Gender Equality for Whom?

Changing Work-Family Arrangements among American Couples from 1969 to 2015

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Abstract

As a response to women's changing roles in the public sphere, couples have adopted varied strategies to reconcile the needs of their families and careers. Using data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics and latent-class analysis, this article studies the multidimensional nature of work-family arrangements in the United States. I identify seven distinct work-family arrangements: traditional, neotraditional, double-burden, egalitarian, double-burden reversed, female breadwinner and neither working couples. Between 1969 and 2015, the prevalence of traditional couples experienced the largest decrease, giving room to egalitarian couples but also unconventional work-family arrangements (double-burden reversed and female breadwinner). Furthermore, preliminary results suggest that these work family arrangements are distributed unequally across social strata. The prevalence of egalitarian partnerships has increased the most among higher-educated couples, while lower-educated couples are increasingly more likely to adopt a female breadwinner arrangement. These findings echo the increasing polarization of Americans' caregiving patterns and work opportunities.

Introduction

Since the 1960s, women's college enrolment and graduation rates have continuously risen, outpacing men's by the early 2000s (DiPrete and Buchmann 2006). In parallel, women's workforce participation have increased substantially –especially, among married women and mothers of young children (Goldin 2006; Percheski 2008). Yet, these dramatic changes in women's participation in the public sphere have not translated into equivalent shifts toward gender equality in the private sphere. Men's and fathers' involvement in housework and caregiving has increased over time and in the most gender-egalitarian contexts but women still perform the vast majority of household labor (Bianchi et al. 2000; Hook 2006, 2010; Lachance-Grzela and Bouchard 2010). As a result, women are overburdened by the competing and increasing time demands of their job and household labor (Jacobs and Gerson 2004; Hays 1996), leading to a heightened sense of conflict between work and family life (Nomaguchi 2009; Winslow 2005).

Despite an established consensus that the gender allocation of paid and unpaid work is heavily unequal for women, few studies have explored work-family arrangements, incorporating both employment and domestic contributions. Existing research on couples' gender responsibilities has typically focused on either the private or the public sphere and, because of data limitations, few have taken a couple-level perspective (e.g. Bianchi et al. 2000; Raley, Mattingly, and Bianchi 2006). Qualitative scholars, on the other hand, have drawn a more comprehensive picture of American couples' decision-making around employment and unpaid work, and their different work-family arrangements, especially among dual-earner couples (Hochschild and Machung 1989; Jacobs and Gerson 2004; Gerson 2010). Building on the typologies identified through qualitative research, a few quantitative exceptions have focused on the work-family arrangements of dual earner couples at specific points in time (e.g. Hall and MacDermid 2009 for the United States; Kitterød and Lappegård 2012 for Norway). Nevertheless, these studies focus on dual earner couples only and cannot address change over time. That is, we have yet to draw a population-level picture of the different strategies couples adopt to reconcile the needs and demands of their work and family life and how these strategies have changed over time.

How do American couples divide their time between the labor market and domestic work? As the gender revolution unfolds, how has the prevalence of different work-family arrangements changed over time in the United States? This article examines how to account for changes in couple-level

patterns of breadwinning and housework given the complex decision-making around employment and unpaid work. Drawing on qualitative and small-N studies, I propose that gender responsibilities may cluster around multiple configurations that represent more accurately how couples negotiate paid and unpaid work. Using latent-class analysis (LCA), I account for the multidimensional nature of gender responsibilities to establish a work-family typology that captures each spouse's absolute and relative contribution to employment and domestic work. This approach uncovers the varied and changing ways American couples allocate their time between employment and domestic responsibilities.

In contrast with other industrialized countries (e.g. Thévenon 2011), in the United States, these dramatic changes in women's roles have not led to public policies in support of work-family reconciliation (Cooke and Baxter 2010; Hook 2015). Consequently, families and individuals are left alone in facing the challenges of meeting the competing needs of their employment and family responsibilities. Young Americans' work-family ideals are clearly shifting toward gender equality (Gerson 2010; Pedulla and Thébaud 2015) but the resources they possess to turn these ideals into practices are highly stratified across social strata (Cherlin 2016; Pessin 2018). Previous studies find that contextual institutional and cultural factor shape gender inequality at the individual-level (Fuwa 2004; Fuwa and Cohen 2007; Hook 2006, 2010; Maume and Ruppanner 2015; Ruppanner and Maume 2016; Ruppanner 2010; Yodanis 2005). These studies, however, have focused on gender differences in either the private or the public sphere and none has examined whether variation in cultural or institutional contexts shapes couples' access to work-family arrangements differently across SES.

How do changing institutional and cultural contexts shape couple-level gendered responsibilities across social strata? One key underlying mechanism is that prevailing work-family arrangements are an outcome of the intersection of individual-level preferences and resources with the prevailing cultural and institutional contexts. I argue that the prevailing gender culture is likely to shape couples' work-family arrangement unequally across social classes. Overall, I expect egalitarian work-family arrangements are more likely to prevail in contexts supportive of gender equality. Nevertheless, I posit that this association will be much stronger among college-educated Americans who possess the resources to secure two stable jobs and have the resources to facilitate work-family reconciliation. Furthermore, building on Gerson's study of work-family ideals (2011)

and recent findings on educational differences in the association between gender-egalitarian norms and marriage (Pessin 2018), I expect that alternative work-family arrangements to egalitarian practices are likely differ across social classes in gender-egalitarian contexts. Nowadays, an overwhelming majority of young Americans aspires to egalitarian partnerships (Gerson 2010; Pedulla and Thébaud 2015). However, if this egalitarian ideal were not achievable, they express fallback plans of work-family arrangements that vary strongly by gender and SES. Pedulla and Thébaud (2015) find that college-educated men and women are more likely to express fallback plans that align with neotraditional partnerships; lower-educated women are more likely to prefer self-reliance or primary breadwinning, whereas their male-counterpart would prefer neotraditional partnerships. In line with these constrained preferences, I expect that being either single or in female primary breadwinner work-family arrangements to be more prevalent among lower-educated Americans, while neotraditional work-family arrangements to be more likely among the higher educated.

This article uses a combination of aggregated state-level measures of gender culture from the General Social Surveys (GSS) with individual-level data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID) to understand how variation in the cultural contexts shapes couple-level work-family arrangements across social strata. The empirical analysis is two-fold. First, I use LCA to establish a multidimensional couple-level typology of time contributions to employment and domestic work. Second, I exploit state-level variation and use multilevel multinomial logistic regressions to test how changes in gender culture are associated with couple-level work-family arrangements across social classes. Following the same methodology than in Pessin (2018), I use gender role attitudes data from the GSS to construct contextual measures of gender norms.

Data and Analytic Approach

Data

The study uses data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID), which started in 1968 with a sample of 18,000 individuals residing in 5,000 family units. The PSID is a representative panel survey that provides information on marital history, weekly data on the partners' paid and unpaid work hours, as well as standard socio-demographic characteristics. The analysis focuses on different-sex partnered couples in which both respondents are between 18 and 64 to ensure that

they fall within the employable ages. These restrictions produce a final sample of 15,079 couples, which corresponds to an analytical sample of 113,855 couple-years.

Analytic Approach

Step 1 – Latent-class analysis. In the first step, I apply LCA to the data to identify inductively a typology of work-family arrangements. By work-family arrangement, I refer to couple's relative division of paid work and housework and each spouse's time input in both domains. The advantage of the LCA approach is that it allows for the identification of a meaningful couple typology taking into account the multidimensional nature of work-family arrangements. The LCA is carried out using the LCA Stata plug-in developed by Penn State's Methodological Center[1]. Finally, all the missing independent variables are multiply imputed (N=20).

Step 2 – Multilevel multinomial logistic regression. In the second step, I explore patterns of association between state-level contextual measures of gender culture and couples' work-family arrangements by SES. I use the previously identified latent classes as outcome variables in unweighted multilevel multinomial logistic regression models. Because selection out of partnership is essential to theoretical mechanisms tested in the analysis, I will add as a possible work-family outcomes, the option of being single, i.e. not being in a residential partnership at the time of survey. *Adding single as an outcome has not been included in the analysis but is the part of the next steps.* The multiple imputations as well as the multinomial logistic regression models are estimated using STATA 13 (StataCorp 2013).

Work-family arrangements dimensions. The objective of the latent class analysis is to create a couple typology that accounts for the multi-dimensional aspects of the division of paid work and housework. I focus on three main dimensions of couples' work-family roles: (i) the relative share of paid work and housework; (ii) each spouse's weekly paid work hours; (iii) each spouse's weekly housework hours. All the variables used in the latent class analysis to create a couple typology are described in Table 1.

The *relative share of paid and unpaid work* is divided into three categories: equally shared, she does the majority, and he does the majority. We construct two separate variables, one for paid

[1] https://methodology.psu.edu/downloads/lcastata

work and one for housework. Following the existing literature on the division of paid and unpaid work (e.g. Nock 2001), we adopt a 40-60% rule to establish that the division is equal. Therefore, for example, housework is defined as equally shared if the wife does more than 40% and less than 60% of the total housework hours performed by both spouses. The same rule-of-thumb is applied to paid work.

The *weekly paid work hours* are divided into three categories. For men, the paid work variable takes three categories: 0-34 hours; 35-49 hours; 50+hours. This variable allows us to distinguish no employment/part-time from regular full-time hours to overworked husbands[2]. We decided not to distinguish men that are not employed from part-time workers because in both the surveys the share of men with zero work hours was very low. For women, we adopt a different categorization of work hours to account for the larger share of women that are not employed. We recode their work hours into the following three categories: 0 hours; 1-34 hours; 35+hours. Differently from men, we do not distinguish women that are overworked from women that work full-time because they represent a small share of our sample in both surveys.

The *weekly housework hours* are divided into three categories. While paid work offers some legally and socially prescribed thresholds to construct paid work hours categories, the same cannot be said about housework. We, therefore, opted to use the actual distribution of the housework hours variables to construct meaningful categories. For men, the weekly housework hours takes the three following values: 0 hours; 1-10 hours; 11+ hours. The thresholds correspond to approximately less than 25^{th} percentile, 25^{th}-75^{th} percentile, more than 75^{th} percentile. For women, we follow a similar strategy and recode the variable to take three different categories: 0-10 hours; 11-20 hours; 21+ hours.

Individual and contextual correlates of work-family class membership (in progress). The key explanatory variables in the analysis are educational attainment at the individual-level and egalitarian gender norms at the state-level. I dichotomize the educational attainment variable in the following way: some college education or more (1) and high school degree or less (0). At the state-level, I use an aggregate measure of gender norms using a gender index built from the GSS.

[2]For husbands, our decision to distinguish full-time work from overwork was also motived by recent research by Cha (2010), which shows that husbands' overwork is positively associated to a return to the traditional male breadwinner/ female homemaker work-family arrangements.

The contextual part of the analysis is still in progress but I will use the same strategy I adopted in my article recently published in the *Journal of Marriage and Family*, where I built a gender ideology index and aggregated it at a higher geographic level and then matched it to data from the PSID. To test my theoretical hypotheses, I will test cross-level interactions between the women's education variable and contextual gender norms and the man's education variable and contextual gender norms. To provide some preliminary results, the analysis will focus on a simple interaction between each partner's educational attainment and the time. The time period provides an imperfect substitute for the prevailing gender culture, where earlier periods capture more gender traditional contexts and more recent periods capture more gender egalitarian contexts. The year variable is categorized in the following way: 1969-1979 = 1; 1980-1989 = 2; 1990-1999 = 3; 2000-2009 = 4; 2010-2015 = 5.

To control for compositional differences between work-family arrangements, the analysis includes several demographic control variables. The models will include the woman's age (1 = 18-24 , 2 = 25-34 – reference category; 3 = 35-44; 4 = 45-54; 5 = 55-64); the couple's age difference (1 = ≤ 2 years; 2 = she 2+ years; 3; he 2+ years); her race (1 = white; 2 = black; 3 = other races or ethnicities), marital status (0 = married; 1 = cohabiting) . We also include measures of the household composition: the number of children in the household (1 = no child; 1 = 1 child; 2 = 2 children; 3 = 3+ children) and an indicator variable for the presence of a 3 year old or younger.

Results

Identifying a of Work-Family Arrangement Typology

The first step of the analysis was to create a typology of work-family arrangements based on the couple's relative division of paid and unpaid work and each spouse's respective paid work hours and unpaid work hours. The LCA was replicated considering a range of numbers of latent classes (from two latent classes to ten latent class analysis). The final number of latent classes was chosen by comparing statistical tests, parsimony, and interpretability for each of the different latent class models (Collins and Lanza 2010, Chapter 4). Figure A1 in the appendix summarizes different measures of goodness of fit. The 7-latent-class solution provided the right balance between parsimony and interpretability.

The item-response probabilities are used to label the latent classes of couples' divisions of paid and unpaid work. The item-response probabilities are presented in Table 3 for each categorical variable used in the latent class analysis. Overall, the data-driven approach has produced a meaningful work-family arrangements typology that aligns well with typologies identified through qualitative work and studies focusing on either couples' relative contribution to employment or gender differences in housework.

First, I find two latent classes where couples' work-family roles complement one another. These couples are characterized by a relative division of paid work and housework, in which wives dedicate more time to housework and less time to paid work. The first complementary couple type, which I label as traditional (37%), embodies the traditional male breadwinner-female homemaker model. Among traditional couples, the probability that she does not work is 66% and the probability that he works full-time or more is 96% (the sum of the probabilities of working full-time and overwork). The second complementary couple type, the neotraditional couples (10%), has a similar relative division of paid and unpaid work than the traditional couple type (Moen 2003). In contrast with traditional couples, however, wives in neotraditional couples deviate from the traditional breadwinner-homemaker model by engaging in the labor market. Neotraditional couples are characterized by an overworked husband (item-response probability = 91%) and a full-time working wife (item-response probability = 80%). With comparison to traditional couples, both neotraditional couples perform on average less hours of housework and fall into the intermediary housework category (11-20 hours a week).

The third couple type in the analysis is characterized by an equal division of paid work and housework, which I label as egalitarian (9%). Egalitarian couples both work full-time and equally divide housework. It is interesting to note that this is also the latent class where women perform on average the least hours of housework: 62% of wives fall into the 0-10 hours of housework per week category. In addition, we can observe in Table 2 that among egalitarian couples, she never does more housework than her husband does. In contrast, the double-burden couples (28%) have an identical work arrangement than the egalitarian couples but the female partner always does more housework. In line with the literature, double-burden couples are full-time dual-earners who work similar hours but follow a traditional division of housework where she is always at a disadvantage.

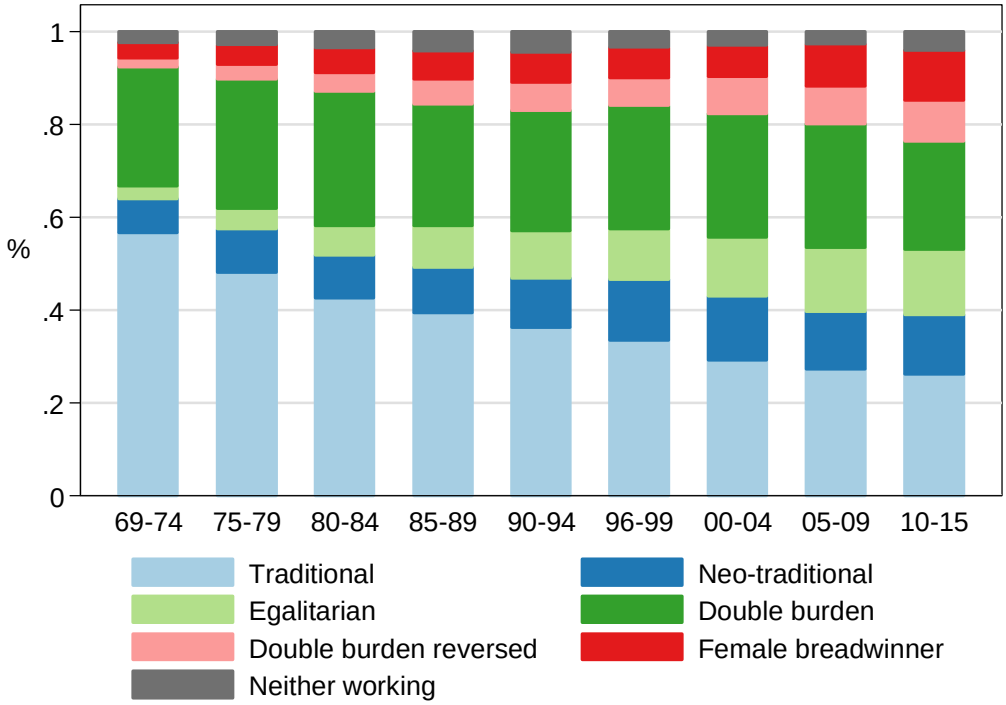
Finally, the next three couple types that stem from the latent class analysis represent unconventional work-family arrangements (Sayer et al. 2009). The first one, which we label double-burden reversed (5%), is composed of couples where the husband does the majority of paid work and does either an equal amount or the majority of housework. Among this couple type, we find no clear pattern for her work hours, with an almost equal distribution of women among the three work categories, i.e. not working, part-time, and full-time. In fact, when comparing both spouses' work hours, the double-burden reversed couple type and the neotraditional couple type are quite similar. The main distinction lies in the distribution of housework. The second unconventional work-family arrangements is labeled as female breadwinners (6%) and distinguishes itself from all other couple types by the lack of full-time work hours for the husband. This couple type is dominated by full-time working female partners that take on the majority of both paid work and housework while their husbands work part-time or less. Finally, I identify a residual work-family arrangements that encapsulates household that lack a full-time worker, where both or one partner are either part-timers or both spouses not employed. Even among these couples, the female partner does more housework than her male counterpart does. For simplicity, I label this class as neither working (4%).

The Prevalence of Work-Family Arrangements across Time

Using the couple typology established with the latent-class analysis, I describe the distribution of couples across time. Figure 1 illustrates the prevalence of different work-family arrangements across time. Overall, the two dominant work-family arrangements are traditional and double-burden couples. As expected, the proportion of traditional couples diminished by more than 30 percent-points between marriages formed in the 1970s and in the 2000s, while the share of double-burden couples remained almost steady around 25%. Instead, the share of egalitarian couples increased from 3% to about 16% over the same period line. In line with previous studies (Raley et al. 2006), full-time dual-earner couples make up an increasing majority of all couples (the sum of neotraditional, egalitarian, and double-burden). Nevertheless, the modal couple type among dual-earners remains the double burden couple, which supports existing studies on the distribution of housework (e.g. Bianchi et al. 2000). Atypical work-family arrangements, such as the double-burden reversed and the female breadwinner couples remain a minority across time but their

proportions more than doubled between the 1970s and 2000s. In fact, in the 2000s, they jointly make up about 20% of all couples.

Figure 1 – The changing prevalence of work-family arrangements across time



Contextual and Individual Correlates of Work-Family Arrangement (In Progress)

I provide some preliminary evidence for the theoretical mechanisms describe in the introduction that the gender culture will shape access to work-family arrangements differently across social strata. I use time as a continuous proxy of egalitarian gender norms, where earlier years capture more traditional gender norms and later years capture more egalitarian gender norms. I test three main hypotheses: as gender norms become more egalitarian, I expect that the prevalence of egalitarian and neotraditional work-family arrangements will be higher among higher-educated couples, while the prevalence of female breadwinner will be higher among lower-educated couples. To test these hypotheses, I run some simple multinomial logistical models where I interact her education with a categorical variable for years and control for the variables described in the data section and summarized in Table 2.

Figure 2 – The average marginal effects of her education on the probability of egalitarian and female breadwinner work-family arrangements

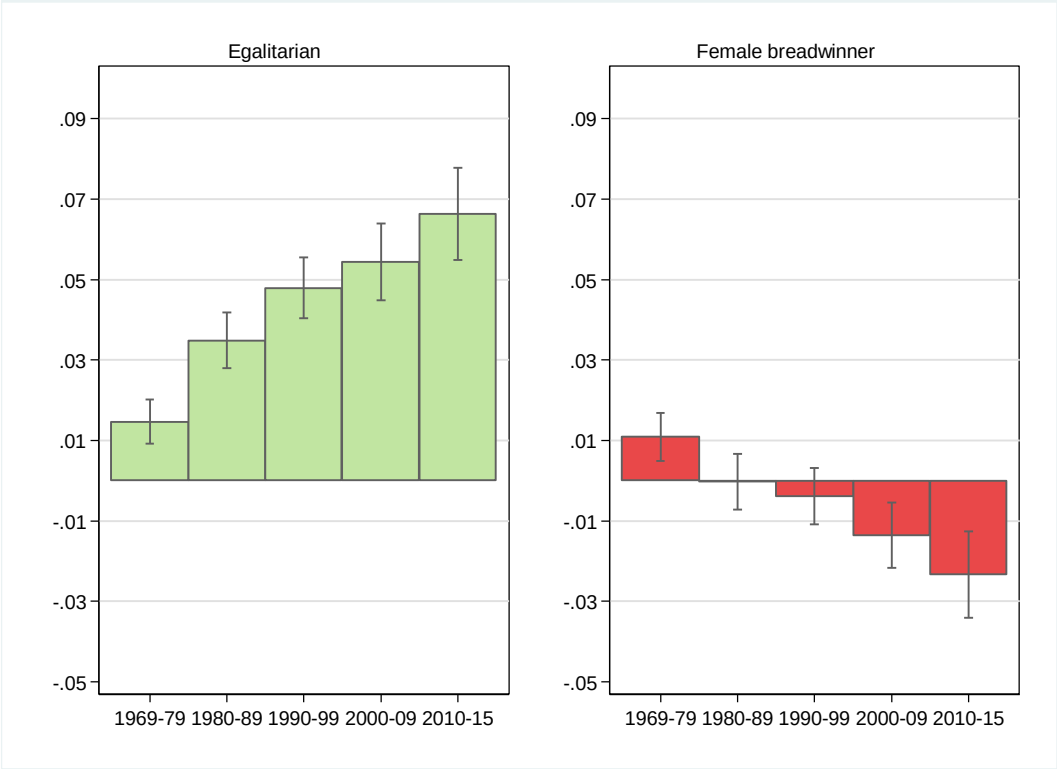


Figure 2 summarizes the preliminary main findings by plotting the average marginal effects of her education on the probability to be either in an egalitarian or female breadwinner work-family arrangement. Her education is measured as whether the female partner has at least some college education. The findings provide some initial support for the hypotheses. On the one hand, the results show that, in more recent years, couples where she has at least some college education are increasingly more likely to adopt an egalitarian division of paid and unpaid work. On the other hand, I find that starting in the 2000s couples where she has a high school diploma or less are decreasingly likely to adopt a female breadwinner work-family arrangements. In other words, the prevalence of female breadwinner couples is higher among lower-educated couples. No time-education gradient is found for neotraditional couples. These findings are supplemented with descriptive statistics showing similar trends (see Figure A2).

Preliminary Conclusion and Next Steps

Using data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics and latent-class analysis, I identified 7 work-family arrangements: traditional, neotraditional, double-burden, egalitarian, double-burden reversed, female breadwinner and neither working couples. Between 1969 and 2015, the prevalence of traditional couples experienced the largest decrease, giving room to egalitarian couples but also atypical work-family arrangements (*double-burden reversed* and *female breadinner*). Furthermore, preliminary results suggest that these changes are stratified by SES, with higher prevalence of egalitarian arrangements among higher-educated couples and a higher prevalence of female breadwinner arrangements among lower-educated couples.

Besides polishing and expanding the theoretical framework of this article, I will implement two main changes in the analysis:

1) Include being single as a possible outcome to control for changing selection into partnership and the theoretical mechanism that may lead individuals to opt out of partnership;
2) Include contextual measures of institutional and cultural factors that shape the gender culture in which couples are nested.

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Table 1 – Variables used in the couple typology

	%		%
Division of housework		Husband's paid work	
Equal	12	0-34 hours	12
Mainly she	82	35-49 hours	61
Mainly he	6	50+ hours	27
Division of paid work		Wife's housework	
Equal	37	0-10 hours	25
Mainly she	9	11-20 hours	32
Mainly he	55	21 hours	43
Husband's housework		Wife's paid work	
0 hours	22	0 hours	30
1-10 hours	60	1-34 hours	19
11+ hours	18	35 hours	51

Note: Mainly she = She does 60% or more of the total hours; Mainly he: He does 60% or more of the total hours.

Table 2 – Variables used in the background analysis

Variables	%	*Variables*	%
Race		Marital status	
White	72.02	Married	94.07
Black	23.23	Cohabiting	5.93
Other	4.75	Whether children <4 in the hh.	25.06
Her age		Spousal age difference	
18-24	11.49	Age homogamy	51.24
25-34	33.27	She is older	7.49
35-44	27.48	She is younger	41.27
45-54	18.72	Year	
55-64	9.04	1969-79	22.21
Her education		1980-89	25.20
High-school diploma or less	53.18	1990-99	26.56
Some college or more	46.82	2000-09	16.15
His education		2010-15	9.88
High-school diploma or less	54.67	Region	
Some college or more	45.33	Northeast	15.74
Number of children (<18)		North Central	24.51
No children	35.79	South	41.96
1 child	23.17	West	17.50
2 children	24.02	Alaska, Hawaii	0.29
3+ children	17.01		

Note: N couples = 15,079; N couple-years = 113,855.

Table 3 – Item-response probabilities conditional on latent class membership

			Traditional	Neo-traditional	Egalitarian	Double burden	Double burden reversed	Female breadwinner	Neither working
Relative	UNPAID	Equal	0	0	**70**	0	**70**	17	13
		W+	**100**	**100**	0	**100**	0	**60**	**80**
		H+	0	0	30	0	30	23	8
	PAID	Equal	0	0	**91**	**95**	0	0	**90**
		W+	0	0	9	5	0	**100**	0
		H+	**100**	**100**	0	0	**100**	0	10
Man	UNPAID	0hrs	32	21	0	20	0	17	27
		1-10hrs	**57**	**71**	**51**	**71**	45	**51**	46
		11+hrs	11	7	49	10	**55**	32	27
	PAID	0-34hrs	4	0	1	1	4	**100**	**100**
		34-49hrs	**67**	9	**87**	**89**	47	0	0
		50+hrs	29	**91**	12	10	50	0	0
Woman	UNPAID	0-10hrs	9	25	**62**	26	**57**	42	22
		11-20hrs	23	44	29	41	31	34	25
		21+hrs	**68**	31	9	33	13	24	**53**
	PAID	0hrs	**66**	0	0	0	27	0	**81**
		1-34hrs	34	20	1	1	36	19	19
		35+hrs	0	**80**	**99**	**99**	37	**81**	0
		%	37	10	9	28	5	6	4

Note: Item-response probabilities > .5 in bold to facilitate interpretation. W+ = She does more; H+: He does more

Appendix

Figure A1 – The changing prevalence of work-family arrangements across time

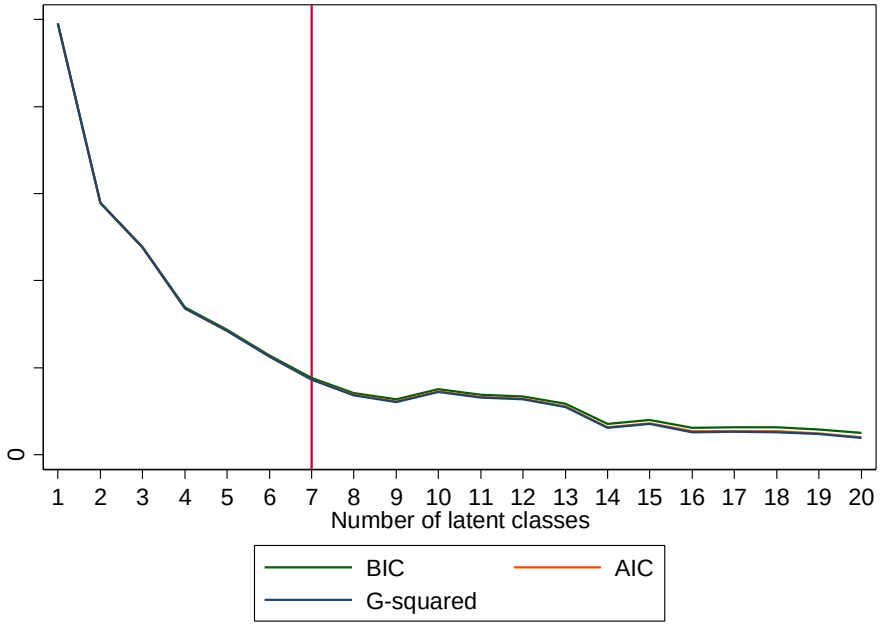

Figure A2 – The changing prevalence of egalitarian and female breadwinner work-family arrangements across time and educational attainment