model One for the effect of PRECH X GI₁ on time-2 household division of labor with an unstandardized coefficient of 2.45 ($p = .0949$). Note that this effect was in the reverse direction of that which was hypothesized. Competing path models¹⁰ (comparing each group in the four models for a total of eight) confirmed that there were no significant differences between cohabitators and noncohabitators in terms of the relationship of attitudes (gender ideology) with behavior (household division of labor). We can therefore assume that cohabitators who marry are not significantly different from those that have continued to cohabit for at least four years (the time between the two waves of the study).

ATTITUDES TOWARD SHARING HOUSEWORK AND HOUSEHOLD DIVISION OF LABOR

The following tests were conducted to test if household labor would be better predicted by an item pertaining closely to that behavior than general gender ideology. A logistic regression of the dummy variable SHARE1 on PRECH and the control variables indicated that having cohabited prior to marriage was the variable with the strongest significant effect on attitudes toward sharing housework (Table 3). Married individuals (at time-1) who cohabited premaritally were 1.77 times more likely to answer “strongly agree” than those that did not cohabit prior to marriage ($p = .0036$). This strong effect on attitudes did not, however, translate into action.

TABLE 7:
Logistic Regression for Attitudes toward Sharing Housework

| Variables | b | Exp(b) |
|----------------------|----------|---------------|
| Cohabiting (PRECH) | .5715** | 1.7709 |
| Age | -.0045 | .9955 |
| Black (white) | -.1990 | .8196 |
| College (no college) | .2972 | 1.3461 |

⁹Interaction terms were tested with gender ideology and all of the control variables. None of these terms was significant in regression analyses.

¹⁰Not reported here.

| Variables | b | Exp(b) |
|---|----------|---------------|
| Cohabiting (PRECH) | .5715** | 1.7709 |
| Female | .4546** | 1.5756 |
| Religious Participation | .2440** | 1.2764 |
| Total income | -9.9E-07 | 1.0000 |
| Income Difference | -2.7E-07 | 1.0000 |
| Household Division of Labor (time-1) | -.0139** | .9862 |

* p <= .05 ** p <= .01 *** p <= .001

Partial correlations were obtained for SHARE1 and time-1 household division of labor for Models One, Three, and Four. In no case was the substitution of SHARE1 a significant improvement over the gender ideology scale (as indicated by correlation difference tests). In fact, the partial correlations involving SHARE1 were lower in all three models (Model One: -.0984 vs. -.2938; Model Three: -.1222 vs. -.2765; Model Four: -.1459 vs. -.2337). This attitude measure which pertained directly to the behavior in question was no better at predicting that behavior than the general gender ideology scale. Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) said that if we wish to predict a behavior, then the attitude toward the behavior itself, not simply toward the object (in this case gender equality) must be assessed. This assertion does not hold true in this instance.

Chapter 5: DISCUSSION

THE EFFECTS OF PREMARITAL COHABITATION

Premarital cohabitation's positive causal effects on gender ideology and household division of labor are supported by the findings. The path analyses indicated both indirect and direct effects of cohabitation on the dependent variables. Although Model Two (comparing those who were cohabiting at time-1 and married and time-2 with those single and then married) did not agree with prediction, I do not feel this is a serious contradiction to the findings in the other models. The fact that time-1 household division of labor was not available brings the Model Two findings into question. This is particularly true because time-1 household division of labor had significant cross-lagged effects on time-2 gender ideology in *both* of the other models. This effect indicates an important way that cohabitation influences the time-2 variables indirectly. More equal household division of labor tends to lead to more egalitarian attitudes at time-2. The alternate cross-lagged effect (time-1 gender ideology on time-2 household division of labor) is not significant in any of the models.

It is noteworthy that a direct effect of premarital cohabitation on time-2 gender ideology remains after controlling for the time-1 variables in Model One. Although premarital cohabitation in this model is a retrospective question asked of persons who were married at time-1 and time-2, this direct effect suggests that not all of cohabitation's effect on time-2 gender ideology is explained by time-1 gender ideology and household division of labor.

I suggest that this remaining influence is that part of "experience" that is not tapped by the gender ideology and household division of labor measures. This may include the opportunity cohabitation provides to be independent before becoming more interdependent in marriage. Cohabitation may allow persons to develop their sense of identity as autonomous individuals with needs, wishes, and goals of their own, rather than primarily in relation to some important others (i.e., parents or a spouse). Blumstein and Schwartz note that cohabitators "are much more likely to deal with one another as independent economic entities" (1983:71). Similarly, this remaining influence may also come from the "role hiatus" (Mason, 1974) between the role of daughter and wife that may allow women the opportunity to develop tastes for employment. These work and occupational roles may become more salient to the identities of women who do not move quickly into marriage¹¹. Future analyses should investigate these suggestions by controlling for "living alone" or "away from home."

¹¹On a cautionary note, it would follow from these arguments that there could be an interaction between cohabitation and gender, as we could expect cohabitation to have a stronger effect on women than men. To test this question, I developed competing models (women only and men only) and tested interaction terms but found no significant effect on any variable in these analyses.

Models Two and Four compare the same group of premarital cohabitators to 1) those single at time-1 and married at time-2 (Model Two) and 2) those who continuously cohabited (Model Four). No significant relationships between cohabitation and the dependent variables were found in these models. This indicates that cohabitators are not significantly different than those who remain single and those that continue to cohabit. The differences appear when premarital cohabitators are compared to married couples who never cohabited (as in Models One and Three). Model Four also contradicts Blumstein and Schwartz's (1983) finding that cohabitators who marry are more traditional than those that continue to cohabit. There is no support for their claim in these findings.

A major problem in previous studies of cohabitation has been their failure to adequately deal with the question of selection bias. Could the effects of cohabitation on later marriages be due to the "type" of people who cohabit rather than anything about cohabitation itself? Undoubtedly, much of cohabitation's influence comes from the fact that cohabitators are more liberal to begin with, a fact that affected their decision to cohabit in the first place. But cross-sectional studies cannot answer this question empirically. The longitudinal data provided by the two waves of the NSFH allowed me to explicitly test the self-selection claim. I found that most of the variation in the time-2 variables was explained by the direct, lagged effects of time-1 gender ideology and household division of labor. In Models Two and Three, no direct effect of cohabitation on the time-2 variables remains.

However, the findings offer a compelling reason to believe that self-selection bias does not account for the entire effect of cohabitation on egalitarianism in marriage. The significant cross-lagged effects of time-1 household division of labor on time-2 gender ideology indicate that the behavioral process of housework and its distribution causally influence later attitudes when controlling for previous attitudes. Cohabitators did not bring household division of labor into their unions, it was shaped through that arrangement.

The fact that the direct effect of premarital cohabitation on time-2 gender ideology is significant in Model One cannot be easily interpreted. Although I argue that this effect may be due to characteristics of cohabitation not tapped by gender ideology and household division of labor (independence, role hiatus), self-selection cannot be ruled out. Model One does not control for gender ideology and household division of labor prior to time-1 (i.e., *during* cohabitation). However, given the strong correlation between time-1 and time-2 gender ideology, we can extrapolate that the time-1 measure is strongly related to the gender ideology of individuals *previous to time-1*. Although selection bias cannot be ruled out, this finding is compelling.

Future research on cohabitation's effect on egalitarianism in marriage would benefit from a focused study with a larger sample of cohabitators that are followed into marriage. Although the NSFH provides a large representative sample, the number of usable cases quickly dwindles, due both to the specificity of the research question and the problem of missing data (e.g., there were only 169 cases of individuals who were cohabiting at time-1 and married at time-2).

THE ATTITUDE-BEHAVIOR RELATIONSHIP

The findings also speak to the debate over the attitude-behavior relationship. In this instance, behavior has more influence over subsequent attitudes than attitudes have over subsequent behavior. This falls in line with Thornton's (1985) finding that while attitudes toward divorce have little influence on subsequent marital dissolution, the experience of a marital dissolution influences attitudes significantly. It is also consonant with the findings of Waite et al. (1986) concerning women living away from home prior to marriage — the development of new social and domestic skills (behaviors) tend to make them more favorable to nontraditional gender roles (Kiecolt, 1988).

The hypothesis that attitudes toward sharing housework should be a better predictor of household division of labor behavior than the more general gender ideology scale was not supported by the analysis. In no case was this "attitude toward the behavior" measure significantly more associated the behavior than was gender ideology. The skewness of responses to the attitudes toward sharing housework item indicate that approval of sharing housework is a widely held normative attitude. The remarkable lack of correspond with actually behavior is a strong reminder of another widely held normative belief: "Talk is cheap." This was true of cohabitators as well as noncohabitators. Tests of interactions between cohabitation and the time-1 variables yielded no significant differences between the two groups. Cohabitators are no better at aligning their attitudes and behaviors than noncohabitators.

I suspect a number of sources for the lack of correspondence between attitudes and behaviors in this study. First, household labor is a complex issue — people have many reasons for how they divide up the chores in their homes. Although I attempted to control for a number of these causes, it is clear that more must be taken into account, such as hours (and shift-times) in the work force, length of commute to work, and the presence and number of children. Even those couples who strongly believe in gender equality may be overwhelmed by other, practical considerations.

Second, the responses to questions on gender ideology and attitudes toward sharing housework may not be true reflections of people's attitudes. This brings to light the difficulty of separating individual attitude change from normative change. Increased support for women's equality can be seen as a normative shift. Schuman (1995:81) notes:

Since both attitudes and nonlegal norms are located in some sense within individuals, it is difficult to see how new norms can be effective without some more or less parallel attitude change; yet we also know that people frequently give lipservice to principles in public that they do not adhere to in private.

An attitudinal response may not be a true reflection of behavior, because it is not even an accurate reflection of the *attitude*. (Schuman, Steeh, and Bobo (1985) have investigated this problem with reference to racial attitudes and the principle/policy implementation gap).

A possible way to get at true gender-role attitudes is suggested by Hochschild's description of "surface" and "underneath" gender ideologies, that is, the beliefs and their attendant emotions (1989:190-193). By asking people, especially men, how they "feel" about doing housework, we may be better able to assess "true" attitudes. A man who truly supports his wife's career and believes chores should be split fairly, should not feel resentful about doing these tasks. The discrepancy between attitudes and behavior speaks to the strength, and the "depth" of the ideology of separate spheres.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that premarital cohabitation has an indirect causal effect on gender ideology and household division of labor in marriage through household division of labor at time-1. The direct effect, controlling for gender ideology and household division of labor, cannot be confirmed however. It is important that self-selection into cohabitation due to gender ideology does not fully explain the effects on marriage. It is not simply a certain type of person who cohabits, the structure and process of cohabitation are independently important. While the effects found were quite weak, they were significant, both in the statistical sense and the vernacular. For such a complex puzzle, this study introduces but one piece. But through the aggregation of research, a picture of modern relationships is emerging. And as one route through which gender attitudes and household division of labor can change, cohabitation may, in a small way, help attenuate women's "second shift."

Future research should seek a larger sample of cohabitators to conduct longitudinal research on (with appropriate comparison groups). Other potential important variables should also be investigated, such as salience of work roles and the importance of personal independence. Another variable that may prove to be important is length of cohabitation. Different durations of cohabitation may signal groups of people who cohabit for different reasons. For example, long-term cohabitators may be significantly different in their gender attitudes than short-term cohabitators. Number of children, timing of births, and time spent in childcare are also potentially important variables to investigate.

Appendix 1: Correlations

| | Age | Black | CHDUM | CHMAR | Coll. | GI ₁ | GI ₂ | Fem | HDL ₁ | HDL ₂ | Inc. Dif. | Inc. | Rel. Part |
|------------------|----------|----------|----------|--------|----------|-----------------|-----------------|----------|------------------|------------------|-----------|-------|-----------|
| Black | -.043*** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| CHDUM | -.184*** | -.035* | | | | | | | | | | | |
| CHMAR | -.242*** | -.313*** | ---- | | | | | | | | | | |
| College | -.095*** | -.115*** | .001 | .144* | | | | | | | | | |
| GI ₁ | -.358*** | .030** | .137*** | .004 | .158*** | | | | | | | | |
| GI ₂ | -.295*** | .027* | .137*** | -.011 | .145*** | .614*** | | | | | | | |
| Female | .047*** | .038*** | .003 | .020 | -.094*** | .092*** | .077*** | | | | | | |
| HDL ₁ | .099*** | .016 | -.161*** | -.183 | -.192*** | -.286*** | -.301*** | -.018 | | | | | |
| HDL ₂ | .071*** | .014 | -.074*** | -.148* | -.183*** | -.225*** | -.225*** | .023 | .496*** | | | | |
| Inc. Dif. | -.040** | -.092*** | -.052** | .070 | .155*** | -.032* | -.031*** | .016 | .060* | .064*** | | | |
| Income | -.016*** | -.064*** | .012 | .102 | .212*** | .104*** | .089*** | .023 | -.048* | -.120*** | .288*** | | |
| Rel. Part | .053*** | .023*** | -.073*** | -.049 | .015 | -.106*** | -1.04*** | .014 | .027 | .026 | .004 | -.017 | |
| Share 1 | -.010 | .009 | -.012 | -.019 | .048 | .036 | .039 | .130 | -.111 | -.084 | -.017 | -.005 | .017 |
| Share 2 | -.018 | .005 | .025 | .046 | .041 | .045 | .024 | .098 | -.099 | -.065 | -.022 | -.027 | .012 |
| CH-Single | -.121*** | -.092 | --- | --- | .026 | .078*** | .073*** | -.046*** | ---- | -.030 | --- | --- | -.060*** |
| PRECH | -.336*** | .007 | .007 | .032 | .036** | .205*** | .178*** | -.043*** | - | -.075*** | -.019 | -.019 | -.021 |

* p <= .05

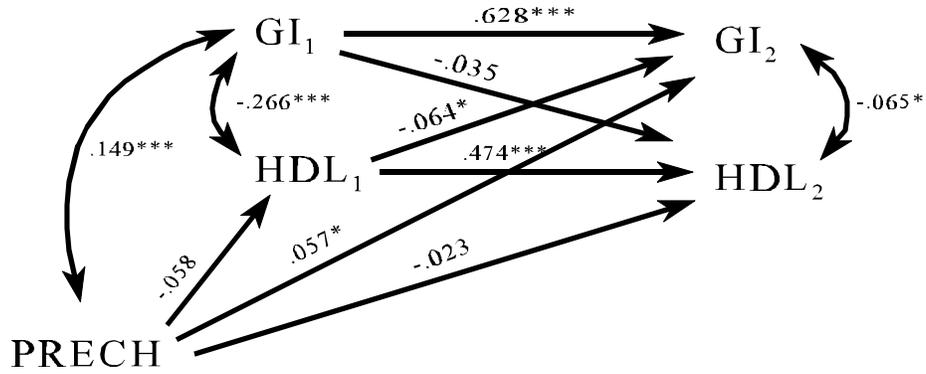
** p <= .01

*** p <= .001

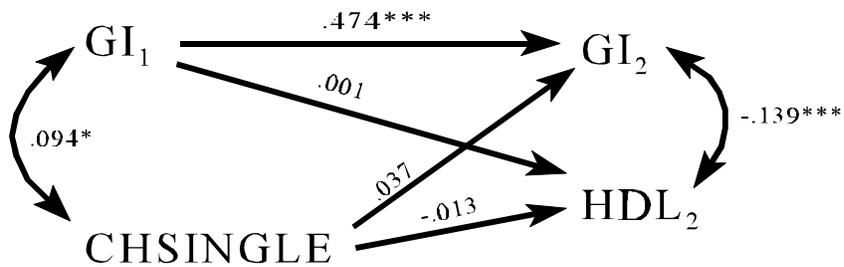
| | Share 1 | Share 2 | CH-Single |
|------------|---------|-------------|---------------|
| Share 2 | .240*** | | |
| CH-Single | -.030 | -.009 | |
| PRECH | .029 | .041 | .066*** |
| * p <= .05 | | ** p <= .01 | *** p <= .001 |

**APPENDIX 2:
PATH MODELS**
(control variables are included but not shown)¹²

Model One:

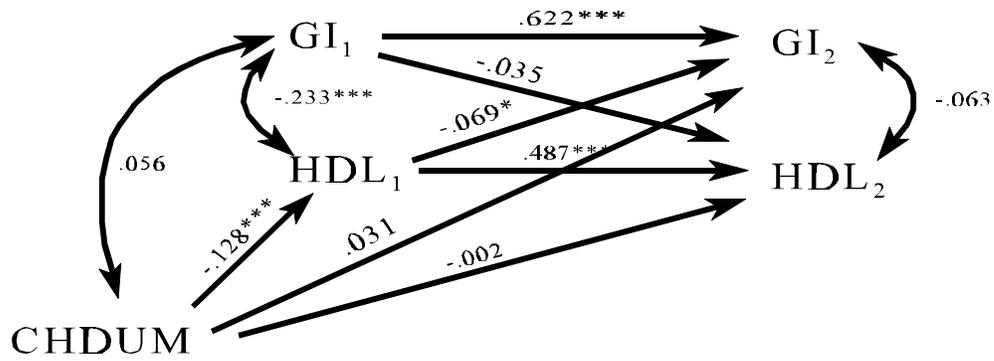


Model Two:

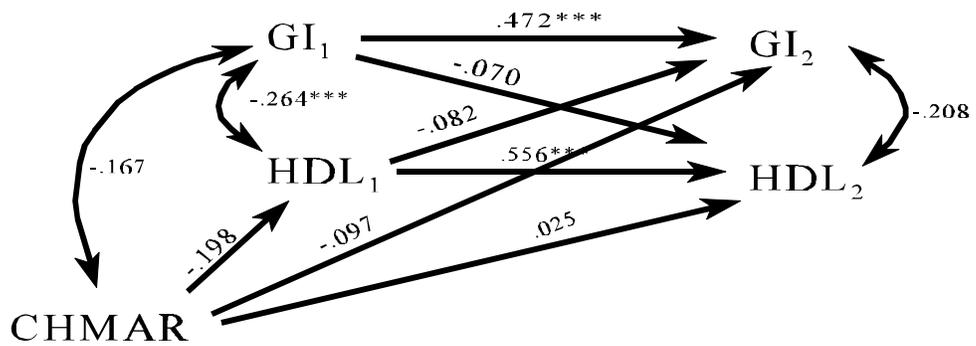


¹² All correlations reported are partial correlations.

Model Three:



Model Four:



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