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# Dishes and Diapers: The Division of Labor and Marital Quality across the Transition to Parenthood

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Dishes and Diapers: The Division of Labor and Marital Quality across the Transition to  
Parenthood

A Thesis Presented

by

KATHERINE NEWKIRK

Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

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Clinical Psychology

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Parenthood

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## DEDICATION

To my eternally supportive parents.

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ABSTRACT

DISHES AND DIAPERS: THE DIVISION OF LABOR AND MARITAL QUALITY  
ACROSS THE TRANSITION TO PARENTHOOD

SEPTEMBER 2012

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This study examines relationships between the division of housework and childcare and marital love and conflict and perceived fairness as a mediator of those relationships. Gender role ideology is also examined as a moderator of the relationships between the division of labor predictors and perceived fairness. To this end 112 working-class, dual-earner couples having their first child were interviewed at three time points during the first year of parenthood after mothers returned to work. Findings indicate that wives' reported greater marital love when their husbands performed more housework and more childcare, with fairness as a mediator of those relations. Husbands' greater participation in both housework and childcare was directly related to their reports of marital love. For marital conflict, wives reported less conflict when husbands performed more childcare with perceived fairness as a mediator. Husbands reported less conflict when they performed a greater proportion of housework, with wives' perceived fairness as a mediator. The division of childcare and perceived fairness were more strongly related for wives with egalitarian gender role ideology than for more traditional wives.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

Families headed by dual-earner couples have become the norm in the U.S., with 58.1 percent of married couples with children both working in 2010 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011). Even when both spouses work full-time, however, wives still do the majority of household work (Erickson, 2005; Mannino & Deutsch, 2007; Pinto and Coltrane, 2009) and childcare (Bianchi, Milton, Sayer, & Robinson, 2000). There is some evidence that childcare tasks and household tasks have differing values in marriage (Ishii-Kuntz & Coltrane, 1992; Poortman & van der Lippe, 2009), due, in part to differing consequences for neglecting the tasks and levels of aversion to the tasks. The factors influencing the division of household and childcare tasks also differ (Deutsch, Lussier, & Servis, 1993), making it essential to examine these two types of family labor as separate entities. The division of family labor is one of the greatest causes of conflict in marriages (Stevens, Kiger, & Riley, 2001), however, research indicates that views of how fair the division of labor is may be more important than the division itself (Kluwer, Heesink & Van de Vliert, 1997), and that sense of fairness is often influenced by partners' gender ideology (Greenstein, 1996b). The relation between the division of family labor and marital quality is therefore tied to both sense of fairness and gender ideology.

Contextual factors, such as life-stage and socioeconomic status, play a role in understanding the relations between family work and marital quality. In terms of life-stage, the division of household work and child care becomes more traditional and is often solidified during the transition to parenthood (Deutsch, 1999; Kluwer, Heesink, Van de Vliert, 2002; Sanchez & Thompson, 1997) and marital conflict increases (Doss,

Rhoades, Stanley, Markman, 2009), making this life-stage a critical time to examine the division of labor in families. In addition, little research has examined the division of labor and marital quality in working-class families. Much of the literature on this subject has addressed these dynamics in middle-class couples who may have more resources (e.g., paid parental leave and ability to buy services for family labor) to buffer the stress of the transition to parenthood than do working-class couples as well as less of a need for two incomes. It is essential to examine these processes among working-class parents who may have fewer options for negotiating the division of household chores and child care.

Understanding how the division of household and child care tasks along with perceived fairness predict marital outcomes and changes in those outcomes for dual-earner fathers and mothers during the transition to parenthood is an important area to pursue, as couples at this stage develop interactional patterns that have the potential to affect their marriages in both the short- and long-term (Huston, 2010). The proposed research will examine the relations between the division of household labor and childcare and marital quality for dual-earner, working-class couples across the transition to parenthood. This study will also examine whether perceived fairness acts as a mediator of these relationships, and whether the relation between division of labor and sense of fairness is moderated by gender ideology.

In the proceeding literature review, I will first discuss the theoretical perspective used to understand the relationship between the division of family labor and marital quality. Second, the relationship between household tasks and childcare tasks as they relate to marital quality will be examined, with attention to perceived fairness as a mediator and gender ideology as a moderator. I will then address how the contextual

factors of social class and life-stage may influence the relations between the division of family work and marital quality.

## **Literature Review**

### **Theoretical Underpinnings of the Division of Labor**

Many theories have been advanced to explain the continued uneven division of domestic labor among dual-earner couples and the processes that allow many husbands and wives to perceive an uneven division of household labor as fair. The proposed study will approach these issues from the perspective of distributive justice theory, which asserts that the division of labor and satisfaction with that division is based on whether it (a) matches *comparison referents*, (b) is seen as *justifiable*, or (c) matches the *valued outcomes* people are socialized to uphold (Major, 1987).

Comparison referents are the people to whom men and women compare themselves when assessing whether the division of labor is fair or unfair. If they compare themselves to their own father or mother, or to same-sex peers, they are more likely to perceive an unequal division of household labor as fair than if they compare their contribution to that of their spouse (Hawkins, Marshal & Meiner, 1995). In their 2002 study, Grote, Naylor, and Clark found that using spousal comparison referents was associated with perceptions of unfairness for both husbands and wives. There is some evidence that husbands primarily compare themselves to other men when assessing the fairness of their contribution to domestic labor, whereas women's are more likely than men to use their spouse as a comparison referent (Gager & Hohmann-Marriott, 2006), making wives more likely than husbands to perceive an unequal division of labor as unfair. As egalitarian women are more likely to view an unequal division of labor as

unfair, and those who use spousal comparison referents are also more likely to perceive the division of labor as unfair, it follows that egalitarian women are more likely to use their spouse as a comparison referent than women with traditional gender ideology. This argument is supported by one study, which found that egalitarian women were more likely to make both spousal and peer comparisons, but that the difference between traditional and egalitarian women was higher for spousal comparisons than for peer comparisons (Buunk, Kluwer, Schuurman, & Siero, 2000).

Turning to Majors' (1987) second point, whether an imbalance is seen as justifiable could depend on factors such as work hours, gender role ideology, or other types of contributions, such as income. Men and women have been found to justify an uneven division of labor based on who is "better" at the task (Grote et al., 2002) or who has higher standards for the task (Thompson, 1991). Justifications can also be related to the importance husbands and wives place on the task. For example, a husband may claim that he would be content to eat sandwiches for dinner every night, so he should not have to cook because it is not important to him (Hochschild, 1989). Income and gender role ideology, particularly whether a working wife perceives her income as making her a "provider" for the family or as "helping" her husband provide, may also play a role in justification. If a working wife perceives that she and her husband should equally share the provider role, then she is justified in desiring an even division of household labor.

Finally, valued outcomes are also a function of what men and women are socialized to value about paid and family work. These values can be related to gender socialization, with traditional women valuing the confirmation of their gender role that comes with the performance of family labor provides (Thompson, 1991). For example, one study found

that when wives' gained the valued the outcome of being appreciated for their performance of domestic labor, they were more likely to perceive an uneven division of household labor as fair than wives who did not gain the outcome of feeling appreciated (Hawkins et al., 1995).

It is likely that comparison referents, factors justifying the division of labor, and desired outcomes vary by contextual factors, such as socioeconomic status. For example, working-class wives are more likely to uphold traditional gender role ideology, and are therefore more likely to compare themselves to other working-class wives, who are also likely to uphold traditional gender roles, making a traditional division of labor the norm for these women. Similarly, working-class husbands are likely to uphold traditional gender roles, and consequently compare themselves to other working-class men with traditional gender roles, making a traditional division of labor the norm for these men. The context-dependent nature of the components of the distributive justice model makes it important to look at the dynamics surrounding family work, fairness, and marital outcomes in working-class as well as middle-class populations.

### **Division of Household Tasks**

One clear finding of research on the division of labor is that wives perform more household tasks than their husbands, and that the kinds of tasks wives typically do differ from those done by husbands. Even among couples who both work full-time, wives do approximately twice as much household labor as their husbands (Bianchi et al., 2000; Demo & Acock, 1993). The division of traditionally feminine household tasks (e.g., cleaning, cooking, laundry) is particularly skewed (Shelton & John, 1996), with women performing about 79% of these tasks (Bianchi et al., 2000). Feminine household tasks

are the daily, necessary and repetitive chores, while the “masculine” household tasks (e.g., lawn care, car maintenance, household repairs) tend to be more flexible, less repetitive, and have a leisure component (Barnett & Shen, 1997).

Gender role ideology has been found to be a predictor of the division of household tasks. Traditional gender ideology involves valuing separate spheres for men and women with men as primary breadwinners and women as primary parents and homemakers, whereas egalitarian gender ideology upholds equal roles for men and women in work outside the home and in family labor. Between traditional and egalitarian ideology lies transitional ideology, where husbands and wives are ambivalent about a wife’s work outside the home. Transitional husbands identify primarily as breadwinners but will support their wives’ working outside the home as long as her primary sphere is in the home, and transitional wives identify primarily as homemakers and mothers and see their work outside the home as “helping” their husbands (Hochschild, 1989). In general, couples with more egalitarian gender ideology have a more equal division of household tasks than those with traditional gender ideology (Coltrane, 2000; Greenstein 1996a; Lavee & Katz, 2002; Pinto & Coltrane, 2009)

Although many studies have found that gender ideology influences the division of labor, findings are mixed concerning whether husbands’ or wives’ gender ideology is more influential. Wives’ gender ideology seems to be a predictor of husbands’ participation in household tasks (Ishii-Kuntz & Coltrane, 1992; Kroska, 2004; Perry-Jenkins, Seery, & Crouter, 1992) with husbands of egalitarian wives performing a greater proportion of household tasks. In contrast, some studies found that husbands’ egalitarian gender ideology did predict their greater participation in household tasks (Kroska, 2004;



Presser, 1994; Sanchez, 1994). However, Ishii-Kuntz and Coltrane (1992) found no such relationship and Greenstein (1996a) only found such a relationship for egalitarian husbands of egalitarian wives. These findings suggest that egalitarian husbands and wives strive for a more equal division of household labor than traditional couples do, making an equal division of household tasks a desired outcome for egalitarian couples but not necessarily for traditional couples. It is less clear how couples who do not share the same gender ideology and have incongruent ideas about how household labor should be divided negotiate the division of household labor.

### **Perceptions of Fairness and Satisfaction with Division of Household Tasks**

While it is well-established that women still do a disproportionate amount of household tasks, many women do not perceive an unequal division as unfair and many are satisfied with doing more housework than their husbands (Stevens, Kiger, & Mannon, 2005). Wives' gender ideology has been found to moderate the relationship between division of household tasks and perceived fairness of the division of household labor for wives (Greenstein, 1996b; Greenstein, 2009; Lavee & Katz, 2002); specifically, for egalitarian and transitional wives' an unequal division of household tasks is related to their perceived fairness, while this relationship does not exist for traditional wives. Research on husbands' sense of fairness is more limited, with one study finding no relationship between division of household labor and perceived fairness among husbands (Lavee & Katz, 2002) and another finding that husbands are more likely to perceive the division of household labor as unfair to their wives as their wives' share of housework increases (Perry-Jenkins & Folk, 1994). Qualitative studies of working-class families have noted that working-class husbands are more likely to see an uneven division of

housework as unfair when their wives' income is needed for the family. A working-class husband is more likely to view his wife's work as "helping" him in his provider role and his own participation in household labor as "helping" her in her homemaker role, whereas a middle-class husband may view his wife's work outside the home as something she does for herself rather than something she does for him or the family (Deutsch, 1999; Shows & Gerstel, 2009).

### **Division of Household Tasks and Marriage**

Although division of household tasks were related to wives' perceived marital quality in one study (Greenstein, 2009), and Deutsch et al. (1993) found relations for both husbands and wives perceived marital quality, most studies have found perceived fairness of the division of household tasks, rather than the actual division of household tasks, to be directly related to marital quality. Greater fairness is associated with better marital outcomes (Claffey & Mickelson, 2008; Frisco & Williams, 2003; Kluwer et al., 1997; Lavee & Katz, 2002). Wives' perceived inequity in the division of household labor increases the likelihood of divorce (Frisco & Williams, 2003) and husbands' greater participation in housework increases the likelihood of a couple having a second child (Cooke, 2004). These findings suggest that division of labor concerns have long-term consequences for the family as a whole. Interestingly, some studies found this relation to be moderated by gender ideology, with more egalitarian wives being less satisfied with their marriages when they perceive the division of household labor as unfair (Buunk et al., 2000; Greenstein, 2009; Lavee & Katz, 2002; Stevens et al., 2005). Findings have been mixed for traditional wives; one study found an inverse relation between perceived fairness and marital satisfaction, such that traditional wives who perceived the division of

household labor as fair were less satisfied with family life than those who perceived it as unfair (Greenstein, 2009). In contrast, Lavee and Katz (2002) found a relationship between fairness and marital quality, but no relationship between actual division of household labor and fairness, indicating that traditional wives may perceive fairness differently than more egalitarian wives.

Other factors, such as social class, seem to moderate the relation between fairness and marital outcomes. In their study on social class and the division of household labor, Perry-Jenkins and Folk (1994) found a negative relationship between fairness and marital conflict for middle-class wives, but not for wives in working-class couples. Moreover, the actual division of household labor was related to wives' perceptions of fairness for all wives in the study except for working-class wives married to middle-class husbands. This finding indicates that factors other than the division of labor itself can contribute to perceptions of fairness. For example, wives may not perceive the division as unfair if they feel that an uneven division is justified by their husbands' higher earnings. Interestingly, for working-class wives in this study, the division of household tasks was related to marital conflict, such that wives who enacted traditional gender roles reported lower levels of marital conflict. Husbands of middle-class wives reported higher levels of marital conflict when wives perceived the division household tasks as unfair, but husbands' own perceptions of fairness were not related to marital conflict. For working-class husbands of working-class wives, lower levels of marital conflict were reported when their wives performed a greater proportion of household tasks. As this relation did not exist for middle-class husbands, it is likely that the relation between the division of household labor and husbands' marital outcomes may differ based on social class.

Other studies investigating division of labor and marital satisfaction for husbands found that the relation between division of household tasks, perceived fairness, and reported marital quality is not as strong as it is for wives. Though one study found men's perceived unfairness of the division of household labor is associated with lower levels of marital happiness (Frisco & Williams, 2003), several studies have found no relation between husbands' division of labor factors and marital outcomes (Kluwer, Heesink, & Van de Vliert, 1996; Stevens et al., 2001). Lavee and Katz (2002) found division of labor to be unrelated to perceived fairness for husbands but that husbands' higher perceived fairness is related to positive marital outcomes. These findings suggest that the division of household labor is a less salient concern for men than for women. In addition, husbands may take different factors into account than wives when assessing fairness, but these perceptions may still be related to husbands' assessments of their marriages.

### **Division of Childcare Tasks**

Research suggests that couples view the division of childcare tasks differently from household tasks. Both men and women seem to enjoy performing childcare tasks more than household tasks (Poortman & Van der Lippe, 2009) and several studies have found an uneven division of housework more strongly predicts negative marital outcomes than an uneven division of childcare (Mikula, Freudenthaler, Brennacher-Kroll, & Schiller-Brandl, 1997; Kluwer, Heesink & Van de Vliert, 2000; for an exception see Pedersen, Minnotte, Mannon, & Kiger, 2011). Despite the rewarding nature of childcare when compared to housework, mothers still do twice as much childcare work as fathers do (Bianchi et al., 2000) and, more often than not, take on the role of primary parent,

delegating tasks to fathers rather than sharing parenting responsibilities equally (Craig, 2006; Gerson, 1997; Hochschild, 1989).

There is some evidence that structural factors, such as husbands' and wives' work hours, also influence division of childcare tasks. Husbands spend more time parenting when wives work more hours outside the home (Deutsch, 1999; Ishii-Kuntz & Coltrane, 1992; Meteyer & Perry-Jenkins, 2010). Additional factors leading to more equal division of childcare include having older children and more children (Ishii-Kuntz & Coltrane, 1992), wives' lower levels of gatekeeping (Meteyer & Perry-Jenkins, 2010), and husbands and wives working opposite shifts (Deutsch, 1999; Meteyer & Perry-Jenkins, 2010).

Like household tasks, the division of childcare tasks is related to gender ideology. Several studies have found a relation with husbands' gender ideology (Aldous, Mulligan & Bjarnason, 1998; Bulanda, 2004; Deutsch, 1999; Ishii-Kuntz & Coltrane, 1992) such that couples with more egalitarian husbands share childcare more equally than those with more traditional husbands. Beitel and Parke (1998) found that both husbands' and wives' egalitarianism predicted increased father involvement in childcare.

### **Perceptions of Fairness and Satisfaction with the Division of Childcare Tasks**

Few studies have examined the relation between the division of childcare and perceived fairness of the division of childcare. One study that examined the division of childcare as a predictor of overall fairness of household labor, found wives who performed more childcare perceived the overall division of family labor as less fair (Claffey & Mickelson, 2008).

While few studies have examined fairness and childcare, some studies have examined the related construct of satisfaction with the division of childcare. Stevens et al. (2005) investigated the relation between division of childcare and satisfaction with the division of childcare, and found that both men and women in their sample were more satisfied with the division of childcare when the division was more even. Other studies have found a similar relation between the division of childcare and satisfaction with the division of childcare for wives, but not for husbands (Kluwer et al., 1996). Though little research has investigated perceptions of fairness about the division of childcare, with most studies examining satisfaction instead, childcare appears to be related to fairness for wives, whereas the relationship for husbands is less clear.

### **Division of Childcare and Marital Outcomes**

Stevens et al. (2005) found that wives' marital satisfaction was lower when they did more of the childcare and higher when husbands did more. However, this relation was mediated by their satisfaction with the division of childcare, such that there was no longer a significant relationship between the actual division of childcare and marital satisfaction once satisfaction with the division of childcare was factored into the model. Husbands' marital satisfaction was related in the opposite way, such that both men who performed more childcare and those who were more satisfied with the division of childcare were less satisfied with married life. A recent study found a similar relation for husbands, such that husbands who performed a greater proportion of childcare reported higher levels of marital burnout (Pedersen et al., 2011), but did not find a significant relation between childcare and marriage for wives. One study found an uneven division of childcare to be related to higher levels of marital conflict and lower levels of marital satisfaction for

wives, but not for husbands (Lavee, Sharlin, & Katz, 1996). Meier, McNaughton-Cassill, and Lynch (2006) found that husbands had higher marital satisfaction when they did more childcare but felt that their wives were “responsible” for childcare, indicating that husbands may be most comfortable as active parents who “help” their wives rather than as primary parents. Other studies have found no relationship between the division of childcare and marital outcomes for either husbands or wives (Deutsch et al. 1993; Ehrenberg, Gearing-Small, Hunter, & Small, 2001).

The discrepant results of past research points to the complex nature of the relations between childcare and marital quality and the dearth of literature concerning the role of perceived fairness in these processes points to a need for further research on the subject. Most of the literature on the division of childcare includes couples with children under 18 (Lavee, et al., 1996; Pedersen et al., 2011; Stevens et al., 2005) or children school-age or below (Ehrenberg et al, 2001; Meier et al., 2006) with very few examining the more work-intensive stage of infancy (Deutsch et al., 1993). Because the childcare workload varies based on the age of children, it is likely that childcare has a different effect in families with infants that in those with school-age children or adolescents. Fathers in particular may be nervous about caring for infants but become more involved with older children, making it difficult to interpret results of studies that use a wide age-range for children. Including couples with children ages 0 – 17 may mask some of the variability that occurs based on the child’s age, making it valuable to focus on a more specific life-stage.

## **Social Context**

### **Transition to Parenthood**

Issues related to household labor and childcare are especially salient during the transition to parenthood when the addition of an infant to the household adds to the domestic workload. The division of household labor tends to become more traditional during this time (Gjerdingen & Center, 2005; Katz-Weiss, Preiss, & Hyde, 2010) as husbands and wives take on new roles. Gjerdingen and Center (2005) found that wives' overall workload, including paid work, housework, and childcare, increased approximately 64% during the transition to parenthood, whereas husbands' increased 37%, leaving the bulk of additional work on the shoulders of wives. The sudden addition of a new set of domestic tasks and the stress of parenting an infant makes household labor a particularly contentious issue for new parents. Couples at this stage experience increased marital conflict (Crohan, 1996; Doss et al., 2009) and a decline in marital satisfaction (Lawrence, Rothman, Cobb, Rothman, & Bradbury, 2008; Twenge, Campbell, & Foster, 2003). The increased family work-load, assumption of new family roles, and changes in the division of the family workload make this life stage a critical time for examining how the division of labor is related to marriage.

### **Social Class**

Most research on the division of labor among couples investigates middle-class couples, and there is reason to believe that the dynamics of division of household labor, fairness, gender ideology, and marriage may differ for working-class couples.

Working-class couples are more reliant on wives' earnings than middle-class couples, and husbands in these families are more likely to view wives' work as a contribution to the family, rather than something they do for their own fulfillment (Deutsch, 1999; Ferree, 1984; Shows & Gerstel, 2009; Weiss, 1985). The power granted



by economic factors (Thompson & Walker, 1989) is countered by the more traditional gender role ideology often found in working-class families, with husbands strongly identifying as breadwinners. Traditional gender ideology may lead to ambivalent feelings surrounding wives' work in these families (Deutsch, 1999; Rosen 1987) and a hesitancy to acknowledge wives' status as coproviders. Working-class wives also seem to feel ambivalent about their provider roles, with most seeing benefits to working apart from a paycheck, such as increased respect and pride (Deutsch, 1999; Ferree, 1984), yet feeling guilty for not staying home with their children (Deutsch, 1999; Ferree, 1987). This ambivalence about identifying as providers may be reflected in the finding that working-class wives generally do a greater proportion of housework than their middle-class counterparts (Perry-Jenkins & Folk, 1994). The contradiction between gender-role ideals and economic necessity frequently encountered by these families likely influences the dynamics surrounding the division of labor at home.

Although it is not a goal of this project to specifically examine the distributive justice constructs of comparison referents, desired outcomes, and justifications, these concepts are useful in understanding how the relation between the division of labor and marital quality might differ based on sociocultural factors. From a distributive justice perspective, working-class husbands and wives may see the wife as primary homemaker as a desired outcome and use other families with a traditional division of labor as comparison referents, leading these couples to have less conflict when they are able to adhere to more traditional gender roles. Knowing that working-class wives perform a higher proportion of housework than middle-class wives and that they are likely to compare themselves to other working class families, the comparison referents used by

working-class men and women are more likely to reinforce traditional family gender roles, which may make them less likely to perceive an unequal division of household or childcare tasks as unfair. In addition, working-class couples are more likely to uphold traditional gender ideology than middle-class couples (Harris & Firestone, 1998), which makes them more likely to desire a more traditional division of family labor. In fact, studies using working-class populations have found marital conflict to decrease when the division of household labor is less even, meaning the more household work wives do, the less they experience marital conflict (Perry-Jenkins & Folk, 1994).

While working-class couples may desire a traditional division of labor more often than middle-class couples, they are also more likely to have structural factors (e.g., work hours, shift-work, and benefits) influencing the division of household labor. Structural factors, such as work shifts, tend to have a greater influence on the division of labor in working-class families than ideological factors (Meteyer & Perry-Jenkins, 2010) and conflict for these couples may arise when structural factors prevent husbands and wives from achieving the desired outcome of dividing household labor in a traditional way. Work shifts and financial need may lead working class couples to share more child care tasks than middle-class couples (Shows & Gerstel, 2009), though these couples may still identify with more traditional gender roles of father as breadwinner and mother as caretaker (Deutsch, 1999). This combination makes working-class couples less able to enact their ideal division of household and paid labor. Thus, in a working-class sample, it is likely that there will be both husbands and wives trying to justify a more even division of household and childcare tasks than would be their ideal in addition to couples seeking justification for an uneven division of household tasks depending on their gender

ideology. Ambivalence surrounding behavior and ideology may make the meaning and consequences of the division of household and childcare tasks different in this population than in middle-class families.

Conflicts between ideology and practicality may lead to disparate effects of the division of labor on marriage among working-class couples. Studies comparing working-class and middle-class couples (e.g., Gupta, Evertsson, Grunow, Neramo, & Sayer, 2010; Perry-Jenkins & Folk, 1994) have provided useful overviews of how division of labor and marital outcomes may differ across socioeconomic groups, but little has been done to examine variability within working-class families. While working-class couples have generally been found to hold more traditional gender role ideals than middle-class couples, working-class families are a heterogeneous group and may vary in terms of gender ideology and other factors influencing the division of labor and its relation to marriage.

### **The Current Study**

This study will address a significant gap in the literature on the importance of the division of labor for marital outcomes by examining the full work load, including paid work, household work, and child care as it influences marriage, while also incorporating spouses' sense of fairness regarding the distribution of these different types of labor as well as both spouses' gender ideology. Further, this study will examine these processes during the transition to parenthood when household workloads and marital conflict increase and marriages become more vulnerable, thus making these issues more salient to couples. This study will also address predictors of changes in marital outcomes over time, which have important implications for long-term family dynamics and child outcomes

and could shape early intervention strategies to prevent marital problems among first-time parents. In addition, given that much of the division of labor literature has focused on middle-class families, the current study, which focuses on lower income and working-class new parents, will broaden our understanding of how social class issues may influence family processes. It is expected that:

1. For wives, perceived fairness of the division of household tasks (HHT) will mediate the relation between division HHT and marital quality, such that wives who perform a greater proportion of HHT will tend to perceive the division as unfair and will in turn have lower levels of marital love and higher levels of marital conflict than those who have a more even division of HHT. See Figure 1 for a model of this relationship.
  - a. Gender ideology will moderate the relation between the division of HHT and perceived fairness for wives, such that the relation between division of HHT and perceived fairness will be stronger for egalitarian wives than for traditional wives. See Figure 2 for a model of this relationship.
2. For husbands, perceived fairness of the division of household tasks (HHT) will mediate the relation between division HHT and marital quality, such that husbands who perform a more even proportion of HHT will tend to perceive the division as fair and will in turn have higher levels of marital love and lower levels of marital conflict than those who have a less even division of HHT.
  - a. Gender ideology will moderate the relation between the division of HHT and perceived fairness for husbands, such that the relation between division of

HHT and perceived fairness will exist for egalitarian husbands, but not for traditional husbands.

3. For wives, perceived fairness of the division of childcare tasks (CCT) will mediate the relationship between division of CCT and marital quality, such that wives who perform a greater proportion of CCT will tend to perceive the division as unfair and will in turn have lower levels of marital love and higher levels of marital conflict than those who have a more even division of CCT.
  - a. Gender ideology will moderate the relation between the division of CCT and perceived fairness, such that egalitarian wives' perceptions of fairness will be more strongly related to the division of CCT than those of traditional wives.
4. For husbands, developing hypotheses is more challenging since the current literature in this area reveals quite inconsistent findings. We predict that perceived fairness of the division of child care tasks (CCT) will mediate the relation between division CCT and marital quality, but this relation will be moderated by husbands' gender ideology such that egalitarian husbands will perceive an uneven division of CCT as unfair, while traditional husbands will not. It is likely, based on past literature, that the relation between CCT and marital quality will be weak, if present at all.
5. It is hypothesized that relations between division of both household and childcare tasks and marital quality will be stronger for women than for men.
6. Finally, little research has examined the differential effects of HHT and CCT on marital outcomes, therefore, we pose no specific hypotheses regarding which type of household labor will have stronger relations to marital outcomes.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD**

#### **Participants**

Participants for this study are part of a larger longitudinal investigation examining the transition to parenthood among 153 dual-earner working-class couples. Data collection began in 1996 and was completed in 2006. Couples were recruited from prenatal classes at hospitals in the New England area during their third trimester of pregnancy. Couples had to meet the following criteria to be included in the study: (a) both members of the couple were employed full-time (35 hours per week or more); (b) both members of the couple planned to resume full-time work within 6 months of the baby's birth; (c) both members of the couple were "working class" as defined by educational attainment of a two-year associates degree or less; (d) both members of the couple were expecting their first child; and (e) the couple was married or cohabiting for at least one year prior to participation in the study. For the purposes of the present study, 111 couples met the additional criteria of having reported work hours at phase 3, having neither member unemployed across phases three to five, and having both members employed outside the home across phases three to five of data collection. Sample characteristics can be found in Table 1. For the purposes of this paper, all participants are referred to as husbands and wives.

#### **Procedure**

Data for the present study were collected at three time points: shortly after both members of the couple returned to work (on average 3-months postpartum) via face-to-face interviews (Time 1), six months postpartum via mail-survey (Time 2), and one-year

after the baby's birth via face-to-face interviews (Time 3). Division of labor and fairness measures assessed at Time 1 will be used to predict concurrent marital quality as well as linear change in marital quality across Time 1, Time 2, and Time 3.

## Measures

### **Household Tasks**

Husbands and wives' reports of their contribution to household tasks were assessed at Time 1 using the "Who does what?" scale (Atkinson & Huston, 1984). This scale includes repetitive and time-consuming "feminine" tasks such as making beds, cleaning, cooking, washing dishes, laundry, running errands, planning family events (e.g., birthday parties), and buying presents for and keeping in touch with family and friends, as well as more gender-neutral or "masculine" tasks, such as maintaining household finances, taking out the garbage, and performing outdoor work. Husbands and wives were asked to select their proportional contribution to each task on a scale from 1 [*usually or always my spouse (0%-20% personal contribution)*] to 5 [*usually or always myself (80%-100% personal contribution)*]. Cronbach's alpha for the feminine tasks subscale was .65 for wives and .58 for husbands and for the total household task scale alphas were .67 for wives and .62 for husbands.

Some studies have looked at feminine household tasks (e.g., Goldberg & Perry-Jenkins, 2004), while other studies include the full workload of household tasks (e.g., Meier, McNaughton-Cassill, & Lynch, 2006). Both the feminine task subscale and the total household task scale were tested as predictors in this study, with similar results. As alphas for the total household task scale were higher than those for feminine household tasks, and stronger relationships were found for all household tasks than for feminine

household tasks (although in the same directions), I decided to use the full household task scale.

### **Childcare Tasks**

Husbands' and wives' reports of their contribution to child-care tasks were assessed at Time 1 using a scale developed by Barnett and Baruch (1987). Contribution to the performance of 15 child-care tasks, including feeding, diaper-changing, getting up at night with the baby, and playing with the baby, was assessed using a 5-point scale from 1 [*usually or always my spouse (0%-20% personal contribution)*] to 5 [*usually or always myself (80%-100% personal contribution)*]. Cronbach's alpha for the child-care responsibility scale was .86 for wives and .79 for husbands.

### **Perceived Fairness**

Husbands' and wives' sense of fairness about the division of housework and child-care tasks were assessed at Time 1 using two single items similar to those used to assess fairness in the National Survey of Families and Households first wave (NSFH-I). Following the division of household tasks and the division of childcare task measures respectively, respondents were asked, "How do you feel about the fairness of your relationship when it comes to the division of house hold tasks?" and "How do you feel about the fairness of your relationship when it comes to the division of child care tasks?" and asked to respond to each using a 5-point scale: 1 = *very unfair to you*; 2=*slightly unfair to you*; 3=*fair to both you and your spouse/partner*; 4=*slightly unfair to your partner*; and 5 = *very unfair to your partner*. This scale appears to address two constructs, fairness to self and fairness to spouse, at face value. However, in the context of the interview, when respondents had just indicated their percent contribution to a list of



household or childcare tasks, it was clear that respondents interpreted this scale as the extent to which the division was fair to the wife, as only one respondent indicated either type of labor was very unfair to the husband. In light of this, we conceptualize this as an “extent of fairness to wife” scale. The scale was reverse-coded for husbands, so that a low score would always mean *very unfair to the wife* and a high score would always mean *overly fair to the wife*. The distribution of perceived fairness of household and childcare tasks for husbands and wives is presented in Table 2.

### **Gender Ideology**

Gender ideology was measured prenatally using the Men’s and Women’s Roles Scale (Brogan & Kutner. 1976). This 39-item scale assesses how “traditional” or “egalitarian/liberal” individuals are in terms of how they view the roles of men and women in workplace and home settings. Sample items include the following: "Unless it is economically necessary, married women who have preschool-age children should not work outside the home," "In groups that have both male and female members, the top leadership positions should be held by males," and "Marriage is a partnership in which the wife and husband should share the economic responsibility of supporting the family." Respondents indicate their level of agreement with each item using a 6-point Likert scale. Higher scores were indicative of more egalitarian gender ideology. For the present study, gender ideology was measured using participants’ mean score on this scale. Cronbach’s alphas for the gender ideology scale were .86 for wives and .90 for husbands.

### **Marital Relationship**

Marital quality was measured using Braiker and Kelley’s (1979) Personal Relationship Scale. Husbands’ and wives’ responses at Time 1, Time 2, and Time 3 will

be used for analysis in this study. Two subscales will be used for this study representing positive affect in marriage (love) and negative affect in marriage (conflict). The *Love* subscale uses 10 items to assess respondents' feelings of closeness and attachment with their partner, with items such as, "How close do you feel toward your partner?" The *Conflict-Negativity* subscale uses 5 items to assess the amount of conflict and negativity in the relationship with items such as, "How often did you and your partner argue with one another?" Responses on the scale range from 1 (*not at all* or *very infrequently*) to 9 (*very much* or *very frequently*). Cronbach's alphas for the *Love* subscale for wives and husbands respectively were .89 and .81 at Time 1, .82 and .90 at Time 2, and .89 and .83 at Time 3. Cronbach's alpha for the *Conflict* subscale for wives and husbands were .79 and .80 respectively at Time 1, .77 and .80 at Time 2, and .76 and .78 at Time 3.

### **Work Hours**

Although all participants reported intentions to return to work full-time when interviewed in the third trimester, actual postnatal work hours varied, with some wives returning part-time and most returning full-time. Work hours were assessed at Time 1 and will be used as a control variable.

### **Analytic Plan**

Multilevel linear modeling (MLM; Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002) was used to fit the models and test the hypotheses. MLM provides a robust method for modeling individual change over time; in this case change in both marital love and marital conflict across the transition to parenthood. Having marital outcome data at three time points allowed us to examine linear change. MLM also allows individual outcomes to be linked to partner's outcomes, thus accommodating the dependent nature of couple data (Sayer & Klute,

2005). Standard power analyses programs in HLM cannot be applied to dyadic, longitudinal data so we went with the rule of thumb in regression which indicates you should have at least 10 cases for each predictor in the model.

A series of multilevel growth models was used to assess the strength of division of housework and child care and perceived fairness in predicting levels of marital quality at one year postpartum and change in quality for husbands and wives while controlling for work hours and the dependent nature of couples' data. The model of fairness as a mediator of the relation between the division of labor and marital quality was tested for husbands and wives. Analyses examined both dyadic level and dyadic change in marital quality across the three phases. The mediating role of fairness was evaluated using Baron and Kenny's (1986) four step process. The following is an example of analysis for the division of household tasks and marital love:

1. Evaluate whether the division of household tasks is significantly related to marital love.
2. Evaluate whether the division of household tasks is significantly related to perceived fairness.
3. Evaluate whether the division of household tasks and perceived fairness are significantly related to marital love in the same model.
4. Determine whether there is a significant change in the strength of the relation between division of household tasks and marital love when fairness is added to the model. A Sobel test will determine whether the relation is significantly weaker, which would indicate that fairness is a mediator.

These steps were repeated for husbands' and wives' reports of both housework and childcare for marital love and marital conflict. Housework and child care were included in separate models to determine how these components of family work related independently to marital quality. Deviance tests were conducted in HLM to determine if more variance in marital outcomes was explained when childcare tasks were added into the initial model that only included household tasks as a way to examine the relative effects of household tasks vs. childcare tasks.

To address the role of gender ideology (GI) as a moderator of the relationship between division of household tasks and childcare tasks and perceived fairness for husbands and wives, hierarchical regression analyses were used where HHT, GI, and HHT×GI were used to predict perceived fairness. These analyses were repeated for childcare tasks, and were conducted for both wives and husbands.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESULTS

Means and standard deviations for all predictor variables can be found in Table 3. As expected, wives performed a significantly higher proportion of household tasks and childcare tasks than husbands, with the exception of masculine household tasks. In terms of gender ideology, wives were significantly more egalitarian than husbands. Means and standard deviations for all outcome variables can be found in Table 4. Husbands and wives did not significantly differ in their reports of marital love, but wives reported significantly higher levels of conflict than husbands at all time-points. Reports of love were negatively skewed for both husbands and wives, with the majority of participants reporting levels of love on the high end of the scale. Due to this distribution, a square transformation was performed on love, and the squared love outcome was used for the analyses reported below.

The first question addressed whether fairness mediates the effect of the division of labor on marital quality. Results for this mediation question were addressed first for marital love and then for marital conflict. For each outcome, effects for household tasks are first reported for wives then husbands, followed by the effects of childcare tasks for wives, then husbands. Finally, results for combined models of household and childcare tasks are reported for husbands and wives. These steps were taken for both wives' reports and husbands' reports of the predictors, however, none of the husband models explained significantly more variance than the unconditional models for love and conflict, and few of the husbands' predictors were significantly related to marital

outcomes for either spouse, so the results for husbands' predictors are not reported here. Results for husbands' reports can be found in Appendix A.

The second question addressed whether gender ideology moderates the relationship between the division of household tasks and perceived fairness and the division of childcare tasks and perceived fairness for wives and husbands. Both husbands' reports and wives' reports of the division of labor and perceived fairness were analyzed.

### **Predicting Marital Love**

#### **Unconditional Model**

We fit an unconditional model (with no Level 2 predictors) for wives' and husbands' levels and change in marital love. The final estimation of variance components for marital love indicated that for both spouses, there was significant variability in levels of marital love at Time 1 ( $\chi^2 = 425.27, p < .001$  for wives;  $\chi^2 = 393.22, p < .001$  for husbands). Variability in linear change was not significant for either spouse ( $\chi^2 = 96.53, p > .500$  for wives;  $\chi^2 = 112.16, p = .275$  for husbands). Although there was no significant variability in spouses' linear change trajectory, we included linear change in love as a dependent variable because research indicates that couples do experience changes in marital quality across the transition to parenthood (Belsky & Rovine, 1990). Moreover, tests of variance are less powerful than those for fixed effects in dyadic MLM, and we were interested in even small changes in parents' marital love (Maas & Hox, 2005).

## Household Tasks

Multilevel growth modeling was used to assess the predictive power of the division of household tasks and perceived fairness of the division of household tasks in predicting level and change in marital love following new mothers' return to work. Husbands' and wives' work hours and education levels, as well as marital status, child gender, and wives' proportional contribution to household income were all included as controls<sup>1</sup>. An unconditional model for marital love was fit in Step 1, the control variables were entered in Step 2, the division of household tasks was entered in Step 3, and perceived fairness was added in Step 4.

As depicted in Table 5, wives' higher proportion of household tasks was a significant predictor of lower initial levels of marital love for wives in the Division model, however this relationship was no longer significant after adding perceived fairness. A Sobel test confirmed that the change in the household task coefficient was significant (Sobel's  $z = 2.75$ ,  $se = 1.74$ ,  $p = .006$ ), indicating that fairness acted as a partial mediator of the relationship between the division of household tasks and wives' marital love. While the mediation model was not supported for change in love, greater perceived fairness was significantly related to a decrease in love for wives, as depicted in Figure 3. Wives who perceived the division of household tasks as fair had higher initial levels of love, but had decreasing love over time, whereas wives who perceived the division to be unfair had lower initial levels that increased slightly over time. While wives who perceived the division of housework to be fair reported significantly greater

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<sup>1</sup> As suggested by Gupta et al. (2010), wives' actual yearly income was also tested as a predictor, however, wives' proportion of income explained more variance in marital outcomes in this study and was therefore used in all analyses.

levels of love than those who perceived it as unfair at Time 1, these groups no longer reported significant differences in levels of love by Time 3 ( $B = 2.16$ ,  $SE = 2.29$ ,  $p = .347$ ). Effect sizes for the division of household tasks and perceived fairness were estimated using proportion reduction in variance, which is one method traditionally used for effect size in HLM. There is some debate as to how best to report effect sizes in HLM (Roberts & Monaco, 2006). Although there is no universally accepted method, the proportion reduction in variance, sometimes referred to as a pseudo R squared, is a common approach and was used for this study. The proportion reduction in variance indicated that the division of housework explained 12.3 percent of variance in wives' levels of love not explained by the control model, and perceived fairness explained an additional 9.9 percent.

In examining cross-over effects, wives' reports of the division of household tasks were a significant predictor of husbands' initial levels of love in the Division model, with husbands reporting less love when wives performed a higher proportion of household tasks. This relationship was reduced to the level of a trend in the Fairness model after adding wives' perceived fairness, however, fairness was not a significant predictor in that model. There was a trend for husband's love to increase over time when their wives' performed more housework in the Division model; however, this effect was weakened after adding wives' perceived fairness in the Fairness model. In terms of effect size, proportion reduction in variance in husbands' level of love for the division of household tasks was 10 percent and fairness was 3.0 percent.

### **Childcare Tasks**



Multilevel growth models for childcare tasks were assessed in the same manner as household tasks. As shown in Table 6, wives' higher proportion of childcare tasks significantly predicted lower initial levels of love for wives, but it was no longer significant after adding fairness in the Fairness model. Wives reported higher levels of love when they perceived the division of childcare to be fair. A Sobel test showed a significant reduction in the strength of the relationship for division of childcare after adding fairness (Sobel's  $z = -2.38$ ,  $se = 1.89$ ,  $p = .017$ ), supporting the notion of fairness as a mediator of the relationship. In terms of effect size for wives' levels of love, the proportion reduction in variance over the control model for the division of childcare was 8.9 percent, with fairness adding an additional 7.5 percent reduction in variance. In addition, being married and working fewer hours predicted increases in wives' love at the level of a trend.

As with household tasks, wives' higher proportion of childcare tasks was a significant predictor of lower levels of marital love for husbands in Model 2, however neither the childcare tasks nor perceived fairness were significant when included together in Model 3. Husbands' education level was a predictor of his love in the Division and Fairness models, such that husbands with higher education levels reported lower marital love. Proportion reduction of variance for husbands' levels of love beyond the control model was 6.7 percent for childcare tasks, and an additional 1.7 percent for fairness.

### **Household and Childcare Combined**

When division and fairness of household and childcare tasks were included in the same model, the two fairness measures were related to wives' initial levels of marital love, with wives reporting more love when they perceived the division of household labor

as fair ( $B = 4.36, SE = 1.79, p = .017$ ) and a trend for higher love when they perceived the division childcare as fair ( $B = 4.50, SE = 2.30, p = .053$ ). As with the household only model, perceived fairness of housework was related to change in wives' marital love at the level of a trend ( $B = -.382, SE = .204, p = .064$ ). Marital love decreased slightly over time for wives who initially perceived the division of household tasks as fair. Wives who perceived the division as fair at Time 1 were no longer significantly different from wives who perceived the division as unfair in levels of love by Time 3. None of the division of labor and fairness variables were associated with marital love for husbands in the combined model. In testing which models provided the best fit for the data, Model Comparison Tests revealed that the combined model was a significantly better fit than the childcare only model ( $\chi^2 = 20.26, DF = 8, p = .010$ ), but was not a significant improvement over the household only model ( $\chi^2 = 7.92, DF = 8, p > .500$ ). Since adding childcare did not result in a significant improvement in fit over the housework only model, and as housework explained a higher proportion of variance in love for husbands and wives, we can conclude that couples' love was more highly related to housework than to childcare.

### **Predicting Marital Conflict**

#### **Unconditional Model**

As with marital love, we fit an unconditional model (with no Level 2 predictors) for wives' and husbands' levels and change in marital conflict. The final estimation of variance components for conflict indicated that for both spouses, there was significant variability in levels of marital conflict at Time 1 ( $\chi^2 = 452.38, p < .001$  for wives;  $\chi^2 = 340.31, p < .001$  for husbands). Variability in linear change was not significant for either

spouse ( $\chi^2 = 111.72, p = .284$  for wives;  $\chi^2 = 103.06, p > .500$  for husbands). As with love, previous research, the limited power to detect variance in dyadic models using MLM, and our interest in even small changes in marital conflict led us to include linear change in conflict as a dependent variable.

### **Household Tasks**

A separate set of multilevel growth models were fit to predict marital conflict. Neither level nor change in wives' marital conflict was related to wives' reports of the division of household tasks, or fairness of that division. Wives who worked more hours outside the home reported lower initial levels of marital conflict, in the Division and Fairness models. Wives whose husbands had higher levels of education reported higher initial levels of conflict in all models, however, husbands' education also predicted diminishing conflict over time.

Husbands whose wives reported performing a greater proportion of household tasks reported higher initial levels of conflict in the Division model. This relationship was no longer significant after adding wives' reports of fairness in the Fairness model, with husbands reporting lower levels of conflict when their wives perceived the division of household tasks as fair. A Sobel test showed that adding fairness to the model resulted in a significant reduction in the relationship between wives' reports of the division of household tasks and husband's reports of conflict (Sobel's  $z = 3.09, SE = .159, p = .002$ ). Married men reported lower levels of conflict than cohabiting men in both models. Proportion reduction in variance in husbands' levels of conflict beyond the control model was 9.6 percent for the division of household tasks and an additional 14.6 percent for fairness.

## Childcare Tasks

As shown in Table 8, wives' reports of the division of childcare tasks were significantly related to wives' initial levels of marital conflict in the Division model, such that wives who reported a more even division of childcare reported lower levels of marital conflict. In the Fairness model, wives' perceived fairness of the division of childcare tasks was significantly related to their initial levels of marital conflict, such that wives reported less conflict when they felt the division of childcare was more fair to them. The relationship between the division of childcare and initial level of marital conflict was no longer significant after adding fairness in the Fairness model. A Sobel test indicated that there was a significant reduction in the strength of the relationship between the division of childcare and marital conflict after adding fairness to the model (Sobel's  $z = 2.957$ ,  $SE = .178$ ,  $p = .003$ ), supporting a mediation model. Wives' higher levels of marital conflict were also predicted by husbands having higher levels of education in both the Division and Fairness models, and by wives' working fewer hours outside the home at the level of a trend. Proportion reduction in variance in wives' levels of conflict beyond the control model was 6.0 percent for the division of childcare tasks and an additional 12.7 percent for fairness. In terms of wives' change in marital conflict, neither the division of childcare nor perceived fairness was significantly related to rates of change. In all models, husbands' lower level of education was related to increasing marital conflict for wives at the level of a trend.

For husbands, neither the division of childcare, nor wives' perceived fairness of the division of childcare were related to husbands' marital conflict. Married husbands

reported significantly lower levels of conflict than cohabiting husbands did, and husbands reported lower levels of conflict when wives worked more hours.

### **Household and Childcare Combined**

When division and fairness of household and childcare tasks were included in the same model, the fairness of childcare was related to wives' initial levels of marital conflict ( $B = -.677, SE = .220, p = .003$ ), with wives reporting less conflict when they perceived the division of childcare as fair. The division of childcare and household tasks and fairness of household tasks were not significantly related to wives' levels of conflict in the combined model. None of the predictors were related to change in wives' conflict in the combined model. As fairness of childcare explained more variance in wives' conflict than the division of housework, childcare, or the fairness of housework, we can conclude that fairness of childcare was what mattered most for wives' conflict.

For husbands, wives' perceived fairness of household tasks was related to initial levels of conflict, with husbands reporting less conflict when their wives perceived the division of household tasks as more fair ( $B = -.572, SE = .165, p = .001$ ). None of the division of labor and fairness variables was associated with change in marital conflict for husbands in the combined model. The combined model was a significant improvement in fit over the childcare only model ( $\chi^2 = 20.58, DF = 8, p = .009$ ), and was also significantly better than the household only model, although to a lesser extent ( $\chi^2 = 15.74, DF = 8, p = .046$ ). While the combined model was an improvement over both the household only and the childcare only model for dyads as a whole, the proportion of variance explained reveals that improvement of fit was only related to one spouse or the other, not both spouses. While both models fit the data, looking at the proportion of

explained variance shows that childcare was related to wives' conflict but not husbands, and housework was related to husbands' conflict but not wives'.

Given the complexity of the results, Table 9 provides a summary of the key findings linking the two types of family labor, household tasks and child care tasks, with two dimensions of the marriage, namely love and conflict. Fairness mediated relations between both housework and childcare for wives' love, such that the fairer the division of both types of labor the more love wives reported. In contrast, for husbands' love was directly related to wives reports of the actual division of housework and childcare, such that the more work wives performed the less love husbands reported. In terms of conflict, a clear contrast was found between husbands and wives. Wives reporting more fairness with childcare reported less marital conflict, while the division of housework and perceptions of its fairness were unrelated to wives reports of conflict. Findings for husbands were the opposite, with fairness mediating a relationship between the division of housework and conflict, but no significant relationships for childcare. Finally, few results emerged for change in reports of spouses' love and conflict. The once exception revealed that wives' perceptions of fairness of housework predicted a decline in wives' love over time.

### **Predicting Perceived Fairness**

Having tested the mediating role of fairness, hierarchical linear regressions were performed to evaluate the moderating role of gender ideology on the relationship between the division of household tasks and perceived fairness for wives and for husbands. These analyses were then replicated for childcare tasks for wives and husbands. The full gender ideology scale described in the Method section, was not significantly related to the

division of labor and fairness measures. Participants tended to fall on the egalitarian end of the gender ideology scale (means and standard deviations can be found in Table 3). There was a ceiling effect for gender ideology, which limited the variability of this predictor, particularly for wives. As the scale takes a broad view of gender ideology, and we hypothesized that gender ideology in relation to roles within the family might be more proximal to the division of labor and fairness, therefore we tested the moderation relationship using a question related to provider role ideology, as per Goldberg and Perry-Jenkins (2004). Participants responded either *agree* or *disagree* with the statement: “The man should be the main breadwinner.” We defined traditional provider role ideology as agreeing with the statement, and egalitarian provider role ideology as disagreeing with the statement. The analyses using the provider role ideology measure are reported below.

### **Household Tasks**

Provider role ideology did not moderate the relationship between the division of household tasks and perceived fairness for wives or for husbands. For wives, there was a main effect for household tasks ( $B = -.402, SE = .067, p < .001$ ), such that wives who performed a higher proportion of household tasks perceived this to be unfair. There was no significant effect of provider role ideology on perceived fairness and no interaction between the division of household tasks and provider role ideology.

The division of household tasks had a main effect for husbands’ perceptions of fairness ( $B = .258, SE = .061, p < .001$ ), with husbands who performed a higher proportion of household tasks perceiving the division as more fair to their wives. There was also a trend for a main effect of provider role ideology for husbands, such that traditional husbands perceived the division of household tasks as less fair to their wives,

which was significant at  $\alpha = .061$  ( $B = -.247$ ,  $SE = .130$ ,  $p = .061$ ). Provider role ideology was not found to moderate the relationship between the division of household tasks and perceived fairness for husbands.

### **Childcare Tasks**

Provider role ideology moderated the relationship between the division of childcare and perceived fairness for wives, as seen in Table 10. Performing a higher proportion of childcare predicted lower levels of perceived fairness overall ( $B = -.334$ ,  $SE = .050$ ,  $p < .001$ ), but this relationship was stronger for wives' with egalitarian ideology than those with traditional provider role ideology ( $B = .195$ ,  $SE = .096$ ,  $p = .045$ ). A graph of this interaction is presented in Figure 4.

For husbands, there was a main effect of the division of childcare on fairness, with husbands who performed a lower proportion of childcare tasks perceiving this as less fair to their wives ( $B = .358$ ,  $SE = .048$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Provider role ideology was neither a significant predictor of fairness for husbands, nor was it a significant moderator of the relationship between the division of childcare and perceived fairness.



## CHAPTER 4

### DISCUSSION

Although much research has examined the relationship between the division of family labor and marital quality, this study's unique sample of working-class dual-earner new parents allowed for exploration of these relationships in a context where couples' gender role ideology may be at odds with necessity. Previous research has also overlooked how different types of family work may be related to different components of the marital relationship for different spouses, which may be particularly important to understanding in the context of the transition to parenthood. This study examined the division of housework and childcare and the role of fairness in predicting marital love and conflict in a specific life-stage (transition to parenthood), family structure (dual-earner couples) and socioeconomic context (working-class), providing a unique opportunity to examine within-group differences in how two types of family work are related to marriage.

#### **Family Labor and Marital Quality**

It was expected that the division of labor would matter more for wives than for husbands, and this hypothesis was supported. Beyond that, it seems that wives' perceptions of the division of labor and fairness matter more than husbands', not only for wives' marital outcomes, but also for husbands'. It may be that husbands' and wives' have differing perceptions of how much work they each perform, but wives' pay more attention to the family workload due to gender socialization, which would be in line with Lavee and Katz's (2002) findings that husbands' perceptions of fairness were not actually related to the division of labor. These results may reflect the greater attention and

concern that women put into the family workload due to cultural expectations for gender roles. Moreover, as women in this sample performed a disproportionate amount of housework and childcare, with very few couples reporting the workload as being unfair to husbands, husbands are more likely to benefit from an uneven division of labor, making men less likely to feel it is a problem.

From a distributive justice perspective, differences in comparison referents may also explain why wives perceive inequity more than husbands, with husbands more likely to compare themselves to same-gender friends and relatives than to their wives. Given that wives were significantly more egalitarian than husbands were, this finding may also be related to differences in valued outcomes. Wives may have been more likely to value an even division of labor and husbands more likely to value a traditional division.

Not only did wives' reports matter more than husbands' but, as in previous studies (Lavee & Katz, 2002) wives' marital outcomes were more strongly related to the division and fairness of family labor than were husbands', particularly in regards to love. This finding may be related to the ideas of separate domains, with couples feeling that breadwinning is the husbands' domain and family labor is the wives'. Wives who hold those values may see a husband's contribution to family labor as an act of love rather than a responsibility, so may love their husbands more and feel their husbands love them more when husbands contribute more to family labor.

This difference in love may also be related to comparison referents; wives may love and feel loved by their husbands more when husbands perform a higher proportion of family labor in relation to their wives, but also when compared to other men. In the context of a working-class family, whose comparison referents may be more likely to

hold traditional gender ideology than a middle-class family, wives' may be more prone to interpret husbands' contribution to family work as a sign of love when it is not the "norm" for husbands to take on those responsibilities. Even if the division of labor is uneven, wives may see it as "fair" if their husbands are doing more in comparison to other husbands they know.

Surprisingly, it was the division of childcare, but not housework, that was related to wives' conflict. Though past research suggests that housework is more aversive than childcare (Poortman & van der Lippe, 2009), and we hypothesized that it would be more strongly related to marital quality than childcare, it may be that across the transition to parenthood childcare is more salient to wives' perceptions of conflict. This finding is likely a function of the timing of our study, with a new baby in the house and wives having recently returned to work. Housework may become more salient to wives once parents have adapted to parenthood or when children are older and thus childcare demands are lower. Another possible explanation for this finding is that housework may be more flexible in the timing, quality, or required time (e.g., parents can get fast-food for dinner if there is no time to cook) than childcare (e.g., a diaper cannot wait to be changed), therefore father's involvement may be seen as more crucial, and is likely more of a boon to mothers in terms of concerns such as sleep, which may be of primary concern after returning to work. The greater urgency and consequences of childcare at this stage may make wives more likely to perceive it as an area of conflict and as a more important battle to fight than that of housework.

In contrast to wives, husbands' conflict was related to housework but not childcare. The finding that husbands in our sample reported more conflict when wives

performed more housework differs from previous findings concerning working-class husbands' and housework, such as Perry-Jenkins and Folk (1994), who found an inverse relationship. This difference may be related to the 10 year chronological difference in the studies, or to the particular life-stage of the transition to parenthood, when couples are establishing new roles. Wives in this sample also worked more hours outside the home than the wives in Perry-Jenkins and Folk's 1994 study, making couples more likely to require husbands' contribution to the family workload.

Though this finding for the division of labor and husbands' love contrasts with previous findings for working-class families, it does fit with other previous research, which has found childcare to be less aversive than housework (Poortman & van der Lippe, 2009). As housework is considered to be a less rewarding type of work than childcare, it is plausible that husbands are less likely to view requests for help with childcare as nagging or conflict than requests for help with housework. Thus, while wives are more likely to argue when they feel husbands are not participating enough in childcare, husbands are more likely to argue, or perceive requests as conflict, when they are related to tasks they more strongly dislike performing. Husbands may also see an uneven division of housework as more justifiable than an uneven division of childcare. Research suggests that husbands care less about how clean the house is, what the family has for dinner, or whether they have a clean shirt on than wives do (Hochschild, 1989). Husbands may see this difference in levels of concern as justification for contributing less to housework, making them less willing to perform housework and, therefore, more likely to protest about it. While different standards and meanings for housework could play into justification for housework, it is less likely that a husband would use differences

in standards and meaning to justify an uneven division of childcare; it is hard to imagine a husband saying, “You’re the one who cares about diaper rash, not me!”

While the hypothesis that fairness would matter more than the actual division of family labor was, by and large, supported, this did not hold true for husbands and love. The division of housework and childcare were both directly related to husbands’ love, while fairness was not. One possible explanation is that husbands’ who love their wives less, are less willing to contribute to housework and childcare (Deutsch, Lussier, & Servis, 1993), which would be reflected more in the actual division of labor than in wives’ perceptions of fairness. It is also plausible that uneven divisions of housework and childcare are related to lower levels of marital love for husband as a result of the higher levels of conflict, which would make conflict a mediator between the division of labor and husbands’ love. Future research should examine these potential models for husbands’ marital love.

The results indicate that the relationship between the division of family labor and marriage depends on whether the outcome is a positive emotion (love) or negative behavior (conflict). Why would family labor be more related to wives’ love and husbands’ conflict? One possible explanation for these findings is the meaning that husbands and wives place on domestic labor. Wives may see family labor as related to emotion and caring for family members (DeVault, 1991), whereas husbands’ may see family labor as, more simply, work to be completed. These differing meanings could lead wives to relate family work to love, an emotional component of marriage, and husbands to relate family work to conflict, a more behavioral component of marriage.

### **Change in Marriage**

One aim of this study was to predict change in marital love and conflict across the transition to parenthood, and surprisingly few relationships were found for change. Generally, there was little change in marital love and conflict across the three phases, leaving little variance in change to predict. Despite this limited variance, there was a trend for wives who perceived housework as fair initially to decline in love over time. This change may be related to violated expectations across the first year of parenthood (Ruble, Fleming, Hackel, & Stangor, 1988), as it is possible that husbands who contributed more right after wives returned to work started to wane in their helpfulness over time. Future research should evaluate perceived fairness as a time-varying-covariate in order to determine whether fairness changes, and if changes in fairness are related to marital love and conflict. It is also possible that a longer time-frame would have allowed for greater change in marital outcomes. Future research could examine how the division of labor during the first year of parenthood predicts marital quality in later years, the likelihood of divorce, or the likelihood of having more children.

### **Gender Ideology**

In regards to the moderating role of gender ideology on the relationship between the division of labor and fairness, results were not as expected. Interestingly, the overall gender ideology scale was not related, but the 1-item question regarding who should be the breadwinner was related to fairness of childcare tasks for wives. It may be that there was a ceiling effect for scores on the gender ideology scale, with the majority of our sample falling toward the highest end (egalitarian) of the spectrum. This distribution limited the range of values for our predictor and the possibility of finding significant

relationships with fairness. In addition, the Brogan and Kutner (1976) gender ideology scale takes a broad view of gender ideology, whereas a scale that hones in on gender ideology in family roles (such as our one item regarding breadwinning), might be more relevant to the division of labor. Confirmatory factor analysis to create a subscale of family role items from the Brogan and Kutner scale might serve to provide a gender ideology scale that is more specific to gender in the family.

The limited findings concerning gender ideology may also be related to the socioeconomic status of our participants. It is possible that structural factors, such as shift work, may leave little flexibility for these couples in terms of the division of labor. In these cases, structural factors may override ideology, which may make an uneven division of labor seem fair, even when it departs from what husbands and wives feel would be ideal. For couples with no other options, an uneven division of labor may be justifiable, even if it leaves one spouse with the bulk of the workload. For these couples, real-life circumstances may have a greater influence on the division of labor than their ideology.

Though the full gender ideology measure resulted in no findings, the breadwinner ideology item, which may more closely capture ideology concerning gender roles within a family, did interact with the division of childcare to predict fairness for wives. Egalitarian wives were more likely to view an uneven division of childcare as unfair than traditional wives. Given that these were new mothers who just returned to work and were trying to establish sustainable parenting roles in their relationships, it makes sense that ideology would come into play more with childcare than with housework at this stage. Another explanation for why this interaction was found for childcare rather than

housework is that the role of primary parent is more valuable to traditional wives than is the role of primary homemaker, which would make traditional wives less likely to perceive an uneven division of childcare as unfair, but rather as a valued outcome.

### **Limitations**

The findings of this study should be viewed in consideration of its limitations. The unique sample of working-class, dual-earner, primarily White, first-time parents is useful for understanding division of labor dynamics in this unique context, but limits the generalizability of these findings. It may be that housework and childcare hold different meanings for couples in different cultures, so may relate to marital quality in different ways. For example, the relationships between the division of labor and marital quality has been shown to sensitive to social class indicators such as a family's financial resources or education levels.

Another limitation of this study is the inability to make causal inferences regarding relationships between the division of family labor and marital outcomes. Family labor variables were used to predict concurrent levels of marital love and conflict, which allows for the possibility that it is marital quality that influences the division of labor, or that this relationship is bidirectional. While this study also examined how the division of labor predicted changes in marital outcomes, there was little change in these outcomes over the three time-points, which allows for few conclusions.

The fairness measure used in this study poses another limitation to these findings. Fairness was measured using one question for each type of family labor, with a scale that placed fair to the husband and fair to the wife at opposite ends. This measure assumes that there is a perfect inverse relation between spouses' levels of fairness, which may not



always be the case. Participants only used a limited range of the scale, with almost no participants indicating that the division of either type of family labor was unfair to the husband. It is impossible to know what factors participants used to assess the level of fairness, or whether there were participants who felt the division of labor was unfair to both spouses.

### **Implications**

This study brings to light some important implications for family labor research. Disparate relationships emerged between housework and childcare, love and conflict, for husbands and wives even within a homogenous sample of working-class, dual-earner couples with one infant. These results highlight the value of looking at both housework and childcare, as they appear to have different meanings for different spouses in different domains of the marital relationship. Another important implication is the need to be careful how we define “marital quality”, as it seems that love and conflict are not two sides of the same coin, but distinct components of marital quality that are related to family labor in diverse ways. That these differences were found within the context of working-class dual-earner families at the same life-stage suggests that using SES, number and age of children, and work hours as control variables may mask important within-group differences and belie the true experiences of families in different social contexts. The context of the transition to parenthood may capture a unique time in the family life course. These findings may be specific to life course issues of new parents who are in the process of renegotiating roles after the birth of a baby and mothers’ return to work. Differences in effects of childcare and housework highlight the importance of the presence and age of children in examining division of labor processes in families.

Studies that include families with teenagers as well as those with infants may mask important differences based on life-stage that simply controlling for the age of children may not capture.

This study also has implications for couples transitioning to parenthood and clinicians working with such couples. As research suggests that housework and childcare hold different meanings for each spouse, couples may benefit from more open communication about how they expect to manage the family workload and how they feel about housework and childcare. Couples and clinicians may also take note of the unique family labor issues that occur when dual-earner couples have their first child and may be unable to afford daycare, in order to better navigate these processes as they occur. Differences in love and conflict suggest couples may benefit from interventions focusing on improving either one of those domains, as they may respond differently to interventions and changes in family labor. Interventions that provide information and prompt discussion about the unique challenges of dual-earner couples with working-class jobs transitioning to parenthood may serve to set realistic expectations, promote healthy marital communication, and normalize the experience for couples.

Table 1: Background Characteristics of the Sample

Characteristic	Mothers	Fathers
Mean age in years (SD)	27.14 (4.57)	29.20 (4.78)
Ethnicity (%)		
White (not Latino)	96.40	92.00
Latino	1.80	2.70
African-American	0.90	0.90
Other	0.90	4.50
Level of Education (%)*		
Less than High School	0.90	0.00
High School Graduate	17.00	29.50
Some College/Vocational	50.00	54.50
Associates' or More	32.10	16.10
Mean Hours Worked Per Week (SD)*	36.63 (9.04)	47.38 (8.82)
Income (SD)*	\$24,593 (\$11,208)	\$32,590 (\$10,662)
Wife's Proportion of Income (SD)	.42 (.12)	
Mean Duration of Partnership in Years (SD)	2.67 (2.50)	
Parents' Marital Status (%)		
Married	83.00	
Cohabiting	17.00	
Child's Gender (%)		
Female	56.3	
Male	43.8	

Note. \* = significant difference between husbands and wives

Table 2: Frequency of Responses for Fairness Measure

	Wives		Husbands	
	HHT	CCT	HHT	CCT
Very unfair to you	10	5	1	0
Slightly unfair to you	37	37	6	2
Fair to both you and spouse	55	64	65	62
Slightly unfair to spouse	10	3	35	42
Very unfair to spouse	0	0	3	2

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Predictors

	Wives				Husbands			
	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Min	Max
<b>Household Tasks</b>								
Feminine	3.96*	0.52	2.75	5.00	2.41	0.49	1.38	3.75
Masculine	1.96*	0.71	1.00	4.50	4.34	0.56	2.33	5.00
Total	3.33*	0.47	2.36	4.50	3.02	0.39	1.86	4.29
<b>Childcare tasks</b>								
Total	3.64*	0.46	2.93	5.00	2.56	0.39	1.53	4.20
<b>Fairness</b>								
Household	2.59	0.77	1.00	4.00	2.70	0.66	1.00	5.00
Childcare	2.59	0.63	1.00	4.00	2.59	0.57	1.00	4.00
Gender Ideology	5.27*	0.49	3.38	6.00	4.93	0.55	3.46	5.94

Note. \* = significant difference between husbands and wives

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics for Mothers' and Fathers' Marital Love and Conflict at Three Time Points

	Mothers				Fathers			
	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Marital Love T1	7.78	1.01	3.20	9.00	7.90	0.83	4.00	9.00
Marital Love T2	7.78	0.87	5.10	9.00	7.72	1.01	3.60	9.00
Marital Love T3	7.61	1.22	2.80	9.00	7.81	0.86	5.10	9.00
Marital Conflict T1	3.75*	1.39	1.00	8.60	3.29	1.18	1.20	6.40
Marital Conflict T2	3.96*	1.30	1.00	7.40	3.50	1.39	1.00	7.80
Marital Conflict T3	3.97*	1.33	1.00	7.40	3.42	1.22	1.00	6.20

Note. \* = significant difference between husbands and wives

Table 5: Coefficients and Model Fit Statistics for Multilevel Growth Models Examining Wives' Reports of Division of Household Tasks and Marital Love Across the Transition to Parenthood

Wives' Predictors	Wives' Love							
	Uncond.		Control		Division		Fairness	
	Level	$\Delta$	Level	$\Delta$	Level	$\Delta$	Level	$\Delta$
Fixed Effects								
Intercept	61.4**	-0.21	65.47**	-0.88*	65.44**	-0.88*	65.45**	-0.84*
Child Gender			-3.53	0.23	-3.67	0.24	-3.77	0.23
Marital Status			-3.06	0.70*	-2.95	0.68†	-2.99	0.67*
Wife's % Income			5.90	0.97	9.03	-0.91	7.09	1.08
Wife's Work Hrs.			0.15	-0.03*	0.04	-0.03†	-0.03	-0.03
Hus. Work Hrs.			0.09	<0.01	0.01	<0.01	0.12	<0.01
Wife's Education			1.91	0.07	0.89	0.09	0.57	0.12
Hus. Education			-0.08	0.11	-0.91	0.14	-0.71	0.13
HHT Division					-9.31**	0.25	-4.65	-0.11
HHT Fairness							5.45**	-0.41*
Full Model Fit								
Deviance	4778		4752		4735		4721	
# Parameters	15		43		47		51	
$\Delta\chi^2$			26.28		11.58		13.64	
df			28		4		4	
p-value			>.500		.020		.009	
Var. Components								
$\tau$	135.05	0.44	127.88	0.31	112.19	0.30	101.10	0.24

Note. HHT = household tasks. Child gender was coded as female = 1, male = 0; therefore positive coefficients indicate that parents of girls were higher on a variable. Marital status was coded as cohabiting = 0, married = 1; therefore, positive coefficients indicate that married parents were higher on a variable.

\*\* p < .01 \* p < .05 † p < .10

Table 5 cont.

Wives' Predictors	Husbands' Love							
	Uncond.		Control		Division		Fairness	
	Level	$\Delta$	Level	$\Delta$	Level	$\Delta$	Level	$\Delta$
Fixed Effects								
Intercept	62.1**	-0.15	61.11**	-0.45	60.76**	-0.38	60.66**	-0.34
Child Gender			0.06	0.08	0.04	0.10	0.14	0.06
Marital Status			1.29	0.30	1.65	0.24	1.67	0.21
Wife's % Income			-14.70	1.26	-11.68	1.10	-11.96	1.11
Wife's Work Hrs.			0.19	-0.03†	0.09	-0.02	0.05	-0.02
Hus. Work Hrs.			0.09	<0.01	0.10	<0.01	0.11	-0.01
Wife's Education			-0.53	-0.12	-1.39	-0.06	-1.52	-0.05
Hus. Education			-3.00	0.03	-3.68*	0.09	-3.57*	0.08
HHT Division					-7.99**	0.49†	-5.46†	0.30
HHT Fairness							2.91	-0.23
Var. Components								
$\tau$	110.89	0.22	104.10	0.20	93.31	0.16	90.50	0.13

Table 6: Coefficients and Model Fit Statistics for Multilevel Growth Models Examining Wives' Reports of Division of Childcare Tasks and Marital Love Across the Transition to Parenthood

Wives' Predictors	Wives' Love							
	Uncond.		Control		Division		Fairness	
	Level	$\Delta$	Level	$\Delta$	Level	$\Delta$	Level	$\Delta$
<b>Fixed Effects</b>								
Intercept	61.4**	-0.21	65.47**	-0.88*	65.4**	-0.86	65.5**	-0.84*
Child Gender			-3.53	0.23	-3.67	0.24	-3.77	0.23
Marital Status			-3.06	0.70*	-2.95	0.68†	-2.99	0.67*
Wife's % Income			5.90	0.97	9.03	-0.91	7.09	1.08
Wife's Work Hrs.			0.15	-0.03*	0.04	-0.03†	-0.03	-0.03
Hus. Work Hrs.			0.09	<0.01	0.01	<0.01	0.12	<0.01
Wife's Education			1.91	0.07	0.89	0.09	0.57	0.12
Hus. Education			-0.08	0.11	-0.91	0.14	-0.71	0.13
CCT Division					-9.31**	0.25	-4.65	-0.11
CCT Fairness							5.45**	-0.41*
<b>Model Fit</b>								
Deviance	4778		4752		4735		4720	
# Parameters	15		43		47		51	
$\Delta\chi^2$			26.28		17.39		13.64	
df			28		4		4	
p-value			>.500		.002		.009	
<b>Var. Components</b>								
$\tau$	135.05	0.44	127.88	0.31	116.51	0.30	107.75	0.27

Note. CCT = childcare tasks. Child gender was coded as female = 1, male = 0; therefore positive coefficients indicate that parents of girls were higher on a variable. Marital status was coded as cohabiting = 0, married = 1; therefore, positive coefficients indicate that married parents were higher on a variable.

\*\* p < .01 \* p < .05 † p < .10

Table 6 cont.

Wives' Predictors	Husbands' Love							
	Uncond.		Control		Division		Fairness	
	Level	$\Delta$	Level	$\Delta$	Level	$\Delta$	Level	$\Delta$
Fixed Effects								
Intercept	62.1**	-.15	61.11**	-0.45	60.8**	-0.38	60.7**	-0.34
Child Gender			0.06	0.08	0.04	0.10	0.14	0.06
Marital Status			1.29	0.30	1.65	0.24	1.67	0.21
Wife's % Income			-14.70	1.26	-11.68	1.10	-11.96	1.11
Wife's Work Hrs.			0.19	-0.03†	0.09	-0.02	0.05	-0.02
Hus. Work Hrs.			0.09	<0.01	0.10	<0.01	0.11	-0.01
Wife's Education			-0.53	-0.12	-1.40	-0.06	-1.52	-0.05
Hus. Education			-3.00	0.03	-3.68*	0.09	-3.57*	0.08
CCT Division					-7.99**	0.49†	-5.46†	0.30
CCT Fairness							2.91	-0.23
Var. Components								
$\tau$	110.89	0.22	104.10	0.20	97.12	0.18	95.46	0.17



Table 7: Coefficients and Model Fit Statistics for Multilevel Growth Models Examining Wives' Reports of Division of Household Tasks and Marital Conflict Across the Transition to Parenthood

Wives' Predictors	Wives' Conflict							
	Uncond.		Control		Division		Fairness	
	Level	$\Delta$	Level	$\Delta$	Level	$\Delta$	Level	$\Delta$
Fixed Effects								
Intercept	3.83**	0.02	4.11**	<0.01	4.12**	<0.01	4.12**	<0.01
Child Gender			0.21	-0.03	0.22	-0.03	0.22	-0.03
Marital Status			-0.46	0.04	-0.47	0.04	-0.47	0.04
Wife's % Income			-0.82	0.11	-0.97	0.12	-0.92	0.12
Wife's Work Hrs.			-0.04*	<0.01	-0.03*	<0.01	-0.03†	<0.01
Hus. Work Hrs.			-0.02	<0.01	-0.02	<0.01	-0.02	<0.01
Wife's Education			-0.11	0.02	-0.06	0.02	-0.06	0.02
Hus. Education			0.82*	-0.04	0.58**	-0.04*	0.57*	-0.04*
HHT Division					0.45†	-0.04	0.32	-0.04
HHT Fairness							-0.15	<0.01
Model Fit								
Deviance	1841		1805		1796		1784	
# Parameters	15		43		47		51	
$\Delta\chi^2$			36.24		9.37		57.60	
df			28		4		4	
p-value			.137		.052		.017	
Var. Components								
$\tau$	1.32	0.003	1.00	0.001	0.96	0.001	0.96	0.001

Note. HHT = household tasks. Child gender was coded as female = 1, male = 0; therefore positive coefficients indicate that parents of girls were higher on a variable. Marital status was coded as cohabiting = 0, married = 1; therefore, positive coefficients indicate that married parents were higher on a variable.

\*\*  $p < .01$  \*  $p < .05$  †  $p < .10$

Table 7 cont.

Wives' Predictors	Husbands' Conflict							
	Uncond.		Control		Division		Fairness	
	Level	$\Delta$	Level	$\Delta$	Level	$\Delta$	Level	$\Delta$
Fixed Effects								
Intercept	3.36**	0.01	3.85**	0.01	3.87**	0.01	3.88**	0.01
Child Gender			0.01	-0.01	-0.01	-0.01	-0.01	-0.01
Marital Status			-0.59†	0.01	-0.61*	0.01	-0.60*	0.01
Wife's % Income			1.47	0.02	1.21	0.03	1.17	0.03
Wife's Work Hrs.			-0.03*	<0.01	-0.02	<0.01	-0.01	<0.01
Hus. Work Hrs.			<0.01	<0.01	-0.01	<0.01	-0.01	<0.01
Wife's Education			0.02	<0.01	0.09	<0.01	0.11	-0.01
Hus. Education			0.14	-0.01	0.19	-0.01	0.18	-0.01
HHT Division					-0.66**	-0.03	0.18	-0.01
HHT Fairness							-0.56**	0.26
Var. Components								
$\tau$	0.94	<.001	0.83	0.001	0.75	>0.001	0.64	>0.001

Table 8: Coefficients and Model Fit Statistics for Multilevel Growth Models Examining Wives' Reports of Division of Childcare Tasks and Marital Conflict Across the Transition to Parenthood

Wives' Predictors	Wives' Conflict							
	Uncond.		Control		Division		Fairness	
	Level	$\Delta$	Level	$\Delta$	Level	$\Delta$	Level	$\Delta$
Fixed Effects								
Intercept	3.83**	0.02	4.11**	<0.01	4.10**	<0.01	4.23**	<0.01
Child Gender			0.21	-0.03	0.20	-0.03	0.02	-0.02
Marital Status			-0.46	0.04	-0.43	0.04	-0.48	0.04
Wife's % Income			-0.82	0.11	-0.78	0.11	-0.97	0.11
Wife's Work Hrs.			-0.04*	<0.01	-0.03†	<0.01	-0.02	<0.01
Hus. Work Hrs.			-0.02	<0.01	-0.02	<0.01	-0.01	<0.01
Wife's Education			-0.11	0.02	-0.14	0.02	-0.13	0.02
Hus. Education			0.82*	-0.04	0.59**	-0.04†	0.66**	-0.04†
CCT Division					0.56*	-0.01	0.06	<0.01
CCT Fairness							-0.71**	0.01
Model Fit								
Deviance	1841		1805		1800		1788	
# Parameters	15		43		47		51	
$\Delta\chi^2$			36.24		5.09		11.41	
df			28		4		4	
p-value			.137		.277		.022	
Var. Components								
$\tau$	1.32	0.003	1.00	0.001	0.94	0.001	0.82	0.001

Note. CCT = childcare tasks. Child gender was coded as female = 1, male = 0; therefore positive coefficients indicate that parents of girls were higher on a variable. Marital status was coded as cohabiting = 0, married = 1; therefore, positive coefficients indicate that married parents were higher on a variable.

\*\*  $p < .01$  \*  $p < .05$  †  $p < .10$

Table 8 cont.

Wives' Predictors	Husbands' Conflict							
	Uncond.		Control		Division		Fairness	
	Level	$\Delta$	Level	$\Delta$	Level	$\Delta$	Level	$\Delta$
Fixed Effects								
Intercept	3.36**	0.01	3.85**	0.01	3.85**	0.01	3.88**	0.02
Child Gender			0.01	-0.01	<0.01	-0.01	-0.05	-0.02
Marital Status			-0.59†	0.01	-0.58†	0.01	-0.60*	0.01
Wife's % Income			1.47	0.02	1.49	0.02	1.43	0.01
Wife's Work Hrs.			-0.03*	<0.01	-0.02†	<0.01	-0.02	<0.01
Hus. Work Hrs.			<0.01	<0.01	-0.01	<0.01	<.01	<0.01
Wife's Education			0.02	<0.01	0.01	<0.01	0.01	<0.01
Hus. Education			0.14	-0.01	0.17	-0.01	0.18	-0.01
CCT Division					0.35	-0.01	0.22	-0.02
CCT Fairness							-0.18	-0.02
Var. Components								
$\tau$	0.94	<.001	0.83	0.001	0.81	0.001	0.80	0.001

Table 9: Summary of Findings for Mediation Analyses

	Love				Conflict			
	Wives		Husbands		Wives		Husbands	
	Level	$\Delta$	Level	$\Delta$	Level	$\Delta$	Level	$\Delta$
<b>Wives' Reports</b>								
HHT	▪	---	▪	---	---	---	+	---
HHT Fair	+	▪	---	---	---	---	▪	---
HH Mediation	✓	---	---	---	---	---	✓	---
HH Model Fit		$p = .014$				$p = .056$		
CCT	▪	---	▪	---	+	---	---	---
CCT Fair	+	---	---	---	▪	---	---	---
CC Mediation	✓	---	---	---	✓	---	---	---
CC Model Fit		$p = .147$				$p = .034$		
<b>Husbands' Reports</b>								
HHT	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
HHT Fair	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
HH Mediation	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
HH Model Fit		$p > .500$				$p = .239$		
CCT	---	▪	---	---	+	---	---	---
CCT Fair	---	+	---	---	---	---	---	▪
CC Mediation	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
CC Model Fit		$p = .118$				$p = .054$		

Note. HHT = household tasks, CCT = childcare tasks, + = a significantly positive association, ▪ = a significantly negative association, ✓ = fairness significantly mediates the association between the division of labor and the marital outcome. For both husbands' and wives' reports, lower values for Fairness indicate less fair to wife. For wives' reports of the division of labor, higher values mean a higher proportion of the family labor for her. For husbands' reports of the division of labor, higher values mean a higher proportion of family labor for him. Model fit compares the fitted model with an unconditional model.

Table 10: Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Wives' Perceived Fairness of Childcare Tasks

Variable	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>
Child Gender	-.275*	.118	-.263*	.098	-.243*	.097
Marital Status	-.044	.161	-.087	.134	-.083	.132
Wife's Proportion of Income	-.026	.069	-.046	.058	-.051	.057
Wife's Work Hours	.141*	.068	.040	.058	.057	.058
Husband's Work Hours	.067	.059	.074	.049	.070	.049
Wife's Education	-.029	.060	.012	.050	.000	.050
Husband's Education	.106	.060	.074	.051	.066	.051
Division of Childcare			-.334**	.050	-.429**	.068
Breadwinner Ideology			-.167	.105	-.162	.104
Div. Childcare x Breadwinner Ideology					.195*	.096
$R^2$	.136*		.412		.435	
$F$ for change in $R^2$	2.335		23.998**		4.140*	

Note. Breadwinner Ideology was coded as 1 = agrees that the husband should be the main breadwinner, 0 = Disagrees that the husband should be the main breadwinner. Child gender was coded as female = 0, male = 1; therefore positive coefficients indicate that parents of boys were higher on a variable. Marital status was coded as cohabiting = 0, married = 1; therefore, positive coefficients indicate that married parents were higher on a variable.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

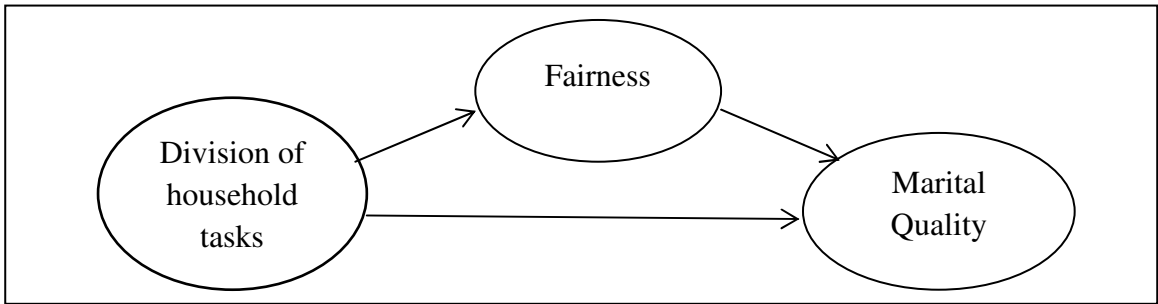


Figure 1. Model of fairness as a mediator in the relation between the division of household tasks and marital quality.

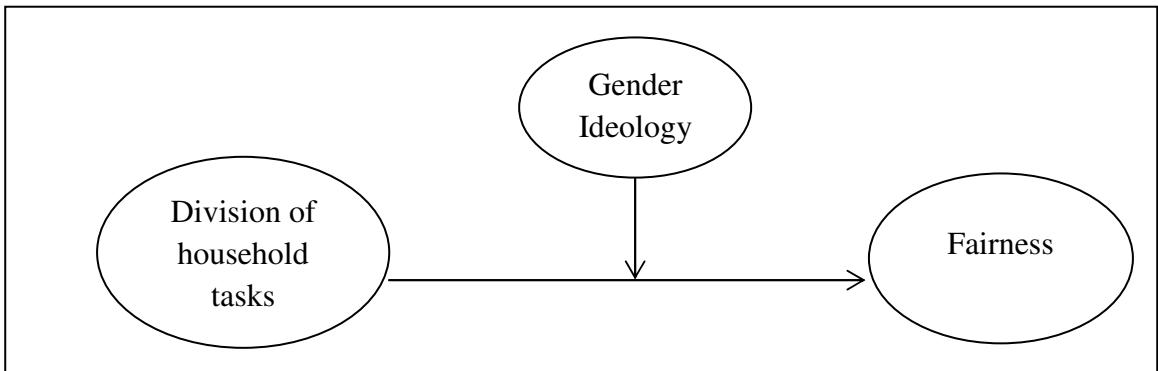


Figure 2. Model of gender ideology as a moderator of the relation between division of household tasks and perceived fairness.

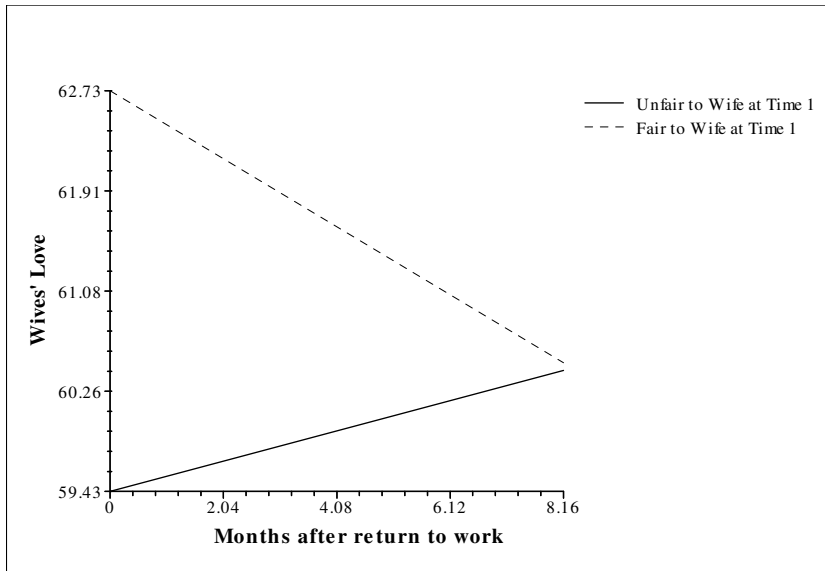


Figure 3. Change in wives' love as predicted by fairness of household tasks.

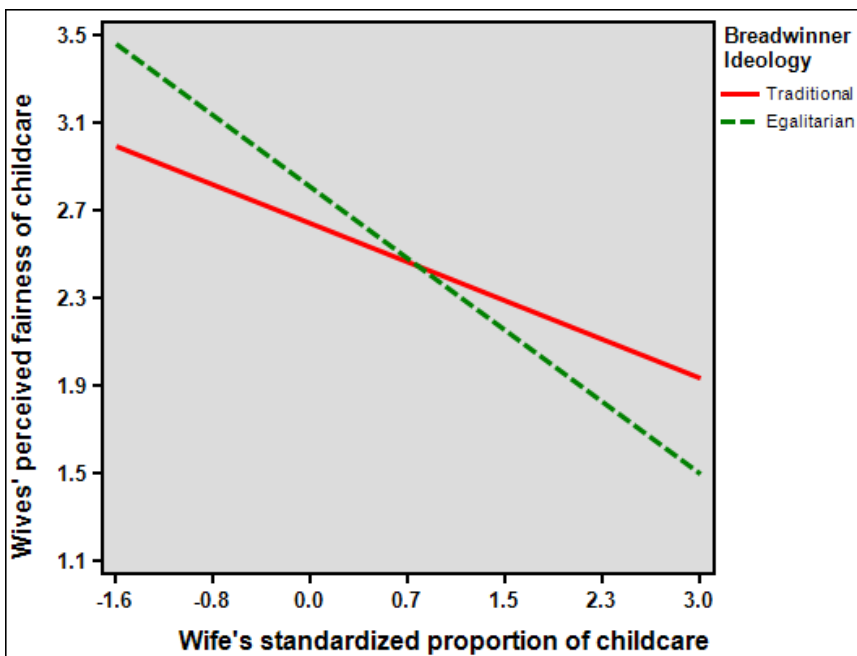


Figure 4. Graph of interaction between gender ideology and division of childcare to predict wives' perceived fairness.



**APPENDIX**  
**RESULTS FOR HUSBAND PREDICTORS**

Table A1: Coefficients and Model Fit Statistics for Multilevel Growth Models Examining Husbands' Reports of Division of Household Tasks and Marital Love Across the Transition to Parenthood

Husbands' Predictors	Wives' Love							
	Uncond.		Control		Division		Fairness	
	Level	$\Delta$	Level	$\Delta$	Level	$\Delta$	Level	$\Delta$
<b>Fixed Effects</b>								
Intercept	61.4**	-0.21	65.47**	-0.88*	65.5**	-0.88*	65.6**	-0.88*
Child Gender			-3.53	0.23	-3.62	0.23	-3.81	0.27
Marital Status			-3.06	0.70*	-2.99	0.70*	-3.07	0.69*
Wife's % Income			5.90	0.97	6.23	0.96	6.97	0.83
Wife's Work Hrs.			0.15	-0.03*	0.15	-0.03*	0.13	-0.03†
Hus. Work Hrs.			0.09	<0.01	0.09	<0.01	0.09	<0.01
Wife's Education			1.91	0.07	1.84	0.07	1.85	0.07
Hus. Education			-0.08	0.11	-0.16	0.12	-0.02	0.09
HHT Division					0.71	<0.01	-0.30	0.15
HHT Fairness							1.47	-0.22
<b>Full Model Fit</b>								
Deviance	4778		4752		4750		4747	
# Parameters	15		43		47		51	
$\Delta\chi^2$			26.28		1.70		3.67	
df			28		4		4	
p-value			>.500		>.500		>.500	
<b>Var. Components</b>								
$\tau$	135.05	0.44	127.88	0.31	127.84	0.31	127.32	0.30

Note. Child gender was coded as female = 1, male = 0; therefore positive coefficients indicate that parents of girls were higher on a variable. Marital status was coded as cohabiting = 0, married = 1; therefore, positive coefficients indicate that married parents were higher on a variable.

\*\* p < .01 \* p < .05 † p < .10

Table A1 cont.

Husbands' Predictors	Husbands' Love							
	Uncond.		Control		Division		Fairness	
	Level	$\Delta$	Level	$\Delta$	Level	$\Delta$	Level	$\Delta$
Fixed Effects								
Intercept	62.1**	-0.15	61.11**	-0.45	60.96**	-0.45	61.21**	-0.47
Child Gender			0.06	0.08	-0.35	0.08	-0.63	0.14
Marital Status			1.29	0.30	1.68	0.31	1.52	0.30
Wife's % Income			-14.70	1.26	-13.18	1.24	-11.72	1.03
Wife's Work Hrs.			0.19	-0.03†	0.18	-0.03†	0.15	-0.03
Hus. Work Hrs.			0.09	<0.01	0.08	<0.01	0.07	<0.01
Wife's Education			-0.53	-0.12	-0.89	-0.10	-0.86	-0.10
Hus. Education			-3.00	0.03	-3.35†	0.03	-3.21†	0.01
HHT Division					3.58	-0.05	2.01	0.18
HHT Fairness							2.27	-0.32
Var. Components								
$\tau$	110.89	0.22	104.10	0.20	102.60	0.20	101.17	0.18

Table A2: Coefficients and Model Fit Statistics for Multilevel Growth Models Examining Husbands' Reports of Division of Childcare Tasks and Marital Love Across the Transition to Parenthood

Husbands' Predictors	Wives' Love							
	Uncond.		Control		Division		Fairness	
	Level	$\Delta$	Level	$\Delta$	Level	$\Delta$	Level	$\Delta$
<b>Fixed Effects</b>								
Intercept	61.4**	-0.21	65.47**	-0.88*	65.7**	-0.88*	65.6**	-0.79*
Child Gender			-3.53	0.23	-3.19	0.22	-3.18	0.09
Marital Status			-3.06	0.70*	-3.49	0.70*	-3.36	0.67*
Wife's % Income			5.90	0.97	5.35	1.00	4.75	0.84
Wife's Work Hrs.			0.15	-0.03*	0.18	-0.04*	0.20	-0.02
Hus. Work Hrs.			0.09	<0.01	0.08	<0.01	0.07	<0.01
Wife's Education			1.91	0.07	2.01	0.07	2.09	0.11
Hus. Education			-0.08	0.11	0.05	0.11	0.15	0.20
CCT Division					-2.70	0.07	-3.84	-0.86*
CCT Fairness							1.46	1.04**
<b>Model Fit</b>								
Deviance	4778		4752		4747		4732	
# Parameters	15		43		47		51	
$\Delta\chi^2$			26.28		5.40		46.24	
df			28		4		4	
p-value			>.500		.247		.006	
<b>Var. Components</b>								
$\tau$	135.05	0.44	127.88	0.31	126.80	0.32	126.89	0.17

Note. Child gender was coded as female = 1, male = 0; therefore positive coefficients indicate that parents of girls were higher on a variable. Marital status was coded as cohabiting = 0, married = 1; therefore, positive coefficients indicate that married parents were higher on a variable.

\*\*  $p < .01$  \*  $p < .05$  †  $p < .10$

Table A2 cont.

Husbands' Predictors	Husbands' Love							
	Uncond.		Control		Division		Fairness	
	Level	$\Delta$	Level	$\Delta$	Level	$\Delta$	Level	$\Delta$
Fixed Effects								
Intercept	62.1**	-0.15	61.11**	-0.45	60.83**	-0.39	60.98**	-0.31
Child Gender			0.06	0.08	-0.44	0.14	-0.46	0.11
Marital Status			1.29	0.30	1.98	0.22	1.89	0.22
Wife's % Income			-14.70	1.26	-13.46	1.12	-13.72	1.04
Wife's Work Hrs.			0.19	-0.03†	0.15	-0.02	0.16	-0.02
Hus. Work Hrs.			0.09	<0.01	0.10	<0.01	0.10	-0.01
Wife's Education			-0.53	-0.12	-0.59	-0.10	-0.56	-0.09
Hus. Education			-3.00	0.03	-3.27†	0.06	-3.22†	0.08
CCT Division					4.92	-0.53	4.64	-0.79†
CCT Fairness							0.40	0.28
Var. Components								
$\tau$	110.89	0.22	104.10	0.20	102.13	0.18	102.12	0.18

Table A3: Coefficients and Model Fit Statistics for Multilevel Growth Models Examining Husbands' Reports of Division of Household Tasks and Marital Conflict Across the Transition to Parenthood

Husbands' Predictors	Wives' Conflict							
	Uncond.		Control		Division		Fairness	
	Level	$\Delta$	Level	$\Delta$	Level	$\Delta$	Level	$\Delta$
Fixed Effects								
Intercept	3.83**	0.02	4.11**	<0.01	4.11**	<0.01	4.10**	<0.01
Child Gender			0.21	-0.03	0.19	-0.03	0.20	-0.03
Marital Status			-0.46	0.04	-0.44	0.04	-0.44	0.04
Wife's % Income			-0.82	0.11	-0.76	0.12	-0.79	0.13
Wife's Work Hrs.			-0.04*	<0.01	-0.04**	<0.01	-0.04*	<0.01
Hus. Work Hrs.			-0.02	<0.01	-0.02	<0.01	-0.02	<0.01
Wife's Education			-0.11	0.02	-0.13	0.02	-0.13	0.02
Hus. Education			0.82*	-0.04	0.52**	-0.04†	0.51**	-0.04†
HHT Division					0.16	0.01	0.21	-0.01
HHT Fairness							-0.06	0.02
Model Fit								
Deviance	1841		1805		1803		1800	
# Parameters	15		43		47		51	
$\Delta\chi^2$			36.24		2.22		3.19	
df			28		4		4	
p-value			.137		>.500		>.500	
Var. Components								
$\tau$	1.32	0.003	1.00	0.001	1.00	0.001	1.00	0.001

Note. Child gender was coded as female = 1, male = 0; therefore positive coefficients indicate that parents of girls were higher on a variable. Marital status was coded as cohabiting = 0, married = 1; therefore, positive coefficients indicate that married parents were higher on a variable.

\*\*  $p < .01$  \*  $p < .05$  †  $p < .10$

Table A3 cont.

Husbands' Predictors	Husbands' Conflict							
	Uncond.		Control		Division		Fairness	
	Level	$\Delta$	Level	$\Delta$	Level	$\Delta$	Level	$\Delta$
Fixed Effects								
Intercept	3.36**	0.01	3.85**	0.01	3.83**	0.02	3.80**	0.02
Child Gender			0.01	-0.01	-0.04	-0.01	-0.03	-0.01
Marital Status			-0.59†	0.01	0.55†	<0.01	-0.52†	<0.01
Wife's % Income			1.47	0.02	1.64	0.01	1.54	<0.01
Wife's Work Hrs.			-0.03*	<0.01	-0.03†	<0.01	-0.03*	<0.01
Hus. Work Hrs.			<0.01	<0.01	-0.01	<0.01	-0.01	<0.01
Wife's Education			0.02	<0.01	-0.02	<0.01	-0.02	<0.01
Hus. Education			0.14	-0.01	0.09	-0.01	0.08	-0.01
HHT Division					0.43	-0.02	0.55†	-0.01
HHT Fairness							-0.17	-0.01
Var. Components								
$\tau$	0.94	<.001	0.83	0.001	0.81	0.001	0.80	0.001

Table A4: Coefficients and Model Fit Statistics for Multilevel Growth Models Examining Husbands' Reports of Division of Childcare Tasks and Marital Conflict Across the Transition to Parenthood

Husbands' Predictors	Wives' Conflict							
	Uncond.		Control		Division		Fairness	
	Level	$\Delta$	Level	$\Delta$	Level	$\Delta$	Level	$\Delta$
Fixed Effects								
Intercept	3.83**	0.02	4.11**	<0.01	4.05**	<0.01	4.05**	<0.01
Child Gender			0.21	-0.03	0.14	-0.03	0.14	-0.02
Marital Status			-0.46	0.04	-0.35	0.04	-0.35	0.04
Wife's % Income			-0.82	0.11	-0.71	0.12	-0.68	0.12
Wife's Work Hrs.			-0.04	<0.01	-0.04**	<0.01	-0.04**	<0.01
Hus. Work Hrs.			-0.02	<0.01	-0.01	<0.01	-0.01	<0.01
Wife's Education			-0.11	0.02	-0.13	0.02	-0.13	0.02
Hus. Education			0.82	-0.04	0.51**	-0.04†	0.50**	-0.04*
CCT Division					0.63*	0.01	0.68†	0.03
CCT Fairness							-0.07	-0.03
Model Fit								
Deviance	1841		1805		1800		1791	
# Parameters	15		43		47		51	
$\Delta\chi^2$			36.24		5.43		8.88	
df			28		4		4	
p-value			.137		.245		.063	
Var. Components								
$\tau$	1.32	0.003	1.00	0.001	0.95	0.001	0.95	0.001

Note. Child gender was coded as female = 1, male = 0; therefore positive coefficients indicate that parents of girls were higher on a variable. Marital status was coded as cohabiting = 0, married = 1; therefore, positive coefficients indicate that married parents were higher on a variable.

\*\*  $p < .01$  \*  $p < .05$  †  $p < .10$

Table A4 cont.

Husbands' Predictors	Husbands' Conflict							
	Uncond.		Control		Division		Fairness	
	Level	$\Delta$	Level	$\Delta$	Level	$\Delta$	Level	$\Delta$
Fixed Effects								
Intercept	3.36**	0.01	3.85**	0.01	3.82**	0.01	3.81**	0.01
Child Gender			0.01	-0.01	-0.02	-0.01	-0.03	-0.01
Marital Status			-0.59†	0.01	-0.55†	0.01	-0.53†	0.01
Wife's % Income			1.47	0.02	1.52	0.02	1.48	0.03
Wife's Work Hrs.			-0.03*	<0.01	-0.03†	<0.01	-0.03†	<0.01
Hus. Work Hrs.			<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	-0.01	<0.01
Wife's Education			0.02	<0.01	0.02	<0.01	0.03	<0.01
Hus. Education			0.14	-0.01	0.13	-0.01	0.16	-0.02
CCT Division					0.23	0.01	-0.11	0.09†
CCT Fairness							0.37	-0.08*
Var. Components								
$\tau$	0.94	<0.001	0.83	0.001	0.83	0.001	0.82	0.001



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