

**Marriage Equalities:
Gender and Social Norms in Same-Sex and Different-Sex Marriage**

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In my presentation, I hope to share some provisional thoughts on my ongoing research into the effect of legal marriage on gender roles in the division of labor and cultural practices associated with marriage, since New York and after New Jersey have extended marriage rights to same-sex couples. The study undertakes to examine effects of marriage on same-sex couples who have married as well the effects of the availability of same-sex marriage on different-sex married couples. My project inquires into couples' decision-making and negotiation about cultural practices, like name-changing and engagement and wedding ceremonies, and about structural practices, like allocation of domestic work, market work, and childcare. I choose these areas of focus because these areas of social practice have traditionally been areas in which gender role specialization has been most pronounced in different-sex marriage.

This project makes two novel contributions. The first is to examine the effect of legal marriage on same-sex couple's decision-making about cultural practices commonly associated with marriage and on these couples' decision-making about division of labor within their relationships. The second is the effect of the availability of same-sex marriage on different-sex married couples' decision-making about marital cultural practices and division of labor.

While the formal law of marriage aspires toward gender egalitarianism, marriage among different-sex couples still displays a significant amount of gender role specialization. This specialization is particularly pronounced in the context of symbolic or cultural practices of marriage, like engagements, marriage ceremonies, and last-name practices (Scheuble, Klingemann, & Johnson, 2000), as well as in structural practices like division of labor (Bianchi, Robinson, & Milkie, 2007; Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983; Hochschild, 1989). For example, while during the 1980s and 1990s more women in different-sex marriages were keeping their last names than previously, women continue to change their last names to their husbands' upon marriage and, by some counts, this practice began increasing in the 1990s, despite the absence of formal legal imperatives for wives to change their last names (Goldin & Shim, 2004).

In addition, gender role specialization in the division of labor among different-sex partners remains in marriage, despite trends toward greater gender parity. Responding to sociological literature stemming from Arlie Hochschild's work identifying the "second shift" worked by working wives (Hochschild, 1989), Bianchi, Robinson, and Milkie (2006) have found that since 1965, men have increased the amount of housework they do and that total workloads of men and women are remarkably similar when paid work and unpaid work are both counted. On the other hand, Bianchi et al. (2006) have also found that gender specialization of women in unpaid family caregiving and of men in paid market work persists, particularly in families with young children, and that men continue to have more free time per week than women. Moreover, Bianchi et al. (2006) have found that wives continue to bear the brunt of "orchestrating family life," resulting in feelings of greater time pressure (p. 170).

In contrast with research on different-sex couples, research on same-sex couples may suggest greater egalitarianism. According to Blumstein and Schwarz (1983), gay and lesbian couples are more likely to share cooking and chores than different-sex couples. Solomon, Rothblum, and Balsam (2004) showed more recently that same-sex couples in civil unions tend to fight more fairly than different-sex couples. These same couples reported higher levels of happiness (in the form of reduced conflict and greater intimacy) than different-sex married couples (Solomon et al, 2004; Balsam, Beauchaine, Rothblum, & Solomon, 2008).

Not surprisingly, gender still plays a variety of roles in same-sex couples' domestic lives. In the division of domestic chores in cohabiting same-sex couples, Carrington (1999) observed partners "work[ing] together to camouflage the actual divisions of domesticity and to prevent threats to the gender identities of their partners, particularly for women who do little domestic work and for men who do a lot" (p. 15). This effort to control for "gender deviance" manifested in discrepant accounts by individual same-sex partners, in which women were more likely to give their partners credit for domestic work and men were more likely to disclaim credit for such work (Carrington, 1999).

Gender differentiation also emerges in same-sex couples' choices about whether and how to hold commitment ceremonies. Hull found that couples who chose to hold a commitment ceremony were more likely to be female, suburban, and previously in a different-sex marriage (Hull, 2006). This corresponded with the greater proportions of lesbian couples than gay male couples seeking civil unions in the first year Vermont conferred this status, marriage licenses in California in 2004, and marriage licenses the first year Massachusetts permitted same-sex couples to marry (Bellafante, 2005; Leff, 2004; Solomon et al., 2004). As Hull (2006) points out, these differences are all the more notable because the population of self-identified gay men is almost double that of self-identified lesbians in the United States.

Moreover, within cultural practices like commitment ceremonies, women in same-sex couples are more likely than men in such couples to view the display of different gender roles as important to their own ceremonies' authenticity (Hull, 2006). This gender role differentiation can consistently inform choices about commitment practices. For example, Hull observed that "in every case in which one female partner chose 'masculine' attire and the other chose traditional 'feminine' garb, a formal proposal of marriage had occurred and it was the masculine-attired partner who had proposed to the feminine-attired one" (Hull, 2006, p. 40).

My project's central theoretical contribution will be to illuminate the relationship between legal change and social norms in the unique context of same-sex marriage. I hope to advance this aim in several ways.

First, focusing on the social effects of marriage furthers our understanding of how couples perceive themselves, encounter the world, and function when legally recognized. This study builds on the work of Rothblum, Solomon, and Balsam (2005), examining the division of labor in couples who received civil union status in Vermont.

Second, by inquiring into symbolic as well as structural aspects of marriage, I hope to develop a deeper understanding of the relationships between law and different types of social norms and practices. To do this, I expand on Hull's analysis of the social construction of marriage by looking beyond ceremonial rituals and engagements to other types of symbolic marital practice like naming and also inquire into structural practices like the division of labor. In doing so, I intend to identify any links between various aspects of the social practice of marriage.

Third, this project aims to explore the intuitions of legal scholars that the availability of marriage for same-sex couples promises to correct for gender inequality in different-sex marriage (Eskridge, 2013; Hunter, 2012). By speaking with different-sex married couples joined by a sibling relationship with participant same-sex married couples, I intend to gain insight on whether the availability of and proximity to same-sex marriage facilitates consideration or reconsideration of historically gender-based aspects of the social practice of marriage.