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**Brian G. Ogolsky, Renée Peltz Dennison
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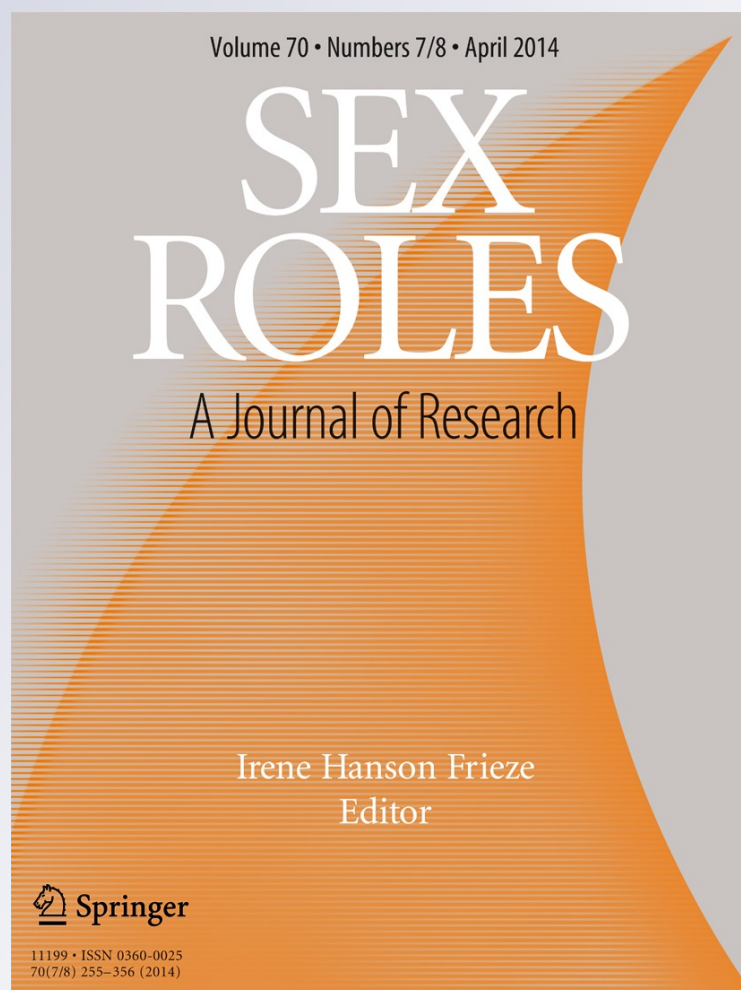
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The Role of Couple Discrepancies in Cognitive and Behavioral Egalitarianism in Marital Quality

Brian G. Ogolsky · Renée Peltz Dennison · James Kale Monk

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Abstract Although gender ideologies and perceptions of equity in the division of household tasks have been associated with marital quality, there is limited understanding of the relationship between *discrepancies* (in husbands' and wives' subjective ideals and accounts of the division of labor) and relationship quality. We examined cognitive egalitarianism (beliefs about gender roles), behavioral egalitarianism (perceptions of the division of household tasks and management), and marital quality among 220 heterosexual, newlywed couples ($N=440$) living in east and central regions of the United States. We used multi-level modeling to examine associations between cognitive egalitarianism, behavioral egalitarianism, and marital quality with a specific focus on discrepancies in the reports of husbands and wives. As hypothesized, both husbands and wives had lower marital quality when their cognitive egalitarianism was discrepant from their partner, and such a discrepancy had a greater influence on wives' reports of marital quality, especially for wives with higher cognitive egalitarianism. Although we expected similar results for the associations between behavioral egalitarianism and marital quality, we found that the strength of the association between wives' behavioral egalitarianism and marital quality decreased as the discrepancy from their husbands' behavioral egalitarianism increased. The association between cognitive egalitarianism and marital quality also increased as behavioral egalitarianism increased for wives but not for husbands. The results of this study illustrate the central role of spousal discrepancy in perceptions and enactment of household labor.

Keywords Equity · Egalitarianism · Marital quality · Newlyweds · Couple discrepancy · Household labor

Introduction

Egalitarianism, or views that support equity, in heterosexual relationships has been studied in the United States across a number of issues including the division of household chores, responsibility for children, and decision-making in relationships (e.g., Ball et al. 1995; Zimmerman 2003). Equity in the division of labor has been linked to individual health and well-being (e.g., Steil 1997) and positive relationship processes such as satisfaction (e.g., Stevens et al. 2001) in United States couples. Moreover, inequity among couples in the United States has been linked to lower levels of marital quality (e.g., Rogers and Amato 2000), constructive and deconstructive conflict (e.g., Kluwer et al. 1997), and relationship dissolution (e.g., DeMaris 2007; Frisco and Williams 2003). Although shifts toward egalitarianism surrounding work and family roles have become more prevalent in the United States, many traditional ideals still permeate the minds and behaviors of contemporary couples, and their friends, families, or colleagues (Galinsky et al. 2011).

Scholars have conceptualized egalitarianism, roles, and gendered issues in U.S. couples by examining men's and women's behaviors (individual's actions), cognition (how individuals think about behaviors) and affect (emotional experiences or reactions; Peplau 1983; Perry-Jenkins and Crouter 1990). In this study, we largely draw from gender construction and relative distribution perspectives to distinguish between *cognitive egalitarianism* (couples' beliefs about how tasks should be divided across partners) and *behavioral egalitarianism* (perceptions of how tasks are actually divided across partners). Lower levels of cognitive egalitarianism reflect more traditional ideologies and ascribe roles to wives

B. G. Ogolsky (✉) · J. K. Monk
The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2007 Christopher Hall, MC-081, 904 West Nevada Street, Urbana, IL 61801, USA
e-mail: bogolsky@illinois.edu

R. P. Dennison
St. Mary's College of Maryland, Lexington Park, MD, USA

and husbands based on gender, whereas higher levels of cognitive egalitarianism reflect a belief in the equitable division of household labor by both partners in a heterosexual relationship, independent of gender. Lower levels of behavioral egalitarianism are indicative of partnerships in which the division of household responsibilities is less equitable and higher levels represent more equity. It is important to note that behavioral egalitarianism simply measures how household labor is divided, without an evaluation of the “fairness” of the division.

Studies indicate that cognitive and behavioral egalitarianism among U.S. couples are not always congruent, which has implications for marital satisfaction (e.g., Hochschild and Machung 2003; Perry-Jenkins and Crouter 1990). For example, men and women may have high levels of cognitive egalitarianism, yet their day-to-day routines or the ways in which gendered behaviors are enforced by others around them may be barriers to achieving equity. In this study, however, we focus on couples' perceptions of egalitarianism and the division of labor, and highlight the influence of discrepancies in partners' cognitive or behavioral egalitarianism on marital quality. Understanding the role of discrepancies between newlywed partners (those within their first 2 years of marriage) is particularly important because the ways in which they come to negotiate their roles as a couple during the first 2 years of marriage can have a persistent effect on levels of conflict and marital quality for years to come (Karney and Bradbury 1995). Moreover, once developed, these early interaction patterns (both positive and negative) remain quite stable over time (Huston 1994; Huston et al. 2001).

Associations between egalitarianism, the division of household tasks, and marital quality are not limited to U.S. couples. In fact, national context has been shown to moderate perceptions of equity in the division of household labor (Greenstein 2009). Yet, we limited the focus of this paper to couples in the United States to gain a better understanding of the issue within this cultural context. Thus, all references to the gendered division of labor and studies cited are based on U.S. samples unless otherwise noted. The purpose of the present study was to examine how marital quality is affected by cognitive egalitarianism, behavioral egalitarianism, and partner discrepancies between newlywed heterosexual spouses in the United States.

Cognitive Egalitarianism and Marital Quality

Cognitive egalitarianism refers to individuals' general beliefs about how household tasks and management responsibilities *should* be divided (in relationships generally), though this may diverge from the way in which tasks are *actually* divided in their own relationships (Perry-Jenkins and Folk 1994; see Usdansky 2011 for a review). Accordingly, mothers are generally more satisfied when there is a good match between ideal

and actual division of labor (Hackel and Ruble 1992; Patterson 1995). From a gender constructivist perspective, those with lower levels of cognitive egalitarianism believe household tasks should be consistent with stereotypical roles ascribed to their gender (e.g., cooking or laundry for women, and repairs for men) to adhere to gender role expectations and demonstrate their competence as husbands and wives. Those with higher levels of cognitive egalitarianism, however, tend to reject the notion that tasks should be gender-segregated (Coltrane 2000).

Cognitive egalitarianism has been associated with the division of household tasks, perceptions of equity in the division of labor, and relationship outcomes (Perry-Jenkins and Crouter 1990). For example, lower levels of cognitive egalitarianism have been associated with more inequity in the actual division of household tasks (e.g., Greenstein 1996a) and yet, less conflict about the division of labor than those with higher cognitive egalitarianism, at least for couples in the Netherlands (Kluwer et al. 1997; Van Yperen and Buunk 1990). According to gender constructivists, these more traditional couples may be socialized to accept or even expect an inequitable division of labor (West and Zimmerman 1987), which, in turn, minimizes conflict between partners. That is, those with more egalitarian attitudes would need to engage in additional negotiation of role expectations, as they do not have a social script to follow. Partners lower in cognitive egalitarianism, however, may feel that performing gendered tasks provides the opportunity to appear as competent members of their gender category (see Coltrane 2000). Empirical evidence supports this notion as data from married couples has shown that gender role attitudes (e.g., cognitive egalitarianism) moderated the association between the division of labor and marital quality for wives, with higher cognitive egalitarianism predicting lower marital quality (e.g., for couples living in Israel; Lavee and Katz 2002). The general consensus among these researchers is that lower levels of cognitive egalitarianism are associated with less conflict about the division of household tasks, and more marital happiness and stability.

The influence of cognitive egalitarianism on relationship quality, however, has not always been clear. For example, using a sample of husbands and wives from a National survey, Voydanoff and Donnelly (1999) found that perceived inequity, psychological distress, and marital quality did not significantly differ by level of cognitive egalitarianism, although women with higher cognitive egalitarianism, as compared to women with lower cognitive egalitarianism, were more likely to experience psychological stress and marital disagreements when they perceived inequity. Stevens and colleagues (2001), however, reported a significant association between cognitive egalitarianism and marital quality. Other studies have failed to include assessments of relationship quality at all (e.g., Blair and Johnson 1992).

The incongruities in the literature may stem from the fact that few studies attend to the discrepancies between partners' levels of cognitive egalitarianism. Research has shown that husbands and wives have different beliefs about how partners should divide household tasks (e.g., Bartley et al. 2005), and perceptions of equity in how tasks are divided also vary across couples (e.g., Frisco and Williams 2003) suggesting that these discrepancies can be explained by gender differences. Gender constructivists argue that these differences stem from the social construction of gendered behaviors (Coltrane 2000). That is, beliefs about how to divide labor stem from a socially imposed ideal of women's vs. men's work, which disproportionately places the burden on women. These beliefs stem from the fact that wives perform about twice as much household labor than husbands as well as different types (Bartley et al. 2005). Empirical evidence supports this notion in that cognitive egalitarianism has been shown to have a greater influence on women's perceptions of inequity in the division of household tasks and marital quality than men's perceptions. For example, Stevens and colleagues (2001) found that women with lower cognitive egalitarianism did more household chores and reported higher marital satisfaction than women with higher cognitive egalitarianism; however, this was not the case for men. Similarly, Lavee and Katz (2002) found that wives with higher levels of cognitive egalitarianism experienced lower marital quality when the division of labor was gender-segregated, whereas cognitive egalitarianism did not significantly influence outcomes for men.

Discrepancy in cognitive egalitarianism between spouses may also be a stronger influence on wives' relationship quality than the beliefs of their husbands. According to gender constructivists, this gender difference may occur because partners should experience less conflict about their roles when they are consistent with how they have been taught to identify (West and Zimmerman 1987). It is probable that marital quality is higher for individuals who have lower levels of cognitive egalitarianism and consensus with their spouse because they share expectations about roles and are not defying social norms that reinforce gender-segregation. Given that household labor is disproportionately viewed as women's work, discrepant attitudes toward the division of labor are likely more salient to women; especially because wives have been shown to be more perceptive of relationship issues (Acitelli 1992), and women tend to hold more egalitarian views than men (Bolzendahl and Myers 2004). Empirical evidence supporting this notion has shown that higher levels of cognitive egalitarianism increase husbands' household contributions, but only for those married to wives with higher levels of cognitive egalitarianism (Greenstein 1996a). Also, examining cognitive discrepancy among couples, Kluwer and colleagues (1997) found that the effect of wives' discontentment with conflict management was moderated by cognitive egalitarianism, and specifically congruity between husbands' and

wives' cognitive egalitarianism, where lower cognitive egalitarianism was related to more conflict avoidance. Therefore, we expect that there may be a stronger association between cognitive egalitarianism and marital quality for wives than husbands, especially when there is a positive association between wives' cognitive egalitarianism and their behavioral egalitarianism.

Behavioral Egalitarianism and Marital Quality

Like cognitive egalitarianism, behavioral egalitarianism has also been linked to marital quality. Behavioral egalitarianism pertains to a spouse's perception of the actual division of labor in their marriage, and is distinct from attributions about the fairness of this division (Mederer 1993). Specifically, behavioral egalitarianism captures individuals' subjective experiences and their own interpretations of the behaviors (Peplau 1983). The general consensus is that equity is desired by most U.S. couples and perceptions of equity influence contentment or perceptions of marital stability (Utne et al. 1984; Van Yperen and Buunk 1990). Yet equity in the division of household tasks among U.S. couples does not always occur because gendered beliefs and behaviors are created through daily interactions (West and Zimmerman 1987). In fact, contradictions between spouses' gender ideologies and their actual, daily practices were found to be frequent (Hochschild and Machung 2003; see Usdansky 2011 for a review). Moreover, these beliefs help us to understand why the contradictions between what individuals prefer and how they behave, along with the discrepant meanings for men and women (Ferree 1990), influence emotional states in different ways (Lively et al. 2010).

For example, although the number of men performing household labor has increased over the last 3 decades, it is well documented that women have continued to outperform men (e.g., Bianchi et al. 2000; Lachance-Grzela and Bouchard 2010). The fact that some women see the division as equitable and others do not (e.g., Greenstein 1996b; Stevens et al. 2001) has been explained by gender constructivists, who assert that inequity is consistent with expectations for women with lower cognitive egalitarianism, but viewed as inequitable or as a "second shift" for women with higher cognitive egalitarianism (Greenstein 1996b; Hochschild and Machung 2003). Wives lower in egalitarianism, thus considered more "traditional," may be more accepting of outperforming men as evidenced by a paradox in which couples report unequal division of household labor as "fair" (see Claffey and Manning 2010). These emotional reactions to roles regarding housework are indicative of the links between cognitive and behavioral egalitarianism and highlight the fact that equity in the division of labor is relative. That is, husbands' and wives' subjective ideals and accounts of how tasks and management responsibilities are divided in their relationships may differ and such discrepancy

should affect marital quality because discrepancies in amounts of labor can lead to increased conflict in couples (Stohs 2000).

Empirical evidence supports the notion of measuring individuals' perceptions of equity in relationships. For example, using data from a National survey, Frisco and Williams (2003) found that individuals' perceived inequity in the division of household labor negatively influenced marital quality for men and women and increased the likelihood of divorce for women. Perry-Jenkins and Folk (1994) also found that perception of equity was the most important indicator of relationship conflict for middle class wives. Moreover, the research that links cognitive egalitarianism and behavioral egalitarianism indicates that incongruence between the two influences the association between wives' cognitive egalitarianism and marital quality (McHale and Crouter 1992). Similarly, discrepancy in gender ideology and the roles that are actually performed (i.e., a wife holding more egalitarian beliefs, but performing the majority of the household labor) has been associated with lower marital quality (Greenstein 1996b; Piña and Bengtson 1993). In other words, relationship quality may be associated with wives' beliefs about how tasks *should* be divided when these beliefs correspond to her perceptions of the equity in how tasks are *actually* divided.

Goals of the Present Study

The primary aim of the present study was to assess discrepancies in husbands' and wives' perceptions of cognitive and behavioral egalitarianism by examining their influence on marital quality. Conflict or strain around the distribution or allocation of tasks may be especially taxing for newlywed couples, who are novices to the division of tasks as a married couple. In order to determine how our independent variables (cognitive and behavior egalitarianism) were associated with our dependent variable (marital quality), we used multi-level modeling (MLM). When examining data from romantic partners, MLM is necessary to account for the statistical dependence between spouses' data. Multi-level modeling accounts for the correlation between spouses by modeling data at two levels. The first level identifies within-couple variation, that is, variation between spouses, and the second level identifies between-couple variation, or differences across couples (Raudenbush and Bryk 2002). In our analysis, we used the two-intercept model (see Raudenbush et al. 1995), which is a method for analyzing data from dyads with a distinguishing characteristic such as gender (Kenny et al. 2006). The strength of the two-intercept model is that it allows for simultaneous estimation of effects for husbands and wives.

To test the following three hypotheses, we computed a model in which marital quality for each spouse was predicted by husbands' and wives' cognitive egalitarianism, husbands' and wives' behavioral egalitarianism, and the interaction between cognitive and behavioral egalitarianism for each spouse

at Level 1. At Level 2, we included within-couple discrepancy scores (modeled as dyadic distance scores) for both cognitive and behavioral egalitarianism, which resulted in the estimation of a cross-level interaction between the discrepancy measures and each of the Level 1 predictors.

The literature surrounding gender ideologies suggests that beliefs about how tasks should be divided influences marital quality (e.g., Lavee and Katz 2002). Gender constructivists assert that gender socialization influences individuals' subjective ideals and perceptions of equity in the division of household tasks (e.g., Ferree 1990; West and Zimmerman 1987). Thus, although there may be associations between cognitive egalitarianism and behavioral egalitarianism, the strength of the associations may differ for husbands and wives. Moreover, research using relative deprivation theory (e.g., Greenstein 2009) has shown that although individuals generally prefer equity in relationships, it is the degree to which individuals value an outcome (i.e., an equitable division of household tasks), and who individuals compare themselves or their partners to that directly influences outcomes (i.e., marital satisfaction). Therefore, it is likely that the interaction of cognitive and behavioral egalitarianism and discrepancies between couples' cognitive and behavioral egalitarianism will influence marital quality. Thus, we pose three hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: There will be a negative interaction of cognitive egalitarianism and discrepancy between spouses' levels of cognitive egalitarianism in models of marital quality for wives but not husbands. That is, *the strength of the association between cognitive egalitarianism and marital quality will decrease as discrepancy between spouses' levels of cognitive egalitarianism increases for wives but not husbands.*

Hypothesis 2: There will be a negative interaction of behavioral egalitarianism and discrepancy between spouses' levels of behavioral egalitarianism in models of marital quality for wives but not husbands. That is, *the strength of the association between behavioral egalitarianism and marital quality will decrease as discrepancy between spouses' levels of behavioral egalitarianism increases for wives but not husbands.*

Hypothesis 3: There will be a positive interaction of cognitive egalitarianism and behavioral egalitarianism in models of marital quality for wives but not husbands. That is, *the association between cognitive egalitarianism and marital quality will increase as the level of behavioral egalitarianism increases for wives but not husbands.*

In addition, we controlled for employment status, number of hours worked, age, education, and the presence of children. Life course theories of development posit that the division of household labor changes as a function of many important demographic factors (Coltrane 2000). For example, research among

Australian couples has shown that dual-earner couples and individuals who work more hours generally experience more stress, conflict regarding work and relationship balance, and role strain (Elloy and Smith 2003). Women, who are employed outside of the home have been shown to hold more egalitarianism views (Fan and Marini 2000), and wives who define themselves as the breadwinners in relationships generally perceive less fairness and want or expect more help from their husbands (Ferree 1987; Goldberg and Perry-Jenkins 2004).

Highly educated individuals generally report higher levels of cognitive egalitarianism (e.g., Fan and Marini 2000), and whereas highly educated and employed women are performing less housework and child care responsibilities, contemporary men with higher levels of education are performing more (Sullivan 2013). Further, individuals in our sample ranged from 18 to 37 years old. Research has shown that higher levels of cognitive egalitarianism (Brooks and Bolzendahl 2004) and behavioral egalitarianism (Davis and Greenstein 2004) persist with each generation, and some women experience higher levels of cognitive egalitarianism and subsequently, perform less housework over time (Artis and Pavalko 2003). Those who married at earlier ages (i.e., during adolescence or emerging adulthood; 18–25 year olds) may have had fewer relational experiences, skills, or time to commit to lower or higher levels of cognitive egalitarianism than those who married at later ages (late 20s and 30s; South 1995). Some scholars believe that these issues relate to life cycle factor more than age because individuals are least satisfied during periods where demands are high and more is expected of them, such as the presence of children (e.g., Suitor 1991). Research has also shown that role conflicts increase and marital satisfaction decreases after the birth of a child (Twenge et al. 2003) although it may be challenging to discriminate between the transition to parenthood and the newlywed stage of the relationship because the birth of the child often occurs within the first few years of a marriage. In fact, lower cognitive egalitarianism is related to marital conflict for couples who become parents early in their marriage (Helms-Erikson 2001).

Method

Sample

Eligible participants must have been married within the last 24 months and between the ages of 18 and 40 years old. To obtain the sample, we reviewed marriage records filed in the last 2 years in five counties in the East and Central regions of the United States. These counties were selected because, collectively, they represented the overall demographics of each respective state as reported in the most recent census data. Eligible participants were sent an invitation letter by mail

soliciting volunteers for a study about factors that affect marriages. Enclosed with the letter was a response form and stamped envelope to be returned by interested couples. When letters were returned as undeliverable, we resent the letters to any additional mailing addresses that were listed on the couples' marriage license. A total of 1,743 letters were sent, of which, 181 (10 %) were returned unopened. Of the 1,562 remaining letters, 263 (17 %) were returned by interested participants. Our response rate was identical to other studies employing recruitment by means of public records (e.g., Karney et al. 1995).

A sample of 220 couples ($N=440$) agreed to participate and met the aforementioned criteria. As seen in Table 1, participants ranged in age from 18 to 37 ($M=27.10$, $SD=3.65$) and had been married for approximately 1 year before the study began ($M=12.56$, $SD=3.72$). The majority of the sample had at least some college education and averaged approximately \$60,000 in annual household income. Approximately 90 % of men and 80 % of women worked outside of the home. Although work hours varied considerably, men, on average, reported working over 40 hours per week outside the home ($M=42.64$, $SD=13.23$), whereas women reported working less than 40 hours week ($M=34.00$, $SD=16.69$). Approximately 24 % of the couples had at least one child living in their household. With respect to ethnicity, 73 % of the participants were Caucasian, 17 % African American, 3 % Hispanic, 2 % Asian American, and 6 % other. Paired t -tests revealed that husbands were older than wives by just over 1 year, $t(215)=5.55$, $p<.01$. Husbands and wives did not differ significantly on any other variable.

Procedure

Eligible participants were sent an email containing study instructions, a link to the online survey, and a unique identifier and password to access the survey. Partners were instructed to complete the survey independently and to refrain from discussing responses until after the surveys were submitted. The surveys took approximately 30 min to complete, and each partner was compensated with a \$15 gift card to a national vendor.

Measures

Cognitive Egalitarianism

To measure cognitive egalitarianism we used an abbreviated version (35 items) of the 95-item Sex-Role Egalitarian scale (SRES), which was developed to measure participants' beliefs about how tasks should be divided between couples across various domains of life, including marital, parental, employment, social-interpersonal-heterosexual, and educational roles (Beere et al. 1984). The items used in the abbreviated version were selected to assess all domains of the original SRES, and

Table 1 Means and standard deviations of demographics for husbands and wives ($N=440$)

Variable	Husband	Wife	Couple
Mean Age (SD)	27.68 (3.72)	26.52 (3.49)	–
Ethnicity			
Caucasian	161 (73 %)	160 (73 %)	–
African American	37 (17 %)	35 (16 %)	–
Hispanic	6 (3 %)	7 (3 %)	–
Asian American	3 (1 %)	4 (2 %)	–
Other	12 (6 %)	14 (6 %)	–
Education			
High School	39 (18 %)	16 (8 %)	–
Some College	41 (19 %)	34 (15 %)	–
College Graduate	56 (26 %)	63 (29 %)	–
Graduate Work	73 (34 %)	96 (43 %)	–
Employment Status			
Employed outside of house	197 (90 %)	175 (80 %)	–
Not employed outside of house	23 (10 %)	45 (20 %)	–
Mean hours worked (SD)	42.64 (13.23)	34.00 (16.69)	–
Household Income			
Less than \$30,000	–	–	67 (11 %)
\$30,000–\$50,000	–	–	83 (19 %)
\$50,000–\$70,000	–	–	95 (22 %)
\$70,000–\$90,000	–	–	71 (16 %)
Greater than \$90,000	–	–	140 (32 %)
Presence of Children	–	–	53 (24 %)
Mean months married (SD)			12.56 (3.72)

We found significant gender differences for age only as noted in the text
SD Standard Deviation

items were formatted as statements (e.g., “A wife should be the one to decide on a couple’s social activities”) that participants indicated agreement, or disagreement, on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 5 = *Strongly Agree*). The original 95-item SRES has been shown to have high internal consistency in past research ($\alpha=.97$; Beere et al. 1984); similarly, the abbreviated 35-item scale used in this study has been vetted in previous research, and showed high levels of reliability ($\alpha=.91$ for wives; $\alpha=.94$ for husbands) in the current study. Scale items were averaged for analysis.

Behavioral Egalitarianism

To measure behavioral egalitarianism, we created a 20-item scale that was developed to assess couples’ perceptions of equity in how tasks and family management behaviors were divided between spouses (see Appendix). Participants indicated on a 5-point scale (–2 = *My Partner Definitely Does*, 0 = *My Partner and I Equally Do*, 2 = *I Always Do*) which spouse generally handles each aspect of household management (e.g., “Who cooks the meals?”), and the mean score was used in all analyses. Although other instruments have been used to

measure perceptions of equity in the division of household tasks, we believed it was necessary to create a scale that reflected household tasks, as well as management activities (Mederer 1993) and couples’ *perceptions of equity* in the division of tasks that are relevant to contemporary couples. This scale was found to have high reliability, for both husbands and wives ($\alpha=.75$ and $.80$, respectively).

Discrepancies in Egalitarianism

In order to examine discrepancies between spouses on levels of cognitive and behavior egalitarianism, we computed a dyadic index using the distance measure of dissimilarity. Distance scores are computed by calculating the square root of the sum of squared differences between spouses. The distance measure is preferable to standard difference scores because (unlike difference scores) distance scores allow for a meaningful interpretation of both the level and the spread of discrepancies (Kenny et al. 2006). We calculated separate measures of distance between spouses for cognitive and behavior egalitarianism.

Relationship Quality

To assess marital quality, we used the 6-item Quality Marriage Index (QMI; Norton 1983). This scale consists of five items asking participants to rate the extent to which they agree with statements about their marriage (e.g., “We have a good marriage”), and one item asking participants to rate overall happiness with their marriage. For this study, all items assessing agreement were scored on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 7 = *Strongly Agree*), and the item rating happiness was scored on a 10-point scale (1 = *Very Unhappy* to 10 = *Perfectly Happy*). Past research has found this scale to be highly reliable for husbands and wives ($\alpha=.96$ and $\alpha=.96$, respectively; Johnson and Bradbury 1999), and the current study found high levels of reliability for husbands ($\alpha=.92$) and wives ($\alpha=.96$). Scale items were summed for analysis (see Norton 1983).

Control Variables

In our analyses we controlled for employment status, number of hours worked outside the house, age (in years), education (in years), and presence of kids. To measure employment status we created a couple-level dummy coded variable indicating whether one or both spouses were employed outside the home (0 = *one stay-at-home spouse*; 1 = *dual-earner couple*). To measure the presence of kids we created a couple-level dummy coded variable indicating whether the couple had children (0 = *no children*; 1 = *one or more child(ren)*).

Results

The newlywed couples in our study reported high levels of marital quality, which is consistent with past work on this population (Neff and Karney 2005). Despite the high levels of quality, the correlation between spouses' marital quality scores was only $r=.44$, which means that only 19 % of the variation in one spouse's marital quality was explained by the other spouse's score. Couples also reported moderate levels of cognitive egalitarianism and moderate levels of behavioral egalitarianism. Paired t-tests showed that husbands and wives differed significantly on cognitive, $t(218)=4.70$, $p<.01$, and behavioral, $t(218)=-9.79$, $p<.01$, egalitarianism. Husbands reported higher levels of cognitive egalitarianism and lower levels of behavioral egalitarianism than wives. See Tables 2 and 3 for the descriptive statistics and intercorrelations for each of the study variables.

The results of the MLM predicting marital quality are presented in Table 4. We first inspected the variance inflation factor (VIF) to assess potential multicollinearity among predictors; however, the VIF was below 2, which shows no evidence of multicollinearity. Because the couples were distinguishable by gender, we ran a two-intercept model, which simultaneously estimates a unique parameter for husbands and wives (see Raudenbush et al. 1995). The MLM equations predicting marital quality are as follows:

Level 1 Model:

$$\text{Marital Quality} = \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{Cognitive Egalitarianism}) + \beta_2(\text{Behavioral Egalitarianism}) + \beta_3(\text{Cognitive X Behavioral Egalitarianism}) \\ + \beta_4(\text{Hours Worked}) + \beta_5(\text{Age}) + \beta_6(\text{Education}) + r$$

Level 2 Model:

$$B_0 = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01}(\text{Discrepancy in Cognitive Egalitarianism}) + \gamma_{02}(\text{Discrepancy in Behavioral Egalitarianism}) + \gamma_{03}(\text{Household Employment Status}) + \gamma_{04}(\text{Kids}) + u_0 \\ B_1 = \gamma_{10} + \gamma_{11}(\text{Discrepancy in Cognitive Egalitarianism}) + \gamma_{12}(\text{Discrepancy in Behavioral Egalitarianism}) + \gamma_{13}(\text{Household Employment Status}) + \gamma_{14}(\text{Kids}) \\ B_2 = \gamma_{20} + \gamma_{21}(\text{Discrepancy in Cognitive Egalitarianism}) + \gamma_{22}(\text{Discrepancy in Behavioral Egalitarianism}) + \gamma_{23}(\text{Household Employment Status}) + \gamma_{24}(\text{Kids}) \\ B_3 = \gamma_{30} + \gamma_{31}(\text{Discrepancy in Cognitive Egalitarianism}) + \gamma_{32}(\text{Discrepancy in Behavioral Egalitarianism}) + \gamma_{33}(\text{Household Employment Status}) + \gamma_{34}(\text{Kids})$$

Our first hypothesis predicted that, for wives, the strength of the association between cognitive egalitarianism and marital quality would decrease as discrepancy between spouses' level of cognitive egalitarianism increased. There was a main effect of cognitive egalitarianism on marital quality for wives only, indicating that higher levels of cognitive egalitarianism

were related to higher levels of marital quality. A main effect of discrepancy in cognitive egalitarianism between partners showed that for both husbands and wives, more discrepancy was related to lower levels of marital quality. In addition to the main effects for cognitive egalitarianism, there was a significant interaction. For each interaction, we plotted values of the

Table 2 Descriptive statistics for study variables for husbands and wives

Variable	M	SD	Minimum	Maximum
1. H Marital Satisfaction	41.58	4.43	9	45
2. W Marital Satisfaction	42.04	4.03	14	45
3. H Cognitive Egalitarianism	2.18	0.33	0.66	3.47
4. W Cognitive Egalitarianism	2.05	0.27	1.43	3.17
5. H Behavioral Egalitarianism	-0.17	0.44	-1.79	1.05
6. W Behavioral Egalitarianism	0.39	0.47	-2.00	1.80
7. Couple Discrepancy in Cognitive Egalitarianism	6.56	2.15	1	15.72
8. Couple Discrepancy in Behavioral Egalitarianism	3.71	1.19	1	9.22

We found significant gender differences for cognitive egalitarianism and behavioral egalitarianism as noted in the text
H husbands, *W* Wives

moderator at one standard deviation above and one standard deviation below the mean as high and low values (Aiken and West 1991). There was a significant interaction between wives' cognitive egalitarianism and couples' discrepancy (see Fig. 1). The association between cognitive egalitarianism and marital quality was significantly higher for women who had less discrepancy in cognitive egalitarianism than for women who had more discrepancy.

Our second hypothesis predicted that the strength of the association between behavioral egalitarianism and marital quality would decrease as discrepancy between spouses' level of behavioral egalitarianism increased for wives but not for husbands. There was no main effect of behavioral egalitarianism for either husbands or wives. A main effect of discrepancy in behavioral egalitarianism emerged for husbands, however, showing that higher discrepancy was related to lower levels of marital quality. Despite the fact that there were no main effects for behavioral egalitarianism, there were two significant interactions. There was a significant interaction between wives behavioral egalitarianism and couples' discrepancy. The association between behavioral egalitarianism and marital quality was significantly higher for wives in couples with less discrepancy in behavioral egalitarianism than for wives in

couples who had more discrepancy (see Fig. 2). There was also a significant interaction between wives' behavioral egalitarianism and one of the control variables, the presence of children. For couples with children, wives' behavioral egalitarianism was positively associated with marital quality. For couples without children, however, wives' behavioral egalitarianism was not significantly associated with marital quality (see Fig. 3). None of the other control variables significantly affected any of the models, including that which tested our third hypothesis, and are therefore not presented in the remaining text or table.

Our third hypothesis predicted that the association between cognitive egalitarianism and marital quality would increase as the level of behavioral egalitarianism increased for wives but not for husbands. We found a significant interaction between wives' cognitive egalitarianism and behavioral egalitarianism. For wives with higher levels of behavioral egalitarianism, the association between cognitive egalitarianism and marital quality was significantly positive; however, for wives with lower levels of behavioral egalitarianism, the association was negative (see Fig. 4).

Table 3 Intercorrelations among study variables for husbands and wives

Variable	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.
1. H Marital Satisfaction	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
2. W Marital Satisfaction	.44*	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
3. H Cognitive Egalitarianism	-.17*	-.24*	–	–	–	–	–	–
4. W Cognitive Egalitarianism	.03	-.13	.20*	–	–	–	–	–
5. H Behavioral Egalitarianism	.15*	.21*	-.17*	-.28*	–	–	–	–
6. W Behavioral Egalitarianism	-.24*	-.27*	.23	.11	-.69	–	–	–
7. Couple Discrepancy in Cognitive Egalitarianism	-.21*	-.17*	.24	.03	-.05	.12	–	–
8. Couple Discrepancy in Behavioral Egalitarianism	-.17*	-.13	.07	.07	.04	.13	.11	–

H husbands, *W* wives

* $p < .05$

Table 4 Husbands' and wives' cognitive egalitarianism, behavioral egalitarianism, and couple discrepancies predicting marital quality

Predictor	Husbands			Wives		
	Coefficient	SE	t	Coefficient	SE	t
Intercept	44.24***	1.87	23.69	39.94***	1.87	21.32
Cognitive Egalitarianism	-.38	1.12	-.34	2.69***	1.04	2.60
Behavioral Egalitarianism	-3.43	4.17	-.82	5.50	3.54	1.56
Discrepancy in Cognitive Egalitarianism	-.97*	.49	-1.99	-1.88***	.42	-4.49
Discrepancy in Behavioral Egalitarianism	-.79**	.24	-3.23	.35	.24	1.48
Cognitive X Behavioral Egalitarianism	2.08	1.85	1.13	3.80*	1.60	3.38
Cognitive Egalitarianism X Discrepancy in Cognitive Egalitarianism	-.40	.27	-1.50	-1.59***	.39	4.06
Cognitive Egalitarianism X Discrepancy in Behavioral Egalitarianism	-.99	1.08	-.91	-.54	.85	-.61
Behavioral Egalitarianism X Discrepancy in Cognitive Egalitarianism	.22	.43	.53	-.25	.25	-.99
Behavioral Egalitarianism X Discrepancy in Behavioral Egalitarianism	-.02	.28	-.08	-.59*	.27	2.17
Presence of Children	-.13	3.83	-.04	-2.86*	3.79	-.75
Children X Cognitive Egalitarianism	2.68	2.03	1.32	4.84	2.95	1.64
Children X Behavioral Egalitarianism	-2.24	9.20	-.24	4.84*	2.14	2.26

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$; $df = 412$

Discussion

We examined how and when discrepancies in newlywed husbands' and wives' perceptions of both cognitive and behavioral egalitarianism influence reports of marital quality. Conceptually, past research has emphasized the importance of examining the interplay between partners' cognitions, behaviors, and affect on partners' roles (Peplau 1983). Moreover, research provides support for the importance of congruity within couples, revealing links between cognitive egalitarianism, behavioral egalitarianism, and relationship outcomes in a variety of ways. For example, research has shown significant effects of discrepancies between husbands' and wives'

cognitive egalitarianism on the division of labor (e.g., Greenstein 1996a). Additionally, studies have shown that incongruities in cognitive and behavioral egalitarianism influence levels of marital satisfaction (e.g., McHale and Crouter 1992; Perry-Jenkins and Crouter 1990).

This study extends previous research by using a dyadic approach to study the multidimensional aspects of egalitarianism and marital quality and focusing on the role of discrepancies across partners. We focused our analyses on cognitive egalitarianism (i.e., partners' general beliefs about men's and women's roles) and behavioral egalitarianism (i.e., partners' perceptions of how tasks are actually divided). We found that cognitive and behavioral egalitarianism, and partner discrepancies in particular, affect husbands' and wives' perceptions

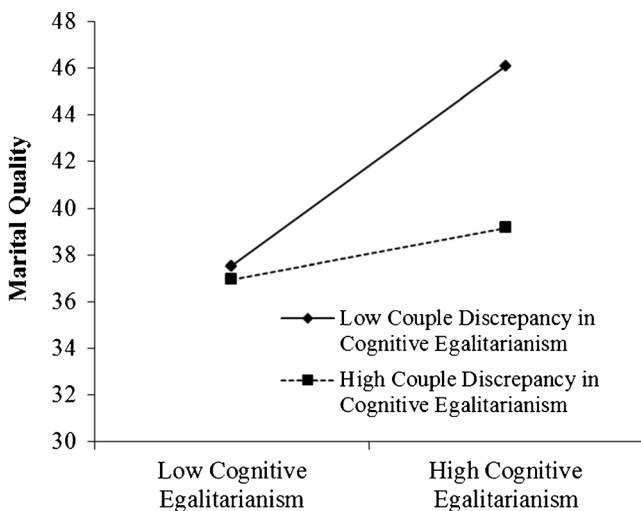


Fig. 1 The cross-level interaction between cognitive egalitarianism and couple discrepancy in cognitive egalitarianism predicting marital quality for wives

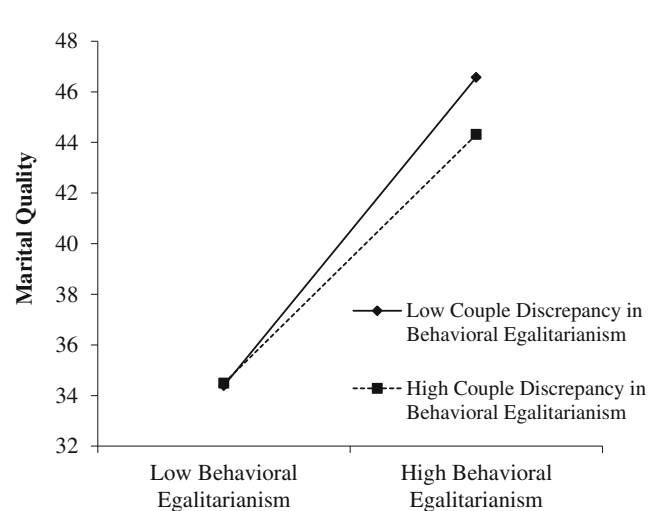


Fig. 2 The cross-level interaction between behavioral egalitarianism and couple discrepancy in behavioral egalitarianism predicting marital quality for wives

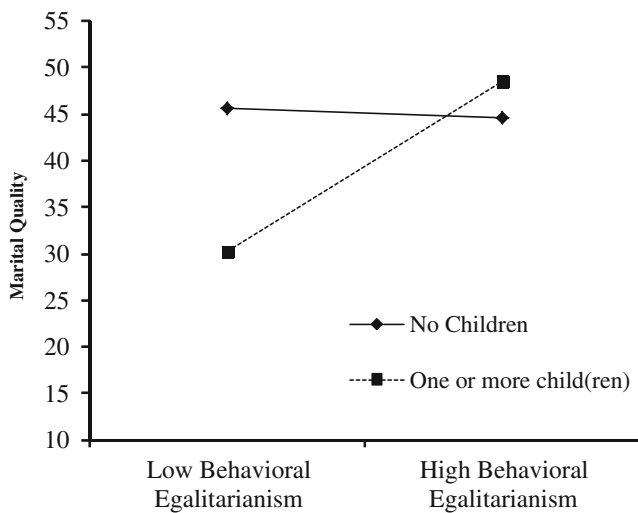


Fig. 3 The interaction between behavioral egalitarianism and the presence of children predicting marital quality for wives

of marital quality in different ways. Furthermore, we controlled for age, education, employment status, the number of hours worked, and the presence of children, yet the only differences found were related to the effects of behavioral egalitarianism on marital quality for women with children.

Cognitive Egalitarianism and Relationship Quality (Hypothesis 1)

Previous research on cognitive egalitarianism has failed to find consistent evidence for a direct effect on marital quality (e.g., Voydanoff and Donnelly 1999). We suggest that the reason for this lack of clarity is that researchers have not carefully attended to discrepancies across spouses. Our results indicate that wives' marital quality is directly affected by their own cognitive egalitarianism, which was not true for

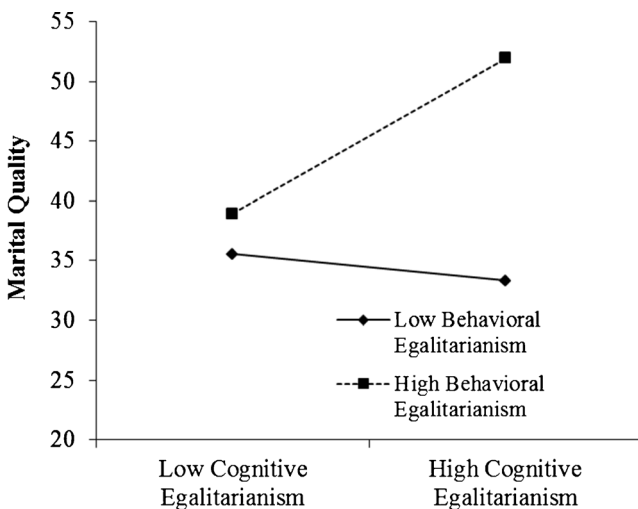


Fig. 4 The interaction between cognitive and behavioral egalitarianism predicting marital quality for wives

husbands. The strength of this association, however, varies as a function of the degree of discrepancy between wives' and husbands' levels of cognitive egalitarianism. That is, wives' reports of marital quality were higher when couples were less discrepant in levels of cognitive egalitarianism (agreed that roles should not be segregated by gender).

Although research indicates that effects of inequity may decrease with lower levels of cognitive egalitarianism for women (e.g., Greenstein 1996b), our research reveals that higher levels of cognitive egalitarianism are associated with higher marital quality for wives. The incongruity between the present study and past research may be attributed to societal changes that have reflected more positive views of egalitarianism with each new generation (Brooks and Bolzendahl 2004; Fan and Marini 2000; Lachance-Grzela and Bouchard 2010), emphasizing the need for more research that helps us gain a nuanced understanding of relationships between cognitive egalitarianism and quality in contemporary marriages.

The fact that discrepancy in cognitive egalitarianism moderated the association between cognitive egalitarianism and marital quality for wives supports the notion that a couple's consensus on roles is important to marital quality (Bahr et al. 1983) and highlights the need to examine this issue from a gender constructivist perspective to understand what discrepancies mean for men and women.

Peplau (1983) stated, "Gender is one of the most basic social categories around which roles are organized" (p. 221) and emphasized the importance of assessing the interplay between couples cognitions, behaviors, and affect. It is well documented that roles or specific tasks that are characterized as "women's work" are generally low-control and necessary on a daily basis and thus, more demanding than "men's work," which generally allows more autonomy (Bartley et al. 2005). As such, one possibility is that wives with higher cognitive egalitarianism experience resentment about their roles and daily demands, and their emotional reactions and rejections of their partner's beliefs could be influencing wives' perceptions of marital quality. Our results revealed that wives with lower cognitive egalitarianism paired with husbands with higher cognitive egalitarianism experienced lower marital quality than wives with higher cognitive egalitarianism married to husbands with lower cognitive egalitarianism. Wives with lower levels of cognitive egalitarianism who are married to men with higher cognitive egalitarianism may be resistant to shift their beliefs because they feel threatened by the thought of relinquishing their responsibilities and ultimately, their primary identity. At the same time, husbands with higher cognitive egalitarianism may experience resentment of their wives' attempts to be gatekeepers of their feminine identities (for a complete description of maternal gatekeeping, see Allen and Hawkins 1999). Although cognitive egalitarianism did not directly affect husbands' perceptions of marital quality, it is related to wives' perceptions of marital quality on several

levels, and our findings regarding the influence of discrepancies within couples make it plausible for associations between husbands' levels of cognitive egalitarianism and their own perceptions of marital quality to be moderated by their wives' beliefs.

Researchers and practitioners need to continue to examine the role of discrepancies in cognitive egalitarianism, identifying ways that couples who are incongruent in their beliefs can move toward common ideological ground and focus on how couples who do agree came to that point in their relationship. Moreover, there have been societal shifts in labor force participation and educational attainment (National Center for Education Statistics 2002), and research has shown that labor force experiences, educational attainment, and parental influences are all determinants of higher cognitive egalitarianism (Cunningham 2001; Thornton et al. 1983). As levels of education increase or changes in labor force participation occur for either the husbands or wives it is possible that partners' beliefs may change independently of the duration of their relationship. Future research should examine the role of these shifts longitudinally, carefully considering the effects on marital outcomes when cognitive changes only occur for one spouse.

Behavioral Egalitarianism and Relationship Quality (Hypothesis 2)

Although contemporary men may be performing more household labor than their ancestors (Lachance-Grzela and Bouchard 2010), our analysis of the effect of discrepancies in couples' behavioral egalitarianism highlights the fact that husbands and wives view male contributions differently. Behavioral egalitarianism alone did not have a direct effect on couples' marital quality in this study, but husbands tended to have lower marital quality when there were discrepancies in the couples' behavioral egalitarianism. Additionally, wives' perceptions of marital quality decreased when spouses were more discrepant in behavioral egalitarianism, which has several possible explanations. It is possible that some couples *do gender* (as a routine; West and Zimmerman 1987), yet society holds them responsible or accountable for their role, which influences their perceptions of how much they do, and subsequently their perceptions of marital quality. For example, wives are generally responsible for managing and performing most of the household tasks (Mederer 1993), whereas husbands are held responsible for the role of "the good provider" (Bernard 1981; Perry-Jenkins and Crouter 1990). As such, men often characterize household tasks and related work as leisure, whereas many women see it as work (Erickson 2005; Shaw 1988).

Although more and more men are contributing to household and family responsibilities, many continue "to hold the 'psychological responsibility' for the financial stability of the family even when the wife is employed" (Perry-Jenkins and

Crouter 1990, p. 140). Thus, husbands may consider any amount of household labor they do a contribution, characterizing it as "helping" their wives. When husbands believe that they are helping their wives, especially when they compare themselves favorably to their peers (Greenstein 1996a, 2009), they can easily feel disappointment or frustration when perceptions of the division are not viewed as such by wives with lower behavioral egalitarianism. Husbands may see their labor as ending when they return home from work, whereas wives may see themselves as having to then start a "second shift" of housework (e.g., '9 to 5' work day for husbands vs. '24 hour' work for wife and mother; see Hochschild and Machung 2003). This disconnect may be reflected in perceptions of marital quality by both parties. If trends in higher cognitive and behavioral egalitarianism continue, yet women are not held accountable for the provider role and men for household tasks, discrepancies in husbands' and wives' behavioral egalitarianism may persist. To gain a better understanding of couples' affect regarding the actual division of labor, studies should examine the influence of accountability to provide explanations for the influence of discrepancies in behavioral egalitarianism on marital quality.

The differences we found in the effects of behavioral egalitarianism on marital quality for women with children parallel research that shows that life cycle stages do matter, and women are least satisfied during periods where demands are high and more is expected of them (e.g., Suitor 1991), such as when they are raising children. Examining this issue longitudinally would provide more insight into the role of changing demands for husbands and wives. Nonetheless, the discrepancies in both cognitive and behavioral egalitarianism and the different ways they influence relationship quality for husbands and wives highlight the importance of including both in analyses.

Effects of Cognitive and Behavioral Egalitarianism on Relationship Quality (Hypothesis 3)

In the present study, when combining cognitive and behavioral egalitarianism, both higher behavioral egalitarianism and congruity between beliefs and behaviors were important to wives' perceptions of marital quality. Women who believed tasks are divided equitably reported more marital quality, but quality was significantly higher when their perceptions of equity in the division were congruent with their beliefs. Marital quality was lower for wives who had lower levels of cognitive and behavioral egalitarianism, but it was significantly lower for wives with higher cognitive egalitarianism, who have high expectations for equity, yet perceived more inequity.

One explanation for this finding is that husbands and wives use different comparisons when judging their own, as well as their partner's contributions, and how this plays out in their

perceptions of marital quality is related to their cognitive egalitarianism. Researchers have suggested that men's and women's perceptions of equity with regard to the division of labor differ because of who and how they compare their own as well as their partner's inputs with regard to the division of household tasks, and research supports these claims (Greenstein 1996b, 2009). Greenstein (1996b) found that the effect of inequity in the division of household labor on perceived fairness decreases with more traditional ideologies. Applying his work to this study, the effects of behavioral egalitarianism may be exacerbated for wives who have high expectations for equity because they perceive the division of labor as unfair, whereas wives with lower levels of cognitive egalitarianism do not perceive the same levels of inequity. Drawing from Greenstein's conceptualizations on comparison references (Greenstein 1996b), it is also possible that wives with lower behavioral egalitarianism married to men who perceive the division of labor as equitable may compare their inputs to their husbands' inputs, whereas the husbands may be comparing their inputs to those of other men.

Limitations and Conclusions

Although the present study contributes to the literature on the division of household tasks and marital quality by examining gender differences and discrepancies in cognitive and egalitarianism, this research is not without limitations. The majority of the participants were Caucasian, middle class couples, just beginning to navigate their roles as husband and wives. Future research is necessary to examine whether we can generalize these findings across a diverse sample of married couples, where contextual issues could be examined more closely. Although the response rate to our survey was identical to past research using participants recruited through public records (i.e., 17 %; Karney et al. 1995), it is important to note that our results may not generalize beyond the demographics of our sample. In particular, past work on differences in recruitment method indicate that samples recruited by means of public records may be slightly older, have higher income, and be slightly more satisfied than participants recruited through advertisements (Karney et al. 1995). A review of the literature highlights the potential mediating or moderating roles of several other variables, such as conflict (e.g., Kluwer et al. 1997) and spousal support or appreciation (e.g., Klumb et al. 2006; Piña and Bengtson 1993) that should be considered in future research to contribute to our understanding of the different pathways toward marital quality for married men and women. Although our research highlights the importance of examining couple discrepancies in both cognitive and behavioral egalitarianism, we can only hypothesize about the

direction of the effects. Our conceptualization generally focuses on the reciprocity of cognitive and behavioral egalitarianism; however, it is possible that there are causal links between beliefs, behaviors, and marital outcomes. As such, future research is needed to examine the direction of the effects.

Although past studies that have shown links between various facets of egalitarianism and marital quality are important, our research supports the use of Peplau's (1983) framework for including cognition, behavior, and affect in future studies. In this research, we assessed affect by examining men's and women's perceptions of marital quality. It is evident that the interplay between couple discrepancies in both cognitive and behavioral egalitarianism has a significant effect on husbands' and wives' perceptions of marital quality.

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Appendix

Table 5 Household task and family management scale

Items

1. Who makes the grocery/shopping list?
2. Who plans weekly meals (e.g., decides what dishes will be cooked)?
3. Who keeps track of family events, such as birthdays?
4. Who maintains family calendar (e.g., Doctor/dentist appointments)?
5. Who decides what chores need to be done (e.g., is it time to change the sheets)?
6. Who decides how chores should be done (e.g., how clothes should be folded, or how clean is clean enough)?
7. Who takes ultimate responsibility for household chores?
8. Who cleans the house?
9. Who cooks the meals?
10. Who does the laundry (e.g., washes, irons, folds)?
11. Who does the grocery shopping?
12. Who washes the dishes?
13. Who runs errands (e.g., dropping off dry cleaning)?
14. Who takes care of the daily needs of the child(ren)?
15. Who creates a monthly/weekly budget?
16. Who balances the checkbook?
17. Who pays the bills?
18. Who worries about financial issues?
19. Who maintains your vehicles (e.g., oil changes, repairs)?
20. Who maintains your yard and/or garden (mows lawn, waters flowers)?

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