2021

Gender Role Beliefs, Household Chores, and Modern Marriages

Jaquoya Carreiro
Antioch University of New England

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by

Jaquoya Carreiro

B.A., Assumption College, 2006
M.A., Argosy University, 2011
M.S., Antioch University New England, 2015

DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment for the degree of
Doctor of Psychology in the Department of Clinical Psychology
at Antioch University New England, 2021

Keene, New Hampshire

Department of Clinical Psychology
DISSERTATION COMMITTEE PAGE

The undersigned have examined the dissertation entitled:

GENDER ROLE BELIEFS, HOUSEHOLD CHORES, AND MODERN MARRIAGES

presented on April 26, 2021

by

Jaquoya Carriero

Candidate for the degree of Doctor of Psychology
and hereby certify that it is accepted*.

Dissertation Committee Chairperson:
Theodore Ellenhorn, PhD

Dissertation Committee members:
Vince Pignatiello, PsyD
James Benton, PhD

Accepted by the
Department of Clinical Psychology Chairperson
Vincent Pignatiello, PsyD
on **4/26/2021**

***** Signatures are on file with the Registrar's Office at Antioch University New England.

Author Note

It should be noted this dissertation originates from a liberal institution in the northeast lending implicit bias towards a liberal northeastern standpoint. While the origins of this paper began unbiased, I expected the United States to be further along in gender equality than research otherwise substantiated. As a female woman, my initial, impartial perspective became more biased and prevalent in my writing throughout the duration of this paper. As these studies were primarily done within a capitalist American society, the pervasive importance of religious, cultural, regional, or social class were not always a focal point.

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Abstract

A primary change in modern marriages is the shift from traditional marriages to modern dual-earner marriages. With this change comes significantly higher divorce rates with traditional marriages averaging over forty years and modern marriages averaging seven years. This paper reviews research studies conducted from the 1980s to present day on heterosexual dual-earner couples and marital satisfaction, particularly in regards to gender role beliefs and household chore division. The social construction of gender remains virtually unaltered and resistant to change; therefore, it follows that individual beliefs regarding gender roles remain unchanged. While dual-earner marriages contributed significantly to changing gender roles external to the home, role expectations within the home mostly remain the same and women continue to shoulder most of the responsibility for household and childcare duties. Metaphorically speaking, women now work two full-time jobs while men continue with their primary job but picking up some secondary "part-time work." Despite participants proffering gender equality, research reviewed in this paper indicate this is not the case. It remains unclear what might translate to equality or even whether equality is something spouses truly desire. Determining what the construct of equality within a marriage would look like to modern couples continues to be a relatively unexplored area in need of further research. Traditional roles try to dominate within non-traditional marriages yet research is lacking in determining the impact gender role beliefs, degree of gender identification, and satisfaction with household chore division have on overall marital satisfaction. Appropriate assessment measures for gender identity, gender role beliefs, and household chore division and satisfaction are also scarce. Clinical approaches in the past have contributed to helping wives become more accepting of the power imbalances within marriage, often using gender as an explanation for behavior to help facilitate understanding;

however, this only reinforces gender stereotypes rather than striving to change them. Social media, self-help books, and the entertainment business are also culprits in propagating gender differentiation and promoting gender inequality in modern marriages. Relationship self-help books are primarily marketed for women, generally offering advice that continues to reproduce the very behaviors causing marital strife and conflict.

Keywords: couples, marital satisfaction, gender identification, gender beliefs, dual-career couples, dual-career earners, marriage equality, household chore division, heterosexual couples

Gender Role Beliefs, Household Chores, and Modern Marriages

The average modern marriage lasts significantly less time than marriages that originated over 40 years ago (Harvey & Pauwels, 1999; Kreider & Renee, 2011). One primary change in marriage from past to present is the shift from traditional marriages to dual-earner marriages (Betz, 2005). The term dual-earner refer to both husband and wife being employed. This includes couples in which (1) one spouse is either (a) working out of financial necessity or (b) whose career did not require higher education and/or he or she do not necessarily have higher career aspirations; and (2) couples who have a high commitment to their careers, a strong desire to advance professionally, and a career that is important to their identities (Thomas et al., 1984). Dual-earner marriages are increasingly more common since the 1960s (Thomas et al., 1984) and have become the contemporary norm of the United States (Betz, 2005). The purpose of this paper was to explore research studies conducted from the 1980s to present day on dual-earner couples and marital satisfaction, particularly in regards to gender, gender role beliefs, and household chore division.

While "sex" is a label assigned at birth based on genitals, "gender" or "gender roles" are set by societal norms and expectations for how people should behave, generally based on their sex (Planned Parenthood, 2020). Every society or culture has expected behaviors and appearances based on sex (male or female) in four areas: (a) personality traits, (b) domestic behaviors, (c) occupations, and (d) physical appearance (Planned Parenthood, 2020). A significant portion of the literature reviewed used 'gender differences' and 'sex differences' interchangeably with a primary tendency to use gender differences; however, sex differences have a biological and genetic focus. The nature of this paper primarily focused on gender differences; therefore, *gender differences* is used for continuity in this paper. "Gender role

beliefs" are to what extent an individual subscribes to societal or cultural norms. The "degree of gender identification" is how individuals identify themselves, most terminology commonly falling under masculine, feminine, androgynous, or undifferentiated categories (Beere, 1990). It is how individuals feel on the inside and how they express their gender through clothing, behavior, and personal appearance. Individuals' degree of gender identification is not based on their assigned sex.

The average modern marriage now lasts seven years (Harvey & Pauwels, 1999; Kreider & Renee, 2011). With the societal shift from a traditional marital household composition of breadwinner/housewife to a contemporary, dual-earner composition, it is imperative to learn more about how gender role beliefs and satisfaction with household chore division impact marital satisfaction. Despite both spouses working full-time, women continue to complete the majority of household chores (Fetterolf & Rudman, 2014; Parker, 1994). Research studies have produced conflicting results on whether an unbalanced division of household labor correlates with overall marital satisfaction. Fewer studies have examined the degree of gender identification, gender beliefs, and gender roles within heterosexual couples in the structure of marital quality (Beam et al., 2018). There is also a lack of appropriate assessment measures for gender identity, gender role beliefs, and household chore division and satisfaction.

With dual-earner couples now setting the new norm for marriage, it is important to understand what creates conflict and satisfaction in these marriages. Focusing on gender as a creation of interaction, as well as the cultural schemas that maintain its place, can help develop a better understanding of why heterosexual marriages continue to experience challenges, conflict, and disruption (Risman, 2004). This understanding could potentially enable therapists to approach couple's treatment through a different lens, potentially impacting the individual and

interactional levels of gendered stereotypes.

Traditional Marriages and the Feminist Movement

Prior to the 1970s, traditional heterosexual marriages were the foundation of the typical American family (Thomas et al., 1984). The husband worked and provided financially for the family while the wife took care of the family, home, and children. In 1940, only 27.4% of the female population worked, of whom only 16.7% were married (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1940–1955). Traditional marriages had low divorce rates, with more than 50% of marriages lasting at least 40 years (Harvey & Pauwels, 1999; Kreider & Renee, 2011). In the 1960s, the feminist movement began working to dismantle occupational, financial, and political inequalities (Collins, 2009). Their efforts, combined with significant economic growth and new job creation in the years following World War II, allowed for more women to enter the workforce (Collins, 2009). In 1960, 34.8% of females worked, out of whom 31.7% were married (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1960–1976). By 1970, 42.6% of the female population worked with 41.4% being married (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1960–1976).

As the feminist movement surged forward, it prompted a major shift in societal views of gender roles in the United States. By the late 1970s, the feminist movement had successfully (a) made gender discrimination illegal (Title IX of the Education Amendments, 1972; Equal Credit Opportunity Act, 1974); (b) legalized birth control and abortions (*Eisenstadt v. Baird*, 1972; *Roe v. Wade*, 1973); and (c) established "irreconcilable differences" and equal distribution of property as grounds for divorce (Uniform Marriage and Divorce Act, 1970). While making gender discrimination illegal did not result in total equality between genders, it did provide women with protected equal rights to education and political and workplace participation (Equal Credit Opportunity Act, 1974; Title IX of the Education Amendments, 1972). Legalized birth

control, then referred to as “The Pill,” enabled more women to pursue formal, post-secondary educational training and professional careers without fear of a pregnancy derailing their plans or their husbands legally controlling their earnings (Collins, 2009). Arguably, it was at this juncture that women became more independent and placed a higher value on their education (Collins, 2009). More women began to choose jobs outside of the home rather than traditional homemaker roles (Betz, 2005). With women granted more rights due to the feminist movement, along with the financial freedom fostering independence, there are fewer reasons to remain in unhappy or unsatisfying marriages. Prior to these rights, women first had to prove wrongdoing on their husband’s behalf in order to obtain a divorce (Collins, 2009). Contemporary western culture favors independence and the ability to take care of oneself and women are no longer dependent on their husbands because of the feminist movement (MacLean, 2010).

Modern Workforce Statistics

Today, women constitute an even greater portion of the labor force and most American women identify strongly with their career roles (Betz, 2005). As of 2016, women constituted 47% of the workforce and working mothers were the primary or sole earners for 40% of households, compared to 11% in 1974 (U.S. Department of Labor Blog, 2017). Among parents (married or single) with at least one child under the age of 18 living in their homes, 92.8% of fathers worked compared to 70.5% of mothers (U.S. Department of Labor, 2018). This differential between parents was even greater if there was at least one child under the age of five in their homes (U.S. Department of Labor, 2018). Among married parents with at least one child under the age of eighteen living at home, 93.6% of husbands worked versus 67.9% of wives. The differential among these married parents was even greater if there was at least one child under the age of three, with 95% of husbands working versus 59.5% of wives (U.S. Department of

Labor, 2018).

By the start of 2017, 74.5% of women between the ages 25–44 were employed versus 89.7% of men in the same age range (U.S. Department of Labor, 2018). 2016 census statistics demonstrate unmarried mothers are more likely to enter the workforce than their married counterparts with discrepancies ranging from 6.6–11.7%, pending their children's ages (U.S. Department of Labor: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018). This census also highlighted that the more education an individual obtained, the more likely they were to engage in the workforce (U.S. Department of Labor, 2018). Furthermore, the percentage of men versus women in the workforce based on education had less and less of a differential as the education level increased (U.S. Department of Labor, 2018).

Given the changes in the last several decades within the workforce and marriage norms, one crucial area that appears slow or resistant to change is the social construction of gender roles. Ongoing gender differentiation and distinction seemingly remains a stronghold in the resistance to change. In the research reviewed, while research participants often state beliefs in gender equality, results indicate no significant change in core beliefs from either gender.

Social Construction of Gender Roles

The central component in the social construction of gender is the creation of difference between men and women (Lorber, 1995; Loscocco & Walzer, 2013). "Societies go to great lengths to create gender distinctions that yield inequality, and then use the differences they have created to explain the inequality" (Loscocco & Walzer, 2013, p. 3). The influx of dual-earner couples has influenced gender as a social structure operating at three levels: (a) individual, (b) interactional, and (c) institutional (Risman, 2004). The cultural norms and gendered stereotypes from dominant social groups shape the institutional level for the social construction of gender

differentiation within a geographic location (Risman, 2004). The institutional level also significantly impacts the development of interactional and individual levels. Interactional levels are what help shape the individual level based on one's interactions with others and the prominent social and cultural beliefs with which they were raised (Risman, 2004). An individual's beliefs regarding gender differentiation and gender roles, and the degree to which the individual subscribes to these cultural schemas, form the individual level (Risman, 2004).

Risman (2004) emphasized that gender as a social structure sets guidelines for behavior through "'cognitive image rules' (p. 432) that are so taken for granted that people may be unaware of why they act or feel as they do" (Loscocco & Walzer, 2013, p. 2). Regardless of race or social class, modern role expectations of husbands or wives in heterosexual marriages tend to coincide with traditional role expectations (Loscocco & Walzer, 2013). The persistence of disproportionate responsibility for household and family tending on women (Treas & Drobnic, 2010), as well as the continued expectation for men to prove themselves through financial earnings (Loscocco & Spitze, 2007), continue to reproduce gender differentiation, particularly for women, in negotiating roles within the context of marriage (Loscocco & Walzer, 2013). As these dynamics are invisible, they often do not receive enough attention in regards to eliminating inequality in marriages nor are given enough consideration in the analyses of marital disruption (Loscocco & Walzer, 2013).

While some people believe change happens from the top down and others believe it seeps from the bottom up, I believe it takes an ongoing influence of all three to initiate or implement any lasting change. If the institutional level were represented by a living, breathing pinball machine, the machine's mechanical parts (i.e., bumpers, flippers, holes, obstacles, etc.) would represent the interactional level while the pinballs represent the individual level. The machine's

parts are the interacting force or communicator between the pinballs and the machine itself, simultaneously impacting the pinballs trajectory while also signaling for the machine's response to the interaction, such as awarding points. Introducing larger pinballs (i.e., introducing new ideas or perspectives) would then require change from the machine itself. The pinball machine may need to increase its overall size, strengthen or widen its mechanical parts, such as the flippers, or change other components of the playing field in order to accommodate the larger ball. Gender roles and gender role beliefs will only begin to change once individuals begin to change their perceptions. One larger pinball, which could impact the machine's parts, might not generate enough influence for the pinball machine itself to change; instead, the machine likely finds a way to expel the larger pinball. Add enough pinballs of a larger size and the machine will adapt itself to accommodate the larger pinballs as the new standard size.

Race and Ethnicity

As marriage and gender are societal constructs specific to locations and cultures, variations are expected across racial and social class groups (Collins, 1990; Hill, 2005); however, "the content of gendered cultural beliefs comes from dominant social groups" (Loscocco & Walzer, 2013, p. 2; Ridgeway & Correll, 2004). In the United States, the White upper- and middle-class populations are the dominant social groups, meaning the basis for gendered stereotypes and cultural norms of marriage are guided by this population (Loscocco & Walzer, 2013). While some research studies specifically looked at certain ethnic or social classes, particularly Black people, this is an area that has not garnered as much focus since most research studies use a general population sample—aka primarily White and either middle- or upper-class socioeconomic status (Loscocco & Walzer, 2013). Therefore, a general review of minority racial and social research on gender roles within a marriage can be summarized fairly quickly.

In a 1998 study, Min stated that American-born Korean American women "are more ready to escape from unequal marriages than their mothers" (p. 202), leading to much higher divorce rates among younger Korean–American generations than in the past. In the 1990s, this younger generation of Korean–Americans matched the divorce rates among the White population (Min, 1998). Another study of White, Black, and Puerto Rican single mothers indicated many poor women reject marriage because they are unable to afford nice weddings and houses, common societal symbols of marriage (Edin & Kefalas, 2005).

Research studies indicate Black men and women are less happy and satisfied with their marriages than White people, with Black wives reporting the lowest levels of happiness (Broman, 1993; Corra et al., 2009). Studies indicate Black men and women tend to subscribe to traditional gender roles and dominance within marriage (Hill, 2005) and that women take on a 'lesser than' role in relationships in order to maintain peace and harmony. As one woman stated, "In relationships I am forced to be much more submissive and appear less capable to keep the peace" (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003, p. 214). In Jones & Shorter-Gooden, an upper-class woman who drives a fancy car and lives in an expensive condo explains:

> I do in my heart believe it would be nice for African-American men to be head of the household, and I do have strong feelings about that traditional picture, so therefore, since I don't live it…I can't feel as good about things as I'd like to…I want to show that the African-American family structure is intact, but by my own success, I feel that sometimes I represent the opposite—that the African-American family structure is not intact. Is being an independent, successful woman really success? (p. 220)

The strong adherence to traditional gender roles among Black men and women might have been best expressed by Oprah Winfrey in a 2003 interview with Jay Leno when she stated she would

never marry her boyfriend because she prized her freedom and did not want to be less independent (Kingston, 2006). Oprah further added, “I feel if I had the role of wife, I would become someone else. I would then start behaving like a wife” (Kingston, 2006, p. 4).

Some research indicates social inequities stemming from racial discrimination and public marginalization may be a driving force to maintain traditional roles at home (Bryant et al., 2010), which “undermines the relevance and stability of their marriages” (Hill, 2005, p. 95). It seems a marginalized group would rally harder for equality at home since this has not yet been achieved publicly but this research could explain why Black individuals have a higher divorce rate than others.

Interestingly, one commonality among all racial and social classes was the social construction of women being more emotionally adept than men (Perry-Jenkins et al., 2013; Reynolds & Knudson-Martin, 2015) and thus more likely to bear responsibility for the emotional quality of her marital relationship, “helping her husband understand both her emotional responses and his own” (Loscocco & Walzer, 2013, p. 6).

Research from Other Countries

The Nordic countries (Norway, Sweden, Finland, Iceland, and Denmark) are considered the most “gender-equal” countries in the world with politics and government policies reflecting strong commitments to the equality of men and women in all areas of life (Magnusson & Marecek, 2012). Even in these countries, where the number of men and women who work outside the home is nearly equal, women continue to generally have the overall responsibility and workload for household and child-rearing duties (Statistics Sweden, 2010). Both men and women receive the same length of paid maternity and paternity leave, however, only 22% of fathers use the length of time afforded compared to 78% of mothers (Statistics Sweden, 2010).

In 2008, Eva Magnusson conducted a research study with 30 heterosexual couples residing between Denmark, Finland, and Sweden, all of whom were raising biological children produced within the marriage. In one-third of the couples, the woman was responsible for all the practical tasks regarding the home and child-care. In another third, the woman was responsible for most, though not all, household and child-care tasks. The last third was comprised of couples who shared these tasks equally. The couples in which the woman did most or all practical tasks described this balance as coming about "naturally" and denied any discussion on expectations, roles, or responsibilities. Men also had wider boundaries and limits in their roles while expectations were for women to be more "flexible." For example, men took more leisure time outside the home, and, if men forgot or failed to complete a household task, expectations were for women to "cover" for them. These couples also described less conflict within the marriage than the third who shared tasks equally. Couples who equally shared tasks reported ongoing negotiations about equally and fairly allocating these tasks, which at times caused expected conflict within the relationship. In all couples, it was more common and acceptable for men to disregard or renege their responsibility for specific tasks. All couples referred and ascribed to sex differences with statements such as "men are like this" and "women are like that" (Magnusson & Marecek, 2012).

Finances and Incomes

In his 1986 study, Hertz discovered a correlation between the "type of accounting system used by dual-earner couples and the authority relations within their marriages. In general, those couples who have chosen separate accounting systems have made a step toward altering the traditional balance of marital authority" (Hertz, 1986, p. 112). A contributing factor to women maintaining a sense of financial independence and freedom and thus, feelings of empowerment

and control within the relationship, could be this shift towards balancing authority within the marriage. Therefore, for couples who pooled their money, men may continue to handle the family's finances and take care of the yard work while the wife manages the household staff and kitchen duties (Hertz, 1986).

Hertz found that dual-earner couples who pooled their money, rather than choosing separate accounting systems, had a greater propensity for traditional gender-based division of household labor. Traditional female-typed chores include cooking, cleaning, laundry, and grocery shopping (Bianchi et al., 2000; Bianchi et al., 2006; Presser, 2004; Schneider, 2012). Traditional male-typed chores include outdoor chores, vehicle maintenance, and home repairs (Bianchi et al., 2000; Bianchi et al., 2006; Presser, 2004; Schneider, 2012).

Recent studies found the relative incomes of couples play a significant role in chore allocation (Doan & Quadlin, 2019). Lower earning spouses were more likely assigned cleaning, laundry, and dishwashing, expected to take care of children's physical needs more often, and overwhelmingly expected to take on the role of the stay-at-home parent if couples opted for this (Doan & Quadlin, 2019). Those with lower incomes more often expected their higher earning counterparts to manage household finances (Doan & Quadlin, 2019). Studies also found higher-earning spouses made fewer contributions to housework and felt justified and entitled in doing so (Fetterolf & Rudman, 2014; Greenstein, 2000). Interestingly, Fetterolf and Rudman found this perceived domestic entitlement only mediated the relationship between income and chore division for men: Despite women also reporting stronger feelings of entitlement if they earned more money, this seldom translated into less housework for them as it did their male counterparts. Regardless of income, every woman in this study endorsed taking significantly more responsibility for housework and childcare than their respective spouse (Fetterolf &

Rudman, 2014). Men who earned an equal or higher income than their wives reported doing far less housework than their spouses and men who earned less income than their spouses reported an equal division of household responsibilities (Fetterolf & Rudman, 2014). It is interesting to note that none of the husbands in this study reported doing more housework than their spouses (Fetterolf & Rudman, 2014).

Gender and Marital Role Identities

Even though the dual-earner lifestyle is becoming increasingly more common than the traditional lifestyle, many men and women continue struggling with role identity (Raley et al., 2006). Before the workforce substantially integrated women, work roles and home roles had clear definitions for both husbands and wives. Once women flooded the workforce, spouses could blur home roles and work roles if they expected equal contributions to both (Raley et al., 2006). Dual-earner marriages have been contributing to changing gender roles external to the home for several decades; however, role changes have been slow to be acclimated into actuation within the home and generally has not impacted how couples divided household chores (Fetterolf & Rudman, 2014; Parker, 1994).

A spouse's perspective on gender identity, specifically femininity and masculinity, may contribute to satisfaction levels regarding the household division of chores. The meanings for these two concepts are fluid notions manifested by cultural and societal norms, best conceptualized as a "set of normative ideas and cultural resources held in place through social and cultural negotiations" (Magnusson & Marecek, 2012, p. 35). This conceptualization designates a repertoire of actions and characteristics considered appropriate and natural for respective genders (Magnusson & Marecek, 2012). In regards to household chores, for example, perceived "masculine" duties might include mowing the lawn and taking out the trash, while

perceived “feminine” chores might include washing laundry or cleaning. Despite all of the changes regarding societal views on gender roles in the last several decades, the dynamics and ideologies of equality, femininity, masculinity, and individuals’ perspectives on their role as a spouse have been slow to change (Magnusson & Marecek, 2012).

Despite major changes in gender roles over the past half century, there is a paucity of research about modern relationships regarding gender beliefs, marital roles, and marital satisfaction. Despite decades of sociological research on household chores, as noted in Doan and Quadlin (2019), past research has utilized

> …measures of gender ideology, such as whether men and women should occupy separate spheres of work and family (Davis & Greenstein, 2009; Kroska, 2000), as well as questions about which housework tasks partners most enjoy doing [Robinson & Milkie, 1998; Poortman & Van der Lippe, 2009]. (p. 146).

According to Doan and Quadlin (2019), few studies have examined Americans’ normative beliefs about the division of household chores or childcare—beliefs they argued were reflective of gendered constraints dictating the division of chores, even for those who did not endorse such beliefs. Recent studies demonstrate that husbands spend an average of 16.6 hours per week on household chores and childcare compared to the 24.5 hours per week wives contribute, even if wives had high-powered, well-paying, or time-intensive careers (Fetterolf & Rudman, 2014). Some studies found women who earn more money than their husbands actually do more household chores than women who earn a similar salary (Bittman et al., 2003; Brines, 1994; Fetterolf & Rudman, 2014; Greenstein, 2000; Schneider, 2011; Tichenor, 2005) as a way to ‘neutralize’ their gender deviance (Atkinson & Boles, 1984; Fetterolf & Rudman, 2014; Greenstein, 2000; Schneider, 2011; Tichenor, 2005); however, other studies did not find

evidence to support this claim (Fetterolf & Rudman, 2014).

In 1994, Rubin conducted a follow-up study from one she conducted 20 years prior on 162 working and lower-middle class families. Her study demonstrated significant changes in men's consciousness and family participation; however, even in families where men shared tasks, women still bore the majority of responsibility as well as full responsibility for the organization of family life. One husband in this study, frustrated that his wife wanted more help from him with household responsibilities, exclaimed, "Christ, what does a guy have to do to keep a wife quiet these days? What does she want? It's not like I don't do anything to help her out, but it's never enough" (Rubin, 1994, p. 87).

In a 1999 study, married couples presented their relationship as incorporating "modern, democratic, and feminist values of gender undifferentiated sharing" (p. 97) during initial interviews; however, it did not take long before husbands sacrificed this relational account of equality to reassert their own masculinity and control within the marriage, as illustrated by one husband's statement asserting that, unlike his wife, he has the power to decide what he will or will not do around the house (Dryden, 1999). Furthermore, Dryden found when wives perceived challenges about relational equality in their marriage, they would justify or blame themselves for any inequalities. For example, one wife blamed herself for not keeping the house tidy enough, a point of contention with her husband, only to later disclose that in addition to working, she serves on multiple committees including the school board and has a severe lack of time; however, she then stated none of this was an excuse because "an awful lot of people work full-time and keep their house tidy as well" (Dryden, 1999, p. 44). Wives were also quick to make positive comparisons of the 'there's a lot worse than he is' variety (Dryden, 1999). Conversely, husbands depicted their wives as inadequate to justify or explain away any

inequalities: Husbands frequently commented they could complete household tasks more efficiently than their wives, their wives were too caring and allowed themselves to be 'put-upon,' construing this as a flaw rather than a virtue, or that their wives 'brought it on themselves' by refusing to let husbands help around the house (Dryden, 1999). Dryden found it was a common theme by both spouses to depict husbands as more than adequate and wives as less than adequate.

Dryden's study (1999) also found that society viewed women's paid employment or careers as a 'hobby' or irritating necessity to supplement income, rendering their jobs less important and less of a sacrifice for the family compared to husbands' employment (Dryden, 1999). In regards to relational gender inequalities, Dryden states the empathic stance both sexes take towards men's insecurities and inability to cope with vulnerabilities is an issue because it only further takes attention away from women's insecurities and suffering (Dryden, 1999).

> There needs to be a lot of soul searching on the part of men concerning the relations between contemporary forms of masculinity and social power… If men don't demonstrate any significant willingness to change, women are likely to continue to 'vote with their feet' – a pattern already reflected in contemporary divorce statistics. In other words, if men don't participate willingly in a renegotiation of power relations, material and emotional privileges are nevertheless likely to be eroded for men through the 'fall-out' of marital breakdown and divorce (Dryden, 1999, pp. 149–150).

Using survey data from 335 predominantly white married parents, Erickson (2005) found emotional work was linked to the social construction of gender even more so than child care or household chores. The wives in Erickson's data perceived "emotional support as an aspect of their family work role in a way that husbands did not" (Loscocco & Walzer, 2013, p. 6). This is

likely due to the fact that women across all racial, ethnic, and social classes are socially constructed as more emotionally adept than men. Therefore, a wife is expected, and more likely, to bear the responsibility for the emotional quality of her relationship as well as helping her husband not only understand her own emotional responses but also his own (Loscocco &Walzer, 2013).

Marital Satisfaction and Careers

Since the 1980s, there has been a significant amount of research on how career and marital satisfaction relate to each other (Doan & Quadlin, 2019; ; McGinley, 2009; Parker, 1994; Sweet & Moen, 2007; Wilke et al., 1998; Yogev, 1982). Studies in the 1980s and 1990s conducted on marital and career satisfaction produced conflicting results, though many indicated changes in occupational and marital roles have the capacity to impact marital satisfaction. In 1982, Yogev's research yielded results indicating there was little support to previous research that indicated dual-earner couples experienced an increase in marital conflict and dissatisfaction (Parker, 1994). In fact, Yogev's research and other later studies show both men and women benefit in marital satisfaction when in a dual-earner marriage (Wilke et al., 1998). A 1986 study linked divorce rates to female work hours, indicating women who worked 35 hours or more per week were twice as likely to experience marital discord as those who only worked 20–35 hours per week (South & Spitze, 1986). In 1990, Ray conducted research that indicated women who began professional careers after marriage were more likely to experience a decrease in marital satisfaction and an increase of conflict with their spouse than women who established their careers prior to marriage or remained in a traditional homemaker role after marriage (Parker, 1994). This was likely due to the disproportionate allocation of home and family responsibilities between the couple (Sweet & Moen, 2007).

Marital Satisfaction and Household Chore Division

There have been limited studies on how an unbalanced division of household labor potentially impacts overall marital satisfaction in the present day. Furthermore, numerous studies yielded contradictory results. A research study conducted by Parker (1994) showed that while spouses of dual-earner couples benefit psychologically and intellectually, equal work and family tasks do not always occur between spouses, with the wife continuing to pick up more household responsibility than her husband. It seems women may feel a greater responsibility to household tasks than men and that women often feel household tasks would go unfinished if they did not complete them (Parker, 1994). Men held stronger to the belief that they performed domestic tasks in order to help out (Parker, 1994).

Women's beliefs about equitable household chore division may influence the extent of marital discord. “Couples need to engage in a process of negotiation and bargaining so that the rules governing their relationship are appropriate and flexible enough to accommodate individual needs” (Thomas et al., 1984, p. 520). According to a 1995 study, women who perceived the inequality of the division of household labor as inequitable or unfair experienced the highest levels of marital conflict and disruption (Greenstein). In contrast, those who perceived the objective inequality as justified reported the least amount of marital conflict and disruption (Greenstein, 1995).

Dual-earner couples are in a constant stage of negotiating between both their careers and relationship with each other (Raley et al., 2006). The dual-earner couples most successful at managing these roles are flexible, maintain open dialogues, and renegotiate household tasks based upon each spouse's current career demands and circumstances (Granello & Navin, 1997). These couples also encourage each other to pursue individual interests, such as hobbies or

spending quality time with friends (McGinley, 2009). These successful couples are usually younger and childless (McGinley, 2009). Once children entered the picture, levels of marital satisfaction were subject to decrease if the roles between husband and wife did not remain balanced (Greenstein, 1995). According to Dew and Wilcox (2011), decreased time spent with each other as compared to prior their child's birth might contribute to this decline in marital satisfaction.

According to a 2017 study by Blom et al., "prior studies on the association between couples' division of labor and relationship satisfaction provided inconclusive results" (p. 196). Some studies indicated traditional division of household chores increased happiness and satisfaction within the marriage (Oshio et al., 2012; Wilcox & Nock, 2006) whereas other studies showed equal division was related to higher satisfaction levels (Amato et al., 2003; Barstad, 2014). A 2014 study showed the distribution of household chores tended to become less equal after marriage compared to premarital cohabitation, which is also suggestive that the role of 'husband' and 'wife' are significant in regards to gendered divisions of labor (Fetterolf & Rudman, 2014).

Marriage versus Cohabitation

Cohabiters refers to couples who live together without being married. Some cohabiters plan to eventually marry their partners while others have no marital intentions and plan to remain single. Since 1995, marriage rates have decreased from 58% to 53% while cohabiters rose from 3% to 7% (Horowitz et al., 2019). According to a 2019 study, 69% of adults believe it acceptable for couples to live together without plans to marry, 16% find it acceptable only if the couple plans to eventually marry and 14% find cohabiting before marriage unacceptable (Horowitz et al., 2019). Of the 85% who felt cohabiting was acceptable, 53% reported it better for society if

couples who want to stay together long-term eventually marry (Horowitz et al., 2019).

Interestingly, education appears to play a role in who chooses to cohabitate before marriage. Of those who viewed cohabiting as a step as toward marriage, 63% were college educated compared to the 38% with a high school education or less. Two-thirds of cohabiters reported a desire to eventually marry but cited financial reasons as a primary reason they were not already engaged or married (Horowitz et al., 2019). Most married and cohabiting adults cited love and companion ship as major reasons to move in with their partner; however, four-in-ten cohabiters also reported finances and convenience were significant factors in their decision (Horowitz et al., 2019).

This study also looked at relationship satisfaction rates between married and cohabiting couples. Overall, married couples reported more trust in their partners and higher satisfaction levels than cohabiters, 58% versus 41%, respectively (Horowitz et al., 2019). 78% of married adults reported their spouse as the person with whom they feel closest compared to 55% of cohabiting partners (Horowitz et al., 2019). This is interesting since other studies indicated the role of husband and wife can cause a shift resulting in less equality between spouses than during the premarital cohabiting stage of their relationship (Batalova & Cohen, 2002; Davis et al., 2007; Fetterolf & Rudman, 2014; Gupta, 1999).

Gender Roles: Influencing Household Chore Division since…well, always.

Gender roles have remained the strongest predictor of chore allocation with women taking on more female-typed and sex-neutral chores, including the physical and emotional care of children (Jacobs & Gerson, 2016). Women are still the ones generally expected to take on the stay-at-home parent role should the couple opt for this, despite increasing public acceptance of nontraditional child-care arrangements, such as stay-at-home fathers (Jacobs & Gerson, 2016).

Research indicates many husbands retain fairly traditional attitudes regarding household duties, even though their wives are also working professionals (Parker, 1994). Men continue to take on more male-typed chores, including being the disciplinarian of their children more often (Doan & Quadlin, 2019). “These results highlight the inextricable link between gender and housework expectations in the United States and imply that housework and child care are tied to essentialist beliefs about how men and women should behave” (Doan & Quadlin, 2019, p. 159). According to McGinley (2009), these traditional attitudes are one significant area of marital dissatisfaction on behalf of women due to the unequal division of household chores.

Yogev (1981) found that many women did not want the traditional gender roles at home to change and continued to assume most of the responsibilities for childrearing and household chores. Yogev concluded that women were “undergoing role expansion (adding new responsibilities without relinquishing old ones) rather than role redefinition” (p. 895). Bird (1979) found that women working outside the home resulted in rescheduling, rather than reduction, of traditional household chores. In their research, Granello and Navin (1997) found in that many women still believe they are responsible for all household duties. Men’s increasing roles in the home seemed to reach a plateau in the 1990s and has made little progression forward since (Sweeting et al., 2014). Chores may have been reallocated onto others, such as hired help, particularly among higher-earning women, releasing women from certain responsibilities, but it does not appear that men have increased their roles in the household (Hertz, 1986).

The impact gender role plays in household chore division appears to remain basically unaltered despite women entering professional careers and would explain why there are still large discrepancies in the balance of housework between men and women. More recent research indicates the inequitable division of chores is likely a significant factor contributing to marital

dissatisfaction for women (McGinley, 2009).

A 2014 study of cognitive and behavioral egalitarianism among 220 heterosexual newlyweds demonstrated that the most satisfied couples went into marriage with similar expectations *and* followed through on them (Ogolsky et al., 2014). A 2018 study by Carlson et al. found that husbands who ran errands with their wives reported greater sexual and marital satisfaction. In the same study, wives who felt they did the majority of the dishwashing were particularly unhappy in their marriage and reported the least sexual satisfaction (Carlson et al., 2018). Frequent conversations to recalibrate chore division appears to play a significant role in day-to-day marital satisfaction to avoid the perception of imbalance by either spouse (Carlson et al., 2018).

In 2018, Foster and Stratton found a correlation between time off from paid work and an increase in female-typed household responsibilities. On days the husband had off but the wife worked, spouses' shared household chores almost equally; however, on days the wife had off while the husband worked, the wife ended up doing the majority of household chores (Alvarez & Miles-Touya, 2019).

It remains unclear what might translate to equality or even whether equality is something spouses truly desire. Should the spouse with the day off do all the chores? Should spouses equally divide daily chores regardless of whether either spouse is working or has the day off? Determining what the construct of equality within a marriage would look like to modern couples continues to be a relatively unexplored area in need of further research.

Self-Help Books, Social Media, and the Entertainment Business

It is well known that social media and entertainment businesses hold enough power to significantly influence public opinion; however, these outlets also significantly influence cultural

schemas and help propagate gender differentiation within the United States. What most people likely would not consider is the idea that self-help books on relationships and marriage also tend to reinforce gendered stereotypes and inequalities (Loscocco & Walzer, 2013).

The 'Helpfulness' of Self-Help Books and Advice

Research suggests that self-help books contribute to gender inequality in modern marriages (Loscocco & Walzer, 2013). In Jimenez and Rice (1990), a study on relationship advice books found two approaches: (a) an emphasis for women to work on themselves in order to improve their relationships with men, and (b) a focus on gender differences between men and women and encouraging women to turn back to a traditional model of 'womanhood.' Another study of self-help books found that while some encouraged women to discard gender typification in favor of egalitarian viewpoints, the most popular books were the ones that upheld gender norms, disempowering women and upholding traditional views on marriage (Zimmerman et al., 2001). Cowan and Cowan (2000) noted that the gender differentiation associated with decreases in marital satisfaction once children entered the picture is generally ignored by best-selling self-help book authors. On an interesting note, regardless of the messages self-help books conveyed, the fact self-help books are primarily geared toward women demonstrates society continues to hold fast to traditional, rather than egalitarian, views on marriage (Jimenez & Rice, 1990; Zimmerman et al., 2001).

Two of the most popular self-help books, *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus* by John Gray and *Act like a Lady, Think like a Man* by Steve Harvey, reproduce gender stereotypes on how 'most people' view men and women, with a primary principle for women to change themselves rather than trying to change their men (Loscocco & Walzer, 2013). In 2007, *USA Today* rated Gray's book as one of the top 10 influential books for the previous 25 years

(Loscocco & Walzer, 2013). In a television interview on April 15, 2008, Gray stated that the shift in roles between men and women presented the biggest challenge to relationships. In another one of his books *Why Mars and Venus Collide: Improving Relationships by Understanding How Men and Women Cope Differently with Stress*, Gray suggests women are not biologically prepared for their shift toward traditionally masculine roles in society:

> The solution is in giving women support to come back to their feminine side—the oxytocin—through more romance, through better listening and more help at home. This is accomplished when women realize that men are not instinctively motivated to do those things so her job in this whole situation is to ask for what she wants. (Loscocco & Walzer, 2013, p. 9)

However, Gray also advises women to stop expecting men to change or become different, which contradicts his advice to ask for what she wants—a change from her husband. This contradiction was further illuminated in his 2010 website advice to a woman who felt her husband was absent on the weekends after being on the road all week for work:

> The way to change this situation is not by changing him, *but changing yourself*. When he arrives this Friday night, greet him warmly, and have his favorite dinner waiting. Talk about his week – but only if *he* wants to do that. Be supportive and affectionate. And over the weekend you share together, don't make him feel that he needs to spend all his time with you…Encourage him to do whatever he likes to do including his having some cave time to just be on his own. (Loscocco & Walzer, 2013, p. 9)

Comedian Steve Harvey disperses similar advice in his book *Act like a Lady, Think like a Man* while espousing traditional power imbalances and gender norms between men and women, including inequitable divisions of household chores. "Appreciating a man, not undermining his

confidence, is the best way to get the best out of your guy. And the best way to appreciate him is by being a girl, and especially letting him be a man" (p. 190). Harvey further states "No matter how society changes or how many responsibilities men take one on in the household, the bottom line is that everyone still expects the woman to turn a house into a home—a clean home" (p. 227).

These are some of the most popular messages conveyed to women despite women being the primary or co-breadwinners in two-thirds of families in the United States (Loscocco & Walzer, 2013). Paul (2010) even noted a recent study implied that the more financially dependent a man was on his wife, the more likely he was to have an affair.

A significant problem with self-help books is the general message that 'we' cause our own problems, therefore, we each hold the power to change whatever life circumstances with which we are dissatisfied. This is problematic as it requires an individual to buy into the notion they actually have this kind of power. If, as discussed earlier, marital and gender roles are created through an interactional process, demanding wives make changes without reciprocal expectations on husbands is problematic and does not broach power imbalances or unequal divisions of family and relationship maintenance (Dryden, 1999) —"rather the socially constructed differentiation is treated as inevitable and a wife's best recourse is to get with the program" (Loscocco & Walzer, 2013, p. 10). Advising women to act like ladies or "girls" and accept their "cavemen" or "kings" sets the stage for couples to continue reproducing the very behaviors implicated in marital stress and conflict (Loscocco & Walzer, 2013). Constructing marital challenges or dissatisfactions as individualistic, rather than cultural and structural continues to be problematic among self-help advice and books (Loscocco & Walzer, 2013).

Social Media and the Entertainment Business

Social media and show business are significant influencers on cultural schemas and help propagate gender differentiation within the Unites States (Loscocco & Walzer, 2013). For example, it has only been in recent years that Disney has racially and ethnically diversified its princesses or made any attempts at 'girl power.' Prior Disney movies focused on the prince rescuing the (typically White) princess, the 'knight in shining armor' coming to save the day if you will. Princess Jasmine might be strong-willed and opinionated, after all she is "not a prize to be won;" but in the end that did not stop Aladdin from being the one who saves the day, *and Jasmine*. Whether it is from major motion pictures, commercials, or other social medias, the damsel in distress waiting for a man to come rescue her theme plays out again and again. Whether it's Disney's *Sleeping Beauty* (her name is Aurora by the way) waiting for true love's kiss to awaken her, Richard Gere 'rescuing' Julia Roberts in *Pretty Woman*—at least she "rescues him right back," or Trinity from *The Matrix*—a tough, capable fighter who dies to save Neo because he is more important and valuable as 'The One.' These repetitive themes, whether overt or subliminal, continue to help generate and promote gender differentiation.

Men and women are taught unrealistic relationship expectations that would leave most men feeling inadequate in meeting a woman's romantic expectations and most women feeling romantically disappointed (Knudson-Martin, 2005). Think of the influx in grand gesture proposals web videos in recent years. This 'grand gesture' expectation has even trickled down into prom date requests among juniors and seniors in high school. Women are taught to wait for men to ask her out on a date or 'make the first move.' While increasingly more popular in recent years, it is frequently seen as taboo for women to ask men on dates or make the first move. In line with initiating the first date, men are expected to pay for dates, take charge of the romance,

such as buying flowers or initiating the first kiss or first sexual encounter, and be the one who proposes marriage. Women taking charge of these actions are often viewed as ‘forceful’ or ‘unladylike.’ Perhaps the best paradox in all of this is that, while men are expected to take charge of the romance initially, the ongoing work and responsibility in maintaining an intimate relationship then falls almost entirely on women (Zimmerman et al., 2001).

Social media and the entertainment business deliver skewed perceptions of what a relationship should (or could) look like and only help maintain the current social constructionism of gender differentiation (Knudson-Martin, 2005). Sixty years ago, the Feminist Movement began dismantling gender inequalities, achieving most of their goals within 20 years. Given the substantial changes the Feminist Movement made over 40 years ago, and how today’s society has a much higher focus on being politically correct and sensitive toward others, we have seemingly made little progress in changing the social construction of gender differentiation since the 1980s. While some major influencers, such as Disney, have begun to produce entertainment geared at empowering women, change has been slow-going and any significant impact has yet to be ascertained.

In researching social mediums and entertainment, consideration was also given to online dating sites and apps. While current research does not tie online dating directly to gender roles and household chore division, it did sensitize me to a greater cultural issue of gender inequality and was used to further my own perspective within this paper (see Appendix).

Thinking Therapeutic Thoughts

In the 1980s, the feminist movement greatly increased awareness of gender as an organizing force within families, challenging therapists to confront issues of power imbalances within heterosexual relationships (Knudson-Martin & Laughlin, 2005). Through the 1980s and

1990s, research highlighted discrepancies between egalitarian beliefs about gender and ongoing power imbalances in relationships. Research further demonstrated that most clinical approaches in this era did not help correct the power imbalance but rather contributed to helping women become more accepting of these imbalances (Hawkins et al., 1994; Knudson-Martin & Laughlin, 2005; Knudson-Martin & Mahoney, 1999; McGoldrick, 1998).

Gender role constructs within a marriage are not only institutionally based, but also based on individual and interactional processes (Risman, 2004). In order to effectively address gender role conflicts in marriages, therapists need to recognize how gender influences the interpersonal processes between the couple (Knudson-Martin & Laughlin, 2005). As stated by Knudson-Martin & Laughlin, "To develop more inclusive practices, we believe that therapists like ourselves must first disengage the concepts of gender, power, and sexual orientation to develop new models of health and normality" (p. 108). A common mistake in therapy, as well as self-help books, is using gender as an explanation for behavior to help understand and adapt to the other as this only reinforces, rather than reshapes, gender stereotypes (Knudson-Martin, 2005).

A postgender approach to therapy involves disengaging from heterosexual gender norms and power differences within the relationship and focusing on equality rather than gender differences (Knudson-Martin & Laughlin, 2005; Knudson-Martin & Mahoney, 1999; Risman & Johnson-Sumerford, 1998; Rutter & Schwartz, 1999). A commonly depicted marital conflict is one in which the wife feels excessive pressure to be responsible in caring for others, such as extended family, and the husband who feels slighted by the lack of time or attention from his wife. Oftentimes, therapeutic tactics involve task assignments aimed at ways the wife can provide her husband more time and affection and ways for the husband to feel less slighted or

hurt by her care and concern for others. Unless the wife feels she is providing more care than preferred and views this as problematic, these tactics focus on the husband's goal and require change from his wife. A postmodern approach would encourage the couple to view their problem from alternate perspectives and problem solve. For example, to place value on the wife's ability to care for others, determine if the husband also had that ability, and brainstorm ways he might be able to help support his wife. Creating more time for each other becomes a problem for the couple to solve together. Rather than expecting a behavioral change from the wife, perhaps the husband can actively participate in the caretaking of others, relieving some of the burden on his wife. In turn, this could free up additional time for the husband and wife to spend together. Creating more time for each other becomes a problem for the couple to solve together while also providing new perspective on the problem.

Postmodern approaches to couples therapy are differentiated from modern approaches in that commonly held social assumptions, or common knowledge, believed to be truths are challenged and deconstructed (Anderson, 2007). These commonly held assumptions, also referred to narratives, are generally accepted as truth or reality within a culture. It is how individuals constitute their understanding of human nature and behavior and would explain why men and women are often judged for exhibiting traits or behaviors contrary to their gender ideal; however, a postmodern lens views knowledge itself as socially constructed (Anderson, 2007). For instance, the notion that men by nature are logical and less emotional while women are more emotional and caring or the *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus* mentality commonly referenced in the United States. These commonly held narratives about gender differences are typically accepted as being truths or reality; however, this is based on the social construction of gender differentiation, not facts. A postmodern approach focuses on an individual's unique,

first-hand experience rather than similarities and patterns (Anderson, 2007). Therapists help couples come up with alternate narratives of subjective experiences to help them view events from different perspectives and devise solutions to conflict within the marriage (Anderson, 2007).

As suggested in several research studies, one therapeutic challenge is the concept of neutrality. Therapists are generally trained to be neutral and keep their own values and interests out of therapy; however, it simply is not possible to be neutral (Knudson-Martin, 1997). Belief in neutrality is belief in being separate from the political structure in the larger society, something that is not possible (Hare-Mustin, 1987; Knudson-Martin & Laughlin, 2005). "Therapists will either support the existing sex-gender system or challenge it. Neutral therapy requires active efforts on the part of the therapist to make hidden power structures visible and to challenge constructions of gender that perpetuate inequality and heterosexism" (Knudson-Martin & Laughlin, 2005, p. 110).

Mental health professionals need to be aware of potential relationship conflicts that arise from dual-earner couples in order to offer effective therapeutic interventions (Thomas et al., 1984). While mental health professionals should keep career satisfaction in mind as one particular area shown to influence a couple's relationship (Rogers & May, 2003), they should also keep in mind differences between spouses' perceived gender roles, degree of gender trait identification, and household chore allocation may interfere with family cohesion and be an underlying source of conflict (Stevens et al., 2002). Developing appropriate assessment measures for household chore division and satisfaction, the degree of gender identification, and gender role beliefs would be beneficial in treatment planning. Therapists can help couples identify how their gender role beliefs or ideas can be limiting their self-potential and help tolerate the discomfort

that frequently occurs with experimenting with behaviors outside of their prescribed gender role (Knudson-Martin & Laughlin, 2005).

Assessment Measures

While there is an abundance of reliable and valid marital satisfaction assessment measures, all designed to accommodate a variety of contexts, there is a lack of appropriate measures in assessing household chore division, satisfaction with the division, gender beliefs about gender roles, and degree of gender identification. In fact, the BEM Sex Role Inventory – Short Form (BSRI-SF) was one of the only valid and reliable measures I was able to find for gender identification. The BSRI-SF is a 20-item questionnaire that measures masculinity and femininity on a 7-point Likert scale. Bem's original version of the BSRI included 40 items and only hypothesized two dimensions for gender identity—masculine and feminine (Choi, 2017). Numerous validation studies indicated additional dimensions: Critiques that resulted in Bem developing the short version of the BSRI, which research found to be more reliable and valid than the original version (Choi, 2017). Factor analyses have shown the BSRI-SF has a construct validity greater than .30 (Larsen & Seidman, 1986). Internal consistency coefficients were .89 for the Femininity subscale scores and .82 for the Masculinity subscale score (Choi et al., 2009). Test-retest coefficients were .82 and .94 for females on femininity and masculinity, respectively, and .89 and .76 for males on femininity and masculinity, respectively (Choi & Fuqua, 2003).

Initially created in 1974, the BSRI-SF continues to be the most commonly used measure in all areas of gender-related research and is most frequently used to classify people as masculine, feminine, androgynous, or undifferentiated (Beere, 1990). Most other measures assume masculinity and femininity to be on opposite ends of the same dimension (Sassenrath &

Yonge, 1979). This would mean that if someone scored high on the masculinity end of the continuum they would, by default, score low on femininity (Sassenrath & Yonge, 1979). The BSRI-SF treats masculinity and femininity as two separate constructs, thus allowing an individual to obtain two separate scores (Sassenrath & Yonge, 1979). These separate scores allow participants to be classified into one of four categories: (a) high masculinity/high femininity (androgynous), (b) high masculinity/low femininity (masculine), (c) low masculinity/high femininity (feminine), and (d) low masculinity/low femininity (undifferentiated; Beere, 1990). Ignoring the fact this paper focuses on heterosexual dual-earner couples, given the substantial increase of public attention and awareness to the LBGTQ community over this millennium, it would seem a more modern measure could be constructed instead of using an almost 40-year-old measure. Perhaps you simply can't mess with perfection?

The Family Responsibility Index (FRI) was one of the only measures to ascertain which spouse, if either, is responsible for an all-encompassing list of household chores. The FRI is a 53-item questionnaire that assesses how spouses divide 53 common household responsibilities on a 5-point Likert scale throughout a typical week, not including the sixth option 'Does not apply.' Between-spouse correlations on the FRI behaviors produced moderately high correlations (Alley, 1984). Pretest correlations ranged from .64 to .89 with a mean *r* of .82 (Alley, 1984). Correlations from the second administration ranged from .00 to.82 with a mean *r* of .79 (Alley, 1984). The FRI appears to elicit a moderately high level of agreement between spouses on the proportionate responsibilities for specific familial behaviors with mean correlations of .88 for husbands and .86 for wives (Alley, 1984). Results from two investigations demonstrate acceptable levels of reliability and validity (Alley, 1984). Research addressed face and content validity by an inclusion of tasks, which formed a representative composite of familial

responsibilities and representation of both traditionally male and female tasks (Alley, 1984).

Unfortunately, this representative composite breakdown is not readily accessible to the examiner, rendering it ineffective in assessing whether the sex or degree of gender identification of a spouse correlates with the task(s) for which they are responsible. Even if an examiner administered the BSRI-SF to couples to determine their degree of gender identification, the examiner would be unable to correlate this with how household chores are divided. The FRI also lacks a factor assessing a spouse's satisfaction level with how chores are divided. While the FRI might highlight inequities in household chore allocation, there is no accounting for whether spouses find this satisfactory. Furthermore, it would be interesting to modify the FRI to address a person's gender beliefs on gender roles. For example, adding the question "Do you believe men and women should be responsible for specific chores based on whether they are male or female? (i.e., "Men are responsible for traditionally masculine chores such as mowing the yard while women are responsible for traditionally feminine chores such as the laundry").

A Need for Further Research

Researchers endorse a likely correlation between career satisfaction and marital satisfaction; however, it is not necessarily clear how other relationship factors may correlate amongst dual-earner couples in today's contemporary society (Bischoff, 2006; Rogers & May, 2003). While researchers were interested in seeing if career satisfaction played a role in marital satisfaction, they did not consider how other facets of a relationship may correlate and potentially affect marital satisfaction levels within a modern marriage construct. With dual-earner couples now setting the new norm for marriage in the United States, it is important to develop an understanding of contemporary conflicts arising from the contemporary social culture now defining marriage.

Even though dual-earner marriages are non-traditional in many aspects, the roles within the relationships are generally more congruent with traditional norms (Hicks et al., 1983). Regardless of differing incomes or gender expressions, Americans continue to "use gender differences as a shortcut to determine who should be doing the housework" (Doan & Quadlin, 2019). This creates conflict within the marriage and acts as a barrier to intimacy (Hicks et al., 1983). Barnhill (1979) stated that issues related to the process and clarity of communication should be focal points of interventions so couples can share their perceptions and work towards a consensus. By reaching a consensus, the couple can experience and address intimacy and conflict within the relationship in healthy ways, providing both spouses *follow through* on the consensus reached (Barnhill, 1979).

Research already demonstrates women continue to take more responsibility for household chores; however, research remains inconclusive as to what extent chore allocation satisfaction correlates with overall marital satisfaction. In general, research on couples indicates the less consensus there is between partners on their roles in both family and work systems, the more conflict is experienced (Thomas et al., 1984). A 2014 study looked at psychological distress in heterosexual marriages at two points in time, 1991 and 2007. Results showed that participants with more gender-traditional attitudes exhibited higher psychological distress (Sweeting et al., 2014).

Gender roles and the degree of gender identification within heterosexual marriages is largely an untapped area of research. Research by and large accounts for 'husband and wife' as equivalent to 'male and female' or 'masculine and feminine.' Despite all the changes modern day marriages have undergone, traditional gender roles are still the prevailing norm, even within dual-earner marriages, so it is important to understand influential factors on marital satisfaction

levels.

Concluding Thoughts

There is a significant difference between the average marriage lasting forty plus years in 1950 to the average marriage lasting seven years present day. The primary change likely accounting for this is the move from traditional to dual-earner marriages. Yet despite such a significant transition, dual-earner marriages do not look very different from traditional marriages. Let's compare: (1) Traditional marriages: Men worked full-time, handled finances, and typically did yardwork, such as mowing the lawn. Women were responsible for all household chores, such as cooking three meals a day, cleaning, shopping, laundry, caretaking, entertaining, etc. and taking care of any children the couple may have, including feeding, diapers, entertaining, doctor's appointments, fixer of all ouchies and booboos, etc. (2) Modern dual-earner marriages: Men work full-time but yardwork and handling finances seems to be a toss-up between which spouse is responsible or if these are shared responsibilities, and some "help out" around the house. Women work full-time, are responsible for most household chores (cleaning, laundry, shopping, caretaking, entertaining, though cooking also appears to be a toss-up between spouses), taking care of any children (feeding, diapers, playmate, doctor's appointments, primary fixer of all ouchies and booboos, the ones expected to stay home from work when children are sick, etc.), and sometimes handling the family's finances and/or yardwork. As research indicates all the way back from the 1980s, Yogev (1981) concluded that women were undergoing "role expansion (adding new responsibilities without relinquishing old ones), rather than a process of roles redefinition" (p. 895). Research also indicates no significant difference from past to present in gender roles at home. It seems dual-earner marriages are comparable to traditional marriages except women, apparently being gluttons for punishment, decided 'I don't think I have enough to do in my current, never-ending 24/7 role. I know, let me add a second full-time job to the

mix! Jolly good fun!' Unfortunately for society, women are not gluttons for punishment. Sarcasm aside, the fact there has been little change in the social construction of gender or individual gender beliefs, despite such significant changes, is resulting in a lot of unhappy marriages. These marriages translate to unhappy people and, following current norms, a lot of divorced people. Yet this continues to be an under- researched field notwithstanding research indicating modern couples espouse gender equality without actually implementing equality. Determining what the construct of equality within a marriage would look like to modern couples continues to be a relatively unexplored area.

In line with equality concepts enters gender. I had a difficult time finding any study that took a spouse's degree of gender identification into account and the impact this may or may not have on gender roles, expectations, and marital quality. Most studies accounting for the degree of gender identification studied homosexual or bisexual relationships. I would anticipate research demonstrating that a person's degree of gender identification likely impacts satisfaction with household chore division for traditionally masculine and feminine chores. For example, if a spouse identifies as more masculine, they will report greater satisfaction with the assignment of traditionally masculine chore responsibilities, along with lower satisfaction with traditionally feminine chore responsibilities. Likewise, if a spouse identifies as more feminine, they will report greater satisfaction with the assignment of traditionally feminine chore responsibilities, along with lower satisfaction with traditionally masculine chore responsibilities. Spouses who identify with both masculine and feminine gender traits, as well as spouses who identify with neither masculine nor feminine gender traits, would likely be ambivalent for which chores they are responsible. Furthermore, the degree of satisfaction with household chore allocation, regardless of the quantification of chore allocation, could correlate with overall marital satisfaction. Despite the likeliness of the above correlations, no assertions can be made due to a lack of research.

Research on entertainment businesses and social media demonstrates a long-standing history in propagating gender differences. There is seemingly never-ending research on subliminal advertising, the effects of playing violent games, ‘men are like this’ and ‘women are like that’ themes, and so on. Gender differentiation is so ingrained in our social constructs, we often do not even recognize it as we long-ago accepted it as ‘factual.’ Self-help books, usually targeting the facilitation of richer, deeper, more loving connections with one’s partner, reinforce gender differences. Even clinical approaches can contribute to acceptance of power imbalances within marriage, particularly when gender is used to understand or explain behaviors. It has been almost 50 years since the BRSI-SF was developed. *Society has yet to create another measurement that is valid and reliable* in examining gender roles, gender beliefs, and degree of gender identification. Although to be fair, at least we have the BRSI-SF. A measurement has yet to be developed examining household chore division while including satisfaction factors with the division, a breakdown of gender stereotypes for the chore list, and how a spouse’s degree of gender identification and gender role beliefs might correlate into this.

Research is lacking across multiple contexts within heterosexual marriages. Whether in assessment measures, therapeutic techniques or interventions, or gender role and gender role beliefs within heterosexual marriages, there are ample opportunities for researchers to dig into relatively underexplored territory.

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Appendix

Online Dating

As of 2013, 30% of American adults reported experience with past or present use of an online dating service or app (Anderson et al., 2020). Online dating is not only a significant change from more traditional methods of meeting romantic interests but also comes at a time where social norms and behaviors around marriage versus cohabitation are changing as people delay marriage or choose to remain single (Anderson et al., 2020). As of 2020, 54% of Americans do not believe the potential success of a match is impacted by whether couples meet online or through more traditional methods (Anderson et al, 2020).

Online dating sites can perpetuate traditional or stereotypical gender roles with a dating site's tips for users when creating their profiles (Dang, 2015). For example, eHarmony and other online dating websites suggest men post multiple photographs so others "can get a sense of who they are," whereas women are encouraged to post multiple photographs because "men want to check them out" (Dang, 2015). Advice from dating sites or apps tend to follow the course of thought that men should take control and be themselves while women should be flexible, passive, and soft (Dang, 2015). Others believe online dating helps facilitate the breakdown of traditional gender roles as the anonymity provides women opportunities to reach out to men first and empowers them in rejecting men whom they are not interested (Dang, 2015). This could be true but given statistics demonstrating women receive far more messages than men, women can instead feel overwhelmed "weeding" through potential candidates for ones who piques her interest. Thirty percent of women felt they received too many messages whereas only 6% of men shared this sentiment (Anderson et al., 2020).

Some dating sites or apps, such as Bumble, launched with intentions of breaking down

gender stereotypes by giving complete control to women. Bumble was founded by Whitney Wolfe-Herd and Badoo (a popular dating app in Europe) owner, Andreev, with Andreev holding a significantly higher share (80%) of Bumble. On Bumble, a "swipe left, swipe right" app, women are required to initiate contact with male counterparts before he can message her. Essentially, if both adults "swipe right" indicating potential interest, women then have 24 hours to send an initial message. Men then have 24 hours to reciprocate in order to maintain ongoing contact with each other. A medical anthropologist decided to utilize Bumble "because it was rumoured to have more professional men than other apps and I was intrigued by its signature design where women ask the men out" (Orchard, 2019). Orchard also found it interesting the company uses a honeybee hive as the logo and model Bumble built itself upon because it is "all about the queen bee and everyone working together" according to a 2015 Esquire interview with Wolfe-Herd, CEO and cofounder of Bumble. Orchard notes a honeybee hive more accurately depicts gender inequity as female workers bees do all the heavy lifting, care for larvae, and take care of their hexagon home. Likewise, Bumble has successfully created an environment in which the female puts in all the work in order to find matches.

Orchard also found men were uncomfortable with being unable to "make the first move" and felt robbed of their "rightful dating power."

> Many openly critiqued us for acting "like men" and I was ghosted, sexually degraded and subjected to violent language by men who resented me or what I represent as a feminist. Men are still not comfortable waiting to be asked out by a woman. This was confirmed by several of my matches, who discussed women's acquisition of socioeconomic and sexual power as a problem (Orchard, 2019).

A journalist followed Bumble for almost a year to observe its pursuit of keeping women

safer, gender equality, and more equitable relationships (Suddath, 2020). She found while CEO Wolfe-Herd frequently discusses how Bumble addresses the above issues and is making a difference, the company does not utilize any measures to track its actual success (Suddath, 2020). Suddath also found, through interviews with current and previous employees at the company that, while the company was built around Wolfe-Herd's concept of feminism, their workplace culture is one of disempowerment to women. According to public filings in 2018, women earned 44% less than their male counterparts at Badoo and Bumble (Suddath, 2020). There have also been allegations of sexual harassment including high-level executives being told to "act pretty" when meeting with investors and female employees' looks being openly discussed (Suddath, 2020). On International Women's Day, Andreev gave men the day off with the "joke" that "if women wanted to be equal, they had to do extra work" (Suddath, 2020).

I started off with such high hopes when first researching Bumble, not because I expected it to be a "safer dating site" for women, but that it would somehow hold female empowerment at its core. Honestly, I am not sure what would constitute one dating site being "safer" than any other. At the end of the day, you meet online, communicate online, then communicate through personal means before, in theory, meeting the other individual in person. Personally, I have not met many individuals who would provide their personal address to someone they met online for a date in-person for the first time. Most initial in-person dates begin with both individuals meeting at a restaurant, coffee shop, or some other public forum. Is one restaurant somehow safer than another? Digression aside, what I found was that not only did Bumble fail to deliver on its "girl-power" theme, it seems to instigate further inequalities between genders. I wrote a substantial portion of this remaining section as my own personal thoughts after skimming through Bumble's statistics and advertisements but before reading any of the other literature. I

cannot say what expectations I held, only that perhaps I expected to change my mind about my initial thoughts and reactions as they felt harsh and perhaps unwarranted. I did not expect Orchard's thoughts to almost eerily echo my own. Nor did I expect Suddath's seeming impartiality at the onset of the article to slowly churn into something that felt fairly biased by the end. Though perhaps not unlike this paper. In the interest of critically analyzing in this critical analysis paper, I left it largely unmodified.

So, by Bumble giving women all the "power," they have essentially relinquished men from the 'taking relationship initiative' (i.e., the wooing and romance period) and turned it over to women to make the first move from the onset of the relationship. One of the few times research indicates men are 'primarily responsible' for maintaining a romantic connection has also become the woman's responsibility. So men have one less task and women are taking on yet another task. According to Bumble's reported statistics, 85% or more of users are looking for marriage or long-term relationships and 63% of men said "women making the first move" made them want to use Bumble. Research indicates that post-marriage, the intimate and emotional responsibility of the relationship typically falls to the 'wife' role whereas it is typically the man's 'role' prior to marriage. More than half of the men on this dating site reportedly like that the initial onset or development of a relationship is off their plate and falls to the woman and now women are responsible the entire duration of the relationship rather than at least 'catching a break' at the onset of the relationship. It feels that Bumble's attempts to further gender equality, at least in the online dating forum, has backlashed in the opposite direction by putting additional responsibility on women. While women may feel more overwhelmed than men with messages on other dating sites or apps, at least these sites are maintaining an "equal opportunity," balanced approach by allowing either gender to initiate a romantic connection.