

Response Thresholds Predict Domestic Labor Conflict
and Labor Allocation in Marital Dyads

by

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ABSTRACT

Guided by Alberts, Tracy and Trethewey's (2011) integrated theory of the division of domestic labor, this dissertation examined the influence of domestic labor response threshold (i.e., the point at which one is sufficiently disturbed by a task undone so as to feel compelled to attend to it) on domestic labor performance and domestic labor conflict. Three-hundred-ten heterosexual participants (155 marital dyads; average marriage length of 20 years) completed an online questionnaire about their performance of household labor, household labor conflict, and response thresholds. Response thresholds were assessed using traditional verbal measures as well as two visual (i.e., photographic) measures developed for this investigation. The data were analyzed using three methods of dyadic data analysis: structural equation modeling, repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), and actor-partner interdependence models using multilevel modeling. Results indicate that the lower one's response threshold, and the higher one's partner's response threshold, the greater one's contributions to household tasks. Additionally, the lower one's response threshold, and the higher one's partner's response thresholds, the more likely the demand-withdrawal pattern is to emerge in domestic labor conflicts. Finally, mutual avoidance is more likely when one partner perceives that it is less costly to complete domestic work than to engage in conflict about it, or when one partner perceives that domestic labor is not a worthwhile or appropriate conflict topic. Contributions of this investigation include support for the integrated theory of the division of domestic labor, increased understanding of how individual differences

(working in concert with actor sex) contribute to domestic labor allocation and conflict, a more sensitive measure of response threshold, and preliminary evidence of the "logics" of avoidance of domestic labor conflict.

DEDICATION

For Regina & Jon Strout
For Warren & Melinda Knight
For Susan Redding Emel
For Estella and Lily

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Division of household labor is a critical issue in the lives of married and cohabitating couples. Dissatisfaction with the division of domestic labor is a frequent source of conflict for married and cohabitating dyads (Blair, 1993; Chethik, 2006; Kluwer, Heesink, & Van de Vliert, 1996; Perry-Jenkins & Folk, 1994) and contributes to relational dissatisfaction, decreased marital happiness, and increased likelihood of divorce (Blair, 1998; Frisco & Williams, 2003; Pleck, 1985; Sutor, 1991). In one study, allocation of household work was the third most frequently-cited conflict topic for married couples, after money and childrearing (Chethik, 2006), although other research has found that division of labor conflicts occur more frequently than disagreements over childcare (Kluwer, Heesink, & Van de Vliert, 2000).

Although the frequency of conflict concerning allocation of household labor is noteworthy, most conflict scholars agree that the mere presence of conflict in romantic relationships is not as consequential for relationship functioning as is the *manner* in which couples enact conflict (Gottman, 1979). Communicating negative affect, conflict denial/avoidance, and competitive conflict behaviors are harbingers or symptoms of relationship distress, while integrative communication and cooperative problem-solving are associated with positive relational outcomes (Bodenmann, Kaiser, Hahlweg, & Fehm-Wolfsdorf, 1998; Eldridge & Christensen, 2002). More specifically, when couples' disagreements over household labor are characterized by constructive problem-

solving discussions and integrative conflict behaviors, their conflicts are associated with productive outcomes, such as an increase in mutual understanding, a clear compromise, and more equal sharing of household work (Kluwer, Heesink, & Van de Vliert, 1997; Weismann, Boeije, van Doorne-Huiskes, & den Dulk, 2008). On the other hand, the use of distributive behaviors and demand/withdraw interactions are associated with destructive outcomes, such as unresolved problems and relationship disruption (Kluwer, et al., 1997; Weismann, et al., 2008). Finally, conflict avoidance also is associated with destructive outcomes and concessions by one partner alone, as when women cut back hours in paid work rather than engage in overt conflict (Weismann, et al., 2008).

Conflict over division of labor may be unavoidable since married and cohabitating couples often must attempt to reconcile two (perhaps greatly differing) visions of the way households are run (Clair, 2011). However, given that *how* couples manage their conflicts can result in either destructive or constructive outcomes, investigating the conditions under which domestic-labor-related conflict occurs and how it is manifested offers insight into how couples can manage their disagreements over household labor more productively.

To the extent that conflict is derived from perceived incompatibility in activities and goals (Roloff & Soule, 2002), any factors that contribute to incompatibility in terms of household labor can be expected to contribute to domestic-labor-related conflict. One factor that has been alluded to in domestic-labor conflict literature (see, for example, Pittman, Teng, Kerpelman, & Solheim,

1999; Thompson, 1991) but has yet to be subjected to systematic investigation, is the construct of *response threshold* (Alberts, Tracy, & Trethewey, 2011). A response threshold, in the realm of domestic labor, refers to the point at which the negative stimulus produced by a task undone motivates an individual to perform the task (in order to remove the stimulus). Discrepancies in married and cohabitating partners' respective response thresholds have recently been offered as one explanation for how domestic labor is allocated (Alberts, et al., 2011).

Insofar as a response threshold represents one's standards of cleanliness, discrepancy in the response thresholds of couple members may represent different ideas about what domestic tasks need to be done, how often, and how thoroughly (Alberts, et al., 2011; O'Colmain & Alberts, 2008). Such differences likely set the stage for conflict over domestic labor performance. Moreover, because the construct of response threshold contains a stimulus component, whereby one partner is more sensitive to or *bothered* by a task undone than the other, partners with highly discrepant thresholds are likely differentially invested in the allocation of household work, creating the conditions for particular conflict patterns (e.g., demand/withdraw). Prior empirical investigations of domestic labor in college roommates provide support for this view, showing that perceived differences in response thresholds predict conflict frequency (O'Colmain & Alberts, 2008; Riforgiate, 2011) as well as specific conflict communication behaviors (O'Colmain & Alberts, 2008).

The primary objective of the current research was to examine the effects of domestic partners' response thresholds on the frequency and form of

heterosexual domestic partners' division-of-labor-related conflict. Because response threshold is a nascent theoretical concept, a preliminary task of this research was to investigate the relationship between participant sex, response threshold, and task performance. Beyond that, this investigation extends previous research on domestic labor allocation and domestic labor conflict in five ways. First, it serves as the first test of the integrated theory among heterosexual romantic couples, the population for which the theory was articulated. Second, it employs marital dyads as the unit of analysis, which allows for consideration of the mutual influence of both spouses on division of labor and conflict. Third, it introduces a new, visual, measure of response threshold to complement verbal measures currently in use. Fourth, the present study contributes to ongoing scholarly debate about the demand/withdraw conflict pattern as a function of the structure of marriage (i.e., driven by the roles of wives and husbands) as well as the structure of a given conflict topic (i.e., driven by the role of complainer-complainees). Finally, this study adds to our understanding of the nature of avoidance of domestic labor conflict by measuring and testing the perceived benefits of avoidance in this context.

In the section that follows, I review predominant explanations for domestic labor inequities, and introduce the response threshold variable in the context of the integrative theory of division of domestic labor (Alberts, et al., 2011). The effects of response threshold on domestic task performance, as suggested by the integrative theory, are offered. Subsequently, research on conflict interaction patterns generally, as well as within the context of division of

labor, is reviewed, and hypotheses about the role of response threshold in conflict patterns are advanced. Finally, this sections ends with a review of the research on t potential “reasons” for mutual avoidance of domestic labor conflict and hypotheses are posed in an attempt to provide empirical support for concepts introduced in previous literature.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Division of Domestic Labor

Much of the research on household division of labor has been devoted to explaining a persistent gender gap in labor performance. On average, women perform between two and three times as much household labor as their male partners (Bianchi, Milkie, Sayer, & Robinson, 2000; 2000; Fuwa & Cohen, 2007). Based on data collected in 2002, Fuwa and Cohen (2007) reported that in the United States, women perform about two-thirds of domestic work (not including childcare), averaging 13.2 hours a week to husbands' 6.6 hours. Researchers also estimate that when both partners engage in full time paid work, women still contribute about 60% of unpaid domestic labor (Sullivan, 2000).

Imbalances in household labor performance have a variety of effects on individuals. It has been well documented, for example, that women who are responsible for a large burden of domestic labor are less able to compete with men in the realm of paid work (MacDonald, Phipps, & Lethbridge, 2005), experience diminished earning potential (Drago, 2007; Polavieja, 2008; Williams, 2000) and are more likely to absent themselves temporarily or permanently from paid work (Hewlett & Luce, 2005; Stone, 2007). Moreover, for both men and women, the performance of certain domestic tasks – those that are repetitive and the scheduling of which performers have little control – are associated with increased psychological distress (Barnett & Shen, 1997).

The effects of division of labor inequality on dyads are more complex. First, inequality does not always translate to perceived inequity. For example, despite the fact that wives in dual-earner couples perform the lion's share of housework, only one-quarter to one-third feel that this is unfair (Barnett & Baruch, 1987; Pleck, 1985). Because of this fact, imbalances in labor performance do not automatically lead to relationship difficulties. It is not the mere presence of inequality that predicts discord and dissatisfaction, but rather the perception that the distribution of labor is unfair (Blair, 1993; Perry-Jenkins & Folk, 1994).

Perceived inequity in division of labor is associated with a host of indicators of marital satisfaction. Wives are more satisfied in marriages in which they perceive that husbands do their fair share of work (Staines & Libby, 1986) and dissatisfied when they feel their husbands are doing too little (Pleck, 1985). Blair (1998) found that both spouses' perceptions of unfairness in the division of domestic labor were positively associated with perceived likelihood of divorce, although Frisco and Williams (2003) found this association for wives only. Both spouses' perceptions of unfairness in domestic labor allocation are directly related with the belief that the marriage is in trouble (Blair, 1993), and inversely related with ratings of marital happiness (Blair, 1998; Frisco & Williams, 2003). Finally, as is stated above, when one or both spouses are dissatisfied with the distribution of domestic labor, relational conflict occurs more frequently (Kluwer, et al., 1996, 1997).

Theoretical explanations for domestic labor allocation. Sociologists and gender scholars (e.g., Baxter, 2004; Bianchi, et al., 2000; Coltrane, 2000;

Cunningham, 2001), and more recently communication scholars (Alberts, et al., 2011), have offered various frameworks for understanding and explaining domestic labor imbalances. Below I review two of the predominant explanations for the household labor allocation as well as outline key tenets of Alberts et al.'s (2011) integrated theory.

Relative resources. Relative resource theorists (e.g., Blood & Wolfe, 1960) who focus on the division of domestic labor conceptualize domestic labor as an undesirable activity that household members attempt to avoid. According to this perspective, women do more household work because they have relatively fewer resources (in the form of paid income), and thus less bargaining power than their husbands. Husbands are able to leverage their relatively greater resources to “buy” themselves out of domestic tasks, whereas women are not (Hernandez, 1990).

There has been mixed support for hypotheses derived from relative resource/ bargaining models. Support for this perspective has been found in that the larger the discrepancy among husbands' and wives' earnings, the larger the discrepancy in domestic labor contributions. Wives' contributions to domestic labor tend to decrease as their earnings increase (Bittman, England, Sayer, Folbre, & Matheson, 2003).

However, certain patterns of earning and domestic labor performance within married households contradict the relative resource model. The theory implies that in households in which women out-earn their husbands, husbands will take on a greater burden of domestic work. To the contrary, in the same study

cited above, Bittman and colleagues (2003) found that wives' contributions to domestic labor decreased with their increased earnings only *up to the point* at which their earnings equal their husbands'. When wives contribute more than half of household income, the balance tips back toward women performing more housework. In fact, the allocation of domestic labor when wives are sole breadwinners very closely resembles the arrangements when men are sole earners – in both cases, wives are doing the majority of the work (Bittman, et al., 2003). Moreover, Bittman et al.'s data showed that changes in housework allocation observed for differing contributions of household income were attributable to changes in women's domestic labor performance: men's performance of domestic labor is virtually unresponsive to changes in wives' income. Using a U.S. sample, Brines (1994) found similar patterns, although she found that husbands' domestic labor performance *is* affected by wives' earnings, but in the opposite direction as expected. Brines reported that while wives decrease their average hours of housework as they earn more of the family income, husbands decrease their hours of housework at they become dependent on wives.

Gender. Scholars have alternately attempted to explain housework allocation as a production or display of gender (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Scholars argue that the division of household labor provides an opportunity for men and women to enact normative modes of masculinity and femininity, with women performing housework and men abstaining from it (Hochschild, 1989; Natalier, 2003; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Hochschild (1989) found, for example, that men in dual-earner couples who perceived their wives' employment

as a threat to their masculinity engaged in less housework, and wives increased their performance, as a way to neutralize gender “deviance” (Atkinson & Boles, 1984) in the partners’ participation in paid work. Brines (1994) also found that husbands in lower income households, and those who were unemployed due to job loss, performed less housework, presumably to preserve their masculine identities in situations in which the “provider” role was less available to them.

However, gender ideology does not wholly account for sex differences in household labor performance. Even couples who espouse the most egalitarian values still have difficulty sharing tasks equally, and some do no better than couples espousing traditional values (Bittman & Pixley, 1997; Brayfield, 1992; Deutsch, 1999; DeVault, 1990).

Integrative theory of division of domestic labor. Noting the inability of resource models and gender ideology to wholly account for divergent patterns of domestic labor performance among men and women, recent communication scholarship has conceptualized household division of labor as the product of an interactive system at work in the coupledom, comprised of individual, dyadic, and social factors (Alberts, et al., 2011). In their integrative theory of the division of domestic labor, Alberts and colleagues explain household work allocation as an interactive process whereby a given task comes to “belong to” one member of the couple. They posit that individual differences between couple members in responsiveness to domestic task need (i.e., response threshold), are reinforced and amplified via properties of the couple system, until particular domestic tasks are viewed as “belonging” to one member of the couple (Alberts, et al., 2011). The

theory suggests that this first happens when one partner has a lower *response threshold* for the task than the other (Alberts, et al., 2011).

A *response threshold* is defined as the point at which one is disturbed by a stimulus or, in the case of domestic labor, a task undone (Alberts, et al., 2011). The disturbance created when the threshold is reached motivates an individual to perform a task that will reduce the disturbance. To illustrate, if a person is disturbed by a trash can that is three-quarters full, the three-quarters mark could be thought of as that person's threshold. When the garbage in the can reaches the three-quarters mark, the person will reach her or his threshold, and be motivated to reduce the disturbance (i.e., take out the garbage; Alberts et al. 2011).

A threshold is an individual characteristic, which depends on features unique to that individual (e.g., his/her upbringing, his or her sensory sensitivity, his/her past experience with that task). To continue the example above, another individual may have a different threshold for garbage; he or she may not be disturbed until the garbage begins to emit a smell or is overflowing its container. That individual would be said to have a *higher* threshold than the first individual, as he or she requires more garbage to be present before becoming disturbed (Alberts, et al., 2011).

Although one's threshold for a particular task is predicted to influence one's proclivity to perform that task, the theory claims that a single individual's threshold alone does not determine how housework is allocated among two (or more) household members. Rather, Alberts et al. (2011) predict that a key factor is the *difference* between partners' response thresholds for a particular task.

According to the integrative theory, the greater the difference between partners' thresholds for a task, the greater the discrepancy in task performance (Alberts, et al., 2011).

The threshold mechanism was first observed in the social behavior of ants and bees (Fewell, 2003). Individual ants, for example, have different thresholds regarding food levels in their colonies. Ants with lower thresholds for food storage are motivated to excavate food sooner than ants with higher thresholds, with important consequences. When a lower-threshold-possessing ant responds to the disturbance (i.e., collects more food), the stimulus for the task is reduced. Importantly, the stimulus is reduced *before* ever reaching the response threshold of a less reactive ant. As a consequence, a higher-threshold-possessing ant is never disturbed by the level of food in the colony, and in turn is never motivated to excavate for food. Thusly, an ant with a lower threshold becomes a specialist in food excavation. In fact, if ants possessing highly discrepant response thresholds are paired, the ant with the lower threshold can die from the hazardous working conditions of excavation (Fewell, 2003). This process is referred to in systems theory as a feedback loop - whereby the performance of a behavior (in this case a task) by one individual in a system decreases the likelihood of another individual performing the same task - and results in divergence, whereby the behaviors of individuals in a system become increasingly dissimilar (Barabási, 2002; Camazine et al., 2001).

Bringing these findings to bear on the division of domestic labor among humans, Alberts et al. (2011) posit that differences in response thresholds for

domestic tasks operate over time to allocate those tasks to the individual with the lower threshold. To continue the example of the garbage can from above, if an individual has a lower threshold for garbage than her or his partner, not only would he/she be expected to take out the garbage sooner, but because this is done before the partner notices any disturbance it reduces the likelihood of the partner taking out the garbage in the future.

Although the similarities between ants' and humans' social network behavior provide the impetus for thinking of domestic labor in this way (Fewell, 2003), the integrative theory of domestic labor also incorporates distinctly human capacities for meaning-making in explaining how domestic labor patterns become sedimented. Alberts et al. (2011) posit that a consequence of the divergent model of behavior caused by disparate thresholds is that partners sharing a domicile come to see a task as *belonging* to one individual or another based on precedent. Thus, even in cases where the stimulus for a task *does* reach the response threshold of the lower-threshold-possessing partner, he/she still may not complete the task (without being asked, anyway) because he/she does not perceive the task as his/her *job*. This is consistent with observations about implicit dyadic-decision making, whereby a course of action, repeated uncontested, can develop into an “unarticulated relationship rule” (Sillars & Kalblesch, 1989, p. 183). It is also consistent with findings in existing literature that the accomplishment of domestic labor arrangements is often perceived as “just happening” rather than as a product of explicit communication (Stone, 2007; Weismann, et al., 2008).

A final consequence of the divergent behavioral pattern articulated in Alberts et al.'s (2011) theory is *specialization* by the lower-threshold possessing partner. Just as Fewell and other biological researchers described certain members of insect species as, for example, *foraging* specialists, so Alberts et al. predict that if an individual repeatedly performs a task before other household members reach their thresholds, that individual becomes a specialist in that task. The result is that one develops or bolsters his/her competency in the task while preventing others from developing the aptitude that comes with experience. This, in turn, may lead to further performance disparities to the extent that partners adhere to a pragmatic rule such as, "the person who is better at the task should complete it." In a similar vein, it may also lead the specialist to maintain responsibility for a task rather than relinquishing it, so as to ensure that the task is completed to his/her standards.

Alberts et al. (2011) argue that response thresholds help explain gendered patterns of domestic labor performance in heterosexual households. They hypothesize that women's overperformance of household labor is at least partly attributable to their having lower thresholds for many household tasks. Women are believed to possess lower response thresholds for several reasons. First, women have a small biological advantage over men in terms of olfactory sensitivity (Doty, Applebaumk, Zushos, & Settle, 1985; Thuerlauf et al., 2009). Second, sex differences in the thickness of, and specialized cells within, male and female retinas make women better able to detect color and texture (Sax, 2005), a characteristic that may give women an advantage in the perception of dust and disorder. Finally, the socialization of the sexes (through explicit teaching and

general modeling of behavior) produces different competencies in males and females, and therefore increased attention to, and standards for, particular household tasks (Babcock & Laschever, 2003; Canary & Emmers-Sommer, 1997; Maccoby, 1990; West & Zimmerman, 1987).

Previous research has provided support for the predictions of the integrated theory. Olgetree and Worthen (2008), for example, found that women have higher standards for levels of household cleanliness. Riforgiate (2011) demonstrated that college-aged women possessed a lower response threshold than college-aged men. Riforgiate also showed that among college students, possessing a lower response threshold relative to one's roommate associated with performing a greater proportion of domestic labor.

Riforgiate's (2011) results show promise for the integrated theory. However, the tenets of the integrated theory of the division of domestic labor have yet to be subject to investigation among cross-sex romantic dyads. An objective of the present study is to test two of the key tenets of the theory –the association between threshold and performance, and the association between threshold and sex – among married couples. As such, four kinds of effects are hypothesized with regard to the integrative theory. First, *actor* effects are predicted, whereby individuals' response thresholds are expected to influence their *own* performance of household labor. Second, *partner* effects are predicted, whereby individuals' *partners'* response thresholds are expected to influence individuals' performance of household labor. Third, *actor-by-partner* interaction effects are predicted, whereby the relative threshold levels of both actors and partners are expected to

influence individuals' performance of household labor. Finally, *role* effects are predicted, whereby marital role (husband vs. wife) is expected to influence response threshold, and labor performance, respectively. The following research question and hypotheses are offered:

H1: Wives report lower global response threshold levels than husbands.

RQ1: Do wives or husbands report lower response threshold levels for a) cleaning the bathroom, b) dusting, c) doing dishes, d) picking up clutter, e) taking out garbage, f) vacuuming, g) doing laundry, h) cleaning the kitchen, and i) making beds?

H2: Wives' global response threshold levels associate negatively with wives' performance of global domestic labor.

H3: Husbands' global response threshold levels positively associate with wives' performance of global domestic labor.

H4: Husbands' and wives' global response threshold levels interact to predict actors' performance of global domestic labor.

H5: Actors' response threshold levels for each of the following tasks: a) cleaning the bathroom, b) making beds, c) picking up clutter, d) doing dishes, e) dusting, f) doing laundry, g) taking out garbage, h) cleaning kitchen surfaces, and i) vacuuming/sweeping; associate negatively with their performance of each task.

H6: Partners' response threshold levels for each of the following tasks: a) cleaning the bathroom, b) making beds, c) picking up clutter, d) doing dishes, e) dusting, f) doing laundry, g) taking out garbage, h)

cleaning kitchen surfaces, and i) vacuuming/sweeping; associate positively with actors' performance of each task.

H7: Actors' and partners' task-specific response threshold levels interact to predict actors' performance of each task.

Response Threshold as a Predictor of Domestic Labor Conflict

Conflict frequency. Response thresholds may also be useful in understanding and predicting conflict concerning the division of domestic labor. When two people form a marital household, a variety of factors influence their individual expectations about what cohabitating as spouses will entail, as well as their experience of sharing a home. If spouses have incompatible views about an aspect of living together (e.g., which color to paint the living room, whether to pay the mortgage by check or direct debit), conflict is by definition more likely to occur. Response thresholds represent one way of understanding spouses' differing views on, and reactions to, levels of cleanliness in the home.

The more discrepant partners' response thresholds, the more frequently division of labor conflicts are expected to arise. Partners with similar response thresholds can tolerate similar levels of mess and disorder (Alberts, et al., 2011). They require similar levels of mess before being disturbed and therefore are less likely to disagree about when and how domestic tasks should be performed (O'Colmain & Alberts, 2008; Riforgiate, 2011). Additionally, when messes are produced, partners with similar response thresholds are, by definition, likely to respond at about the same time, decreasing the likelihood that one partner will feel overworked. The opposite is expected to the extent that partners have

dissimilar thresholds (i.e., when one partner has a low threshold and the other has a higher threshold). O'Colmain and Alberts (2008), in a study of college roommates, found that a greater degree of reported "sanitation superiority," or the perception that one is more bothered by messes and has higher cleanliness standards than one's housemate, was associated with greater conflict frequency. Similarly, Riforgiate (2011) found that individuals reported more frequent domestic labor conflict with their same-sex roommates to the extent that they perceived they and their roommate had discrepant response thresholds.

In the present study, I extend O'Colmain and Alberts (2008) and Riforgiate's (2011) findings by examining the influence of response threshold on frequency of domestic labor conflict among a sample of married couples. This study also extends previous research by measuring each partners' response threshold rather than a single partner's assessment of the threshold discrepancy in the dyad. It is expected that dyad members' response thresholds will interact, such that the greatest conflict frequency will occur when one partner has a relatively lower response threshold than the other. Thus, the following hypothesis is put forth:

H8: Actors' and partners' global response threshold levels interact to predict actors' reports of division of labor conflict.

Conflict behavior. In addition to predicting increased frequency of conflict, the relative response thresholds of marital partners likely also influence the specific behaviors manifested when they enact conflict. In this section, I discuss expected relationships among partners' response thresholds and three

conflict patterns: mutually integrative communication, demand/withdraw, and mutual avoidance.

Integrative communication. Researchers have found that, as with other conflict topics, mutually integrative communication behaviors enacted during division of domestic labor conflict associate directly with productive outcomes, such as increased understanding and perception of compromise (Kluwer, et al., 1997), as well as developing a clear-cut plan that leads to more equal sharing (Weismann, et al., 2008). Also, mutually integrative behaviors associate inversely with negative outcomes of division of domestic labor conflict, such as relationship disruption (Kluwer, et al., 1997), suggesting that mutually integrative communication during housework conflicts could stave off some of the adverse consequences of dissatisfaction with housework allocation.

Surprisingly little research has examined the preconditions associated with dyad members' use of integrative behaviors in division of labor conflict, although Kluwer and colleagues (1997) found that a mutually integrative interaction pattern was more likely when couples reported relatively low levels of discontent with division of household labor. In the present study, I predict that when *both* dyad members' report either high or low response thresholds, integrative conflict behaviors are more likely. Integrative communication in conflict reflects a concern for both oneself and one's partner and reflects engagement in the conflict issue (Ohbuchi & Tedeschi, 1997; Sillars, 1980). Partners who have similarly high or low thresholds have more common ground to stand on in conflict discussions: there is more agreement on the importance (high or low) of

housework, and partners are more equally invested in the outcome of the discussion because they are similarly bothered by tasks undone. This is consistent with the finding by O'Colmain and Alberts (2008) that reported use of mutually integrative communication was related negatively to discrepancies in college roommates' mess thresholds and cleanliness preferences. Based on this reasoning, I put forth the following hypothesis

H9: Actors' and partners' global response threshold levels interact to predict actors' reports of mutually integrative division of labor conflict.

Demand/withdraw. The demand/withdraw pattern is the most commonly studied form of specific conflict communication with regard to division of household labor (Eldridge & Christensen, 2002). Demand/withdraw is characterized by asymmetry in partners' behavior: one spouse or partner criticizes, attempts to engage the other, or persuade the other to change, while the other partner becomes defensive, psychologically disengages, or even physically withdraws from the conflict (Christensen, 1987; Sullaway & Christensen, 1983; Wile, 1981). The issue that has predominated much of demand/withdraw research concerns which partner is playing the role of demander and which partner is playing the role of withdrawer at a given time.

When initially introduced in the conflict literature, the demand/withdraw pattern was primarily conceptualized as wife-demand/husband-withdraw, with husbands reporting that a critical issue in their marriage was a "nagging wife," and wives reporting a complementary problem of a withdrawn husband (Ternan,

Buttenweiser, Ferguson, Johnson, & Wilson, 1938). Research since that time has generally found that wife-demand/husband-withdraw occurs more frequently than husband-demand/wife-withdraw (Christensen, 1987, 1988; Christensen & Heavey, 1990; Eldridge, Sevier, Jones, Atkins, & Christensen, 2007), excepting Papp and colleagues, (2009). A variety of explanations have been offered for the observed sex differences in demanding and withdrawing behaviors in relationship conflict, including differences in the socialization of men and women in the experience of closeness (Christensen, 1987, 1988), sex-differentiated physiological reactivity to conflict-induced stress (Gottman & Levenson, 1986, 1988), and the influence of personality variables such as femininity (Walczynski, 1997). A complete review is available from Eldridge and Christenson (2002).

Additionally, scholars have pointed to structural features of society, in heterosexual marriages, and within conflict discussions to explain sex-differentiated demand/withdraw patterns. Generally, structural explanations converge on the idea that demanding behavior in conflict corresponds to a desire to change some feature of the partner or the relationship, and that withdrawal is motivated by a desire to avoid change (i.e., maintain the status quo). From a broad social structural perspective, the female-demand/male-withdrawal pattern is expected as men, in an effort to maintain the greater status and benefits conferred to them in society, deflect women's attempts at change (Noller, 1993; Peplau & Gordon, 1985). Similarly, researchers who focus on the structure of the marriage relationship argue that men incur more benefits than women in the traditional marriage arrangement and, thus, wives are likely to desire change in more areas of

the marriage and initiate discussions to achieve change (Jacobson, 1989, 1990). Men, by contrast, “have a lot to lose but nothing to gain by discussing relationship problems” (Eldridge & Christensen, 2002, p. 305), and so they avoid or withdraw from discussions that might alter the status quo.

Another variant of structural explanations centers on explaining the conditions under which either wife-demand/husband-withdraw *or* husband-demand/wife-withdraw occurs. This perspective addresses an implication of structural approaches that, if women demand more because they more often want to change the status quo, men are likely to engage in demanding behavior when they are in the role of complainer or change seeker. Heavey and colleagues (1993) hypothesized an effect of the *conflict* structure such that in conflict discussions in which the wife desires change, wife-demand/husband-withdraw is more likely, whereas in conflicts over topics for which the husband desires change, husband-demand/wife-demand is more likely.

Tests of the conflict structure hypothesis have yielded support for the importance of conflict topic (or more specifically, who raises a topic), in predicting demand/withdraw patterns. In conflicts that center on a topic raised by wives (i.e., desiring change in husbands), wife-demand/husband-withdraw is more likely than husband-demand/wife-withdraw. However, for conflict discussions of a topic raised by husbands (i.e., desiring change in wives), there is no significant difference in the likelihood of the two patterns (Christensen & Heavey, 1990; Eldridge & Christensen, 2002; Eldridge, et al., 2007; Heavey, et al., 1993; Walczynski, 1997). These findings suggest that *both* sex and topic effects operate

to produce demand/withdraw patterns. The researchers concluded that women generally have a propensity toward the demanding role, and men toward the withdrawing role, in conflict discussions, but conflict topic operates to enhance (for wives' topics) or attenuate (for husbands' topics) that pattern (Heavey, et al., 1993). Other research has shown a complete reversal of the demand/withdraw pattern based on topic, whereby wife-initiated topics are more likely to produce wife-demand/husband-withdraw and husband-initiated topics are more likely to produce husband-withdraw/wife-demand (Holtzworth-Munroe, Smutzler, & Stuart, 1998; Klinetob & Smith, 1996; Papp, et al., 2009).

More research is being done to determine the conditions under which complete role reversal is most likely. For example, Eldridge and colleagues (2000; Eldridge, et al., 2007) found that interaction patterns among non-distressed or low-level distressed couples more closely approximate complete role reversal based on topic-initiator than do patterns observed in highly distressed couples. That is, more-distressed couples display more rigidity in the *wife*-demanding and *husband*-withdraw pattern. Nevertheless, generally speaking, for husband-initiated topics (i.e., when husbands want to change the status quo), husbands are at least as likely as wives to engage in demanding behavior, and wives are at least as likely as husbands to withdraw (Eldridge & Christensen, 2002).

Response thresholds and demand/withdrawal patterns. Given what is known about the importance of the role of *change seeker* in demand/withdrawal patterns, it is expected that response threshold will influence the presence and structure of demand/withdraw division of labor conflict. First, it is expected that

demanding behavior is more likely among individuals with relatively lower response thresholds. Relatively low-threshold-possessing individuals are believed to be overburdened with domestic labor performance, and thus are more likely to desire change in domestic labor allocations. By contrast, relatively high-threshold-possessing individuals are more likely to want to maintain the status quo (O'Colmain & Alberts, 2008), and thus withdrawing behavior is more likely among these individuals. Finally, the effects of both partners' response thresholds are expected to interact such that more demand/withdrawal is expected with larger discrepancies in partners' response thresholds. O'Colmain and Alberts (2008) found that dissimilarity in mess thresholds and cleanliness standards predicted greater use of the demand/withdraw pattern among college roommates. The lower one's response threshold in relation to one's partner, the more housework an individual is likely to take on relative to his/her partner, and thus, the more he/she will attempt to enlist the partner's help or cooperation through conflict. Additionally, the more discrepant partners' response thresholds, the more unequally invested they are in engaging in conflict over domestic labor allocations. The lower-threshold-possessing partner, by virtue of being more disturbed by tasks undone, is more invested in a solution and dependent on the partner's cooperation to achieve that solution (Kluwer, et al., 1997). The higher-threshold-possessing partner, by contrast, cares less about the messes or undone tasks in question, can achieve his/her goal unilaterally (Kluwer, et al., 1997), and therefore may feel the conflict is not worth pursuing.

Research by Kluwer et al. (1997) supports this assertion. These researchers found an interaction between wives' and husbands' discontent with division of labor arrangements on demand/withdraw conflict patterns such that wives' discontent was a stronger predictor of wife-demand/husband-withdraw when husbands reported low levels of discontent. In some cases, demand/withdraw may also take the form of criticism by the lower-threshold-possessing individual of the *quality* of task performance produced by the higher-threshold-possessing individual. Weismann et al. (2008) found that women's criticism of men's performance of certain household tasks led some men to withdraw, leaving women to tend to the tasks themselves. Whatever the specific mechanism at work, each partner's response threshold, and the interaction between the two, are expected to predict demand/withdraw division of labor conflict. Given that dyads are the unit of analysis for this study, two forms of demand/withdraw are examined: actor-demand/partner-withdrawal (actors reports of a conflict pattern whereby they demand and their partner withdraws), and partner-demand/partner-withdrawal (actors reports of a conflict pattern whereby their *partner* demands and *they* withdraw). Specifically:

H10: Actors' global response threshold levels associate negatively with their reports of actor-demand/partner-withdrawal during division of labor conflict.

H11: Partners' global response threshold levels associate positively with actors' reports of actor-demand/partner-withdrawal during division of labor conflict.

H12: Actors' and partners' global response threshold levels interact to predict actors' reports of actor-demand/partner-withdrawal during division of labor conflict.

H13: Actors' global response threshold levels associate positively with their reports of partner-demand/actor-withdrawal during division of labor conflict.

H14: Partners' global response threshold levels associate negatively with actors' reports of partner-demand/actor-withdrawal during division of labor conflict.

H15: Actors' and partners' global response threshold levels interact to predict actors' reports of partner-demand/actor-withdrawal during division of labor conflict.

Response thresholds, role, and demand/withdrawal patterns. As noted above, some studies of demand/withdraw communication have found a complete role reversal in the demand/withdraw pattern, such that each sex demands when discussing a topic on which they desire change (Holtzworth-Munroe, et al., 1998; Klinetob & Smith, 1996). Other researchers have found a remaining influence of sex, even when varying topic-initiator, such that wife-demand/husband-withdraw is more likely for wives' topics, but wife-demand/husband-withdraw and husband-demand/wife-withdraw are not statistically significantly different for husbands' topics (e.g., Heavey, et al., 1993).

Kluwer and colleagues (2000) obtained results similar to the latter pattern in a scenario study. Participants rated wife-demand/husband-withdraw as more

likely than husband-demand/wife-withdraw, but only when the wife desired an increase in her spouse's domestic labor performance while her husband was satisfied with the status quo. When judging scenarios in which the husband desired an increase in his spouse's domestic labor performance but the wife was satisfied with the status quo, there was no significant difference in perceived likelihood of husband-demand/wife-withdraw and wife-demand/husband-withdraw (Kluwer, et al., 2000). Thus for domestic labor conflicts, there may be an influence of sex as well as desire-for-change/desire-for-status-quo on the roles taken in demand/withdraw patterns. For that reason, I propose the following research questions assessing interactions between sex (husbands vs. wives) and response threshold levels:

RQ2: Does role (husbands vs. wives) interact with actors' response threshold levels to predict actors' reports of actor-demand/partner-withdraw during division of labor conflict?

RQ3: Does role (husbands vs. wives) interact with partners' response threshold levels to predict actors' reports of actor-demand/partner-withdraw during division of labor conflict?

RQ4: Do role (husbands vs. wives), actor response threshold level, and partner response threshold interact to predict actors' reports of actor-demand/partner-withdraw during division of labor conflict?

RQ5: Does role (husbands vs. wives) interact with actors' response threshold levels to predict actors' reports of partner-demand/actor-withdraw during division of labor conflict?

RQ6: Does role (husbands vs. wives) interact with partners' response threshold levels to predict actors' reports of partner-demand/actor-withdraw during division of labor conflict?

RQ7: Do role (husbands vs. wives), actor response threshold level, and partner response threshold interact to predict actors' reports of partner-demand/actor-withdraw during division of labor conflict?

Avoidance. As with the demand/withdraw conflict pattern, mutually avoidant behaviors in division of labor conflicts associate with destructive conflict outcomes (Kluwer, et al., 1997) and lack of change. Despite the apparent ineffectiveness of avoiding division of labor conflicts, research shows that it is fairly common, particularly when overperformers (most often women) feel that the costs of engaging in conflict exceed the costs of continuing to carry a greater burden of domestic work (Johnson & Huston, 1998; Kluwer, et al., 1997; Pleck, 1985; Thompson, 1991).

O'Colmain and Alberts (2008) found that larger differences in mess thresholds and cleanliness standards were positively related to reported use of mutually avoidant conflict behavior in college roommates. In a way, this seems to contradict their previously cited finding that the demand/withdraw pattern was more likely among roommates with more discrepant thresholds. Their findings suggest that when partners have different response thresholds, there is an increased tendency for both partners to avoid, as well as an increased tendency for one partner to pursue and one to withdraw (a behavior similar to avoidance). What accounts for these dual, partially contradictory, patterns? One possible

explanation is that among cases in which one partner has a relatively low threshold and the other has a relatively high threshold, sometimes the lower-threshold possessing partner has reason to believe that avoidance is a more effective strategy than constructive or demanding communication. There are many potential reasons why an individual might make such a judgment (e.g., questions about the legitimacy of the complaint, ineffective previous conflicts, perception that the partner is unwilling to change, etc.). Whatever the reason, a lower-threshold-possessing partner may feel it is less costly to simply perform the labor work him/herself rather than try to persuade the partner to change or contribute.

Weismann et al. (2008) observed this pattern among dual earner couples – some wives exhibited stoicism in the face of dissatisfaction with division of domestic labor. These wives avoided division of labor conflicts, instead reducing their hours in paid work to compensate for the extra labor they were allocated at home. This reflected a view among couples that the division of household labor was “not worth mentioning” (Weismann, et al., 2008, p. 358). Many of the wives in the study who avoided division of labor conflict also attributed their avoidance to differing standards between spouses for the performance of household labor. Some wives acknowledged that because they wanted household labor performed a “certain way,” they chose not to pursue contributions from husbands. Implied in these descriptions is a choice between asking for help that may be substandard and simply completing the tasks themselves, sometimes resentfully. It may be,

therefore, that stoicism results when individuals perceive that avoidance is more beneficial than engaging in conflict.

Taken together, O'Colmain and Alberts (2008) and Weisman et al.'s (2008) research suggest two possible patterns: First, lower-threshold possessing individuals with higher-threshold possessing partners are more likely to avoid division of labor conflict. Second, avoidance (as opposed to making demands or engaging constructively) may depend on a perception by the lower-threshold possessing individual that avoiding conflict confers some benefit. Thus, the following hypothesis and research question are put forth:

H16: Actors' and partners' global response threshold levels interact to predict actors' reports of mutual avoidance during division of labor conflict.

RQ8: Do actors' and partners' global response thresholds, as well as actors' perceived benefits of avoidance, interact to predict actors' reports of mutual avoidance during division of labor conflict?

Chapter 3

METHOD

Participants

Data were collected using a social networking sample. Undergraduate students in a Communication department at a large university in the southwestern United States were asked to recruit one heterosexual married couple to complete a web survey. Students were offered extra credit in a Communication course in exchange for recruiting a couple to the study. On each of the surveys, participants were asked to provide a telephone number that would not be connected to responses, but would be used to verify participation. Following the completion of data collection, an undergraduate research assistant contacted 20% of respondents at random, and successfully verified participation.

Participants were 155 heterosexual married couples. Dyads had been married an average of 19.98 years ($SD = 9.99$), and the vast majority of dyads ($n = 116$) were reporting on their first marriage. Male participants' age ranged from 22 to 77 years, with a mean age of 49.69 years ($SD = 9.73$). Female participants' age ranged from 20 to 69 years, with a mean age of 46.92 years ($SD = 8.84$). Collectively, 3.3% of this sample identified as Asian, 3.9% as Black or African American, 2.6% as Latino or Hispanic, 85.6% as White or European American, 4.6% as other or more than one category. Among males, 83.9% were employed full time and 3.9% were employed part time. Among females, 49.0% were employed full time and 20.6% were employed part time.

Measures

Response threshold. Three self-report measures were used to assess response threshold. The first was the *disorder tolerance* measure, a 7-item scale initially developed by O'Colmain and Alberts (2008) and later revised by Riforgiate (2008). The disorder tolerance measure includes a list of common household tasks (i.e., cleaning the bathroom, dusting, doing the dishes, picking up clutter, taking out the garbage, vacuuming) and asks participants to indicate the degree to which they would be bothered (1 = *not bothered at all*; 7 = *extremely bothered*) if a task was left undone. The disorder tolerance measure also includes a global stem ("In general, how would you rate the degree to which undone household tasks bother you?"), with the same response options as above. Previous use of the measure has determined that the items in the disorder tolerance measure load on a single factor and the scale has obtained a Cronbach's alpha estimate of internal reliability between .81 and .91 (Afifi, et al., 2008; O'Colmain & Alberts, 2008). For the present study, the disorder tolerance measure was expanded to include three additional tasks: doing laundry, cleaning the kitchen, and making beds. Cronbach's alpha for the revised scale was .93.

The disorder tolerance measure assesses the degree to which an unkempt living space is disturbing to an individual. This is appropriate in that the measure likely assesses a dimension *reflected in* the construct of response threshold, that of cleanliness standards or preferences. The more bothered one is by a stimulus, the more incentive there is expected to be to complete an action that reduces the stimulus. However, the disorder tolerance measure does not directly connect the

perception of a disturbance to a propensity to attend to the task, as is implied by the theoretical definition of the response threshold construct. Therefore, two additional measures of response threshold were developed to assess the point at which a mess is bothersome enough to an individual to motivate him/her to attend to the task. Specifically, these forms of measurement present participants with photographs of task-specific “messes” (e.g., an overflowing trash can) and ask participants to indicate whether, or the point at which, they would be motivated to attend to the mess.

In the *graded response threshold* measure, participants viewed a series of photographs depicting successively “messier” conditions, and were asked to indicate whether, on a typical day, they would be “bothered enough to take care of the task” (1 = *Definitely not*; 4 = *Definitely would*).

In the *snapshot response threshold* measure, participants were shown a single moderately “messy” photograph for each task, and asked to rate their response on a 5-point scale (e.g., 1 = *I would be bothered enough to clean the bathroom long before it got to this point*; 5 = *I would not be bothered enough to clean the bathroom until long after this point*).

Domestic labor performance. Previous conceptualizations of domestic labor have varied in the extent to which they include indoor as well as outdoor tasks, stereotypically male versus female tasks, childcare and emotional labor . Following Alberts et al., (2011), in this study, domestic labor was conceptualized as indoor and outdoor housework tasks, excluding items solely related to

children's need. For example, laundry was included, but reading to children was not.

Domestic labor *performance* has also been conceptualized in a variety of ways. Researchers have alternately studied domestic labor performance as a proportion or percentage of time spent by both members of a couple (Barnett & Shen, 1997; Blair & Lichter, 1991), as absolute time spent in an average week (Barnett & Shen, 1997; Bianchi, et al., 2000), and by allocation (i.e., how often each member of the household completes various tasks; Mederer, 1993).

For the present study, *task-specific domestic labor performance* was conceptualized in terms of how often an individual completes a task relative to his/her partner. Following Mederer (1993), this was measured by asking participants to indicate whether, under normal circumstances, they or their partner complete each task (1= *My partner always does*; 7 = *I always do*)¹. *Global domestic labor performance* was conceptualized as the proportion of total household work tasks a respondent contributes in an average week. Following Barnett and Shen (1997), participants were asked to indicate the minutes per week they spend in each task in an average week². For each dyad, a score for total

¹ Participants were instructed to select "not applicable" if a task is not performed in their home or if someone other than themselves or their partner completes the task.

² Barnett and Shen (1997) created an estimate of each individual's time spent in domestic labor by averaging an individual's and his/her partner's estimates of that individual's contribution. They took this approach to try to correct reporting bias. However, I elected to use only the actor's reports of their time spent in each task. This is consistent with the theoretical underpinning of this study: if an individual has a particularly high threshold for a task, he/she may not even notice that a task has been completed, let

minutes spent in each task was computed. An individual's proportion of time in each task was determined by dividing his/her minutes in that task by the minutes spent in that task for the dyad. Example:

$$\text{Actor proportion of laundry} = \frac{\text{Actor's minutes doing laundry}}{\text{Actor's minutes doing laundry} + \text{Partner's minutes doing laundry}}$$

The global estimate was computed by averaging the proportions across the nine household tasks.

Conflict behavior. This study employed self-report assessment techniques to measure conflict behaviors. One advantage of self-report techniques over laboratory observations when studying conflict patterns is that certain interaction patterns of interest, such as demand/withdraw, are not as likely to occur when couples have been explicitly instructed to discuss an issue (Eldridge & Christensen, 2002). Although more subtle withdrawal behaviors, such as topic changes, are observable, a laboratory setting is not conducive to detecting more extreme withdrawal such as silence or leaving the room (Eldridge & Christensen, 2002).

Dyadic conflict behavior was measured using an adapted version of the Communication Patterns Questionnaire-short form (CPQ-SF; Christensen & Heavey, 1990; Heavey, et al., 1993). The CPQ-SF assesses spouses' perceptions of marital interactions when an issue or problem arises and during discussions of issues and problems.

alone be able to accurately estimate the amount of time his/her partner spent in that task.

The CPQ-SF has been used in nearly two dozen studies, and has demonstrated moderate to high internal consistency (Cronbach's α ranges from .50 to .85), and convergent validity with a measure of dyadic adjustment (Futris, Campbell, Nielson, & Burwell, 2010). Despite the frequent use of the CPQ-SF, no study to date has examined consistencies between partner- and self-report data for the CPQ-SF (Futris, et al., 2010). However, studies have demonstrated consistency between partner-report, self-report, and observational ratings for the communication patterns questionnaire (CPQ; Bodenmann, et al., 1998; Christensen, 1988; Hahlweg, Kaiser, Christensen, Fehm-Wolfsdorf, & Groth, 2000), of which the CPQ-SF is a condensed form. Additional items to measure avoidance were added to the CPQ-SF (i.e., "I don't bring up the issue," "I don't initiate a discussion," "I don't talk about the problem. "). The 14 items of the revised CPQ-SF were submitted to a principal components analysis with varimax rotation. Criteria for determining components were (1) Kaiser's criterion of an eigenvalue of 1 or greater, (2) at least two items per component, (3) primary loadings of .60 or greater and secondary loadings less than .40, and (4) conceptual coherence among items forming each component. Two of the 16 initial items that did not meet these criteria were dropped from the analysis, which was then rerun. The final 4-component solution accounted for 74.75% of the variance. The first component (variance = 21.33%, loadings = .82 to .85) contained four items reflecting an *actor-demand/partner-withdraw* subscale. The second component (variance = 21.32%, loadings = .79 to .86) contained four items reflecting a *partner-demand/actor-withdraw* subscale. The third component (variance =

16.85%, loadings = .81 to .87) contained three items reflecting a *mutually constructive* subscale. The fourth component (variance = 15.25%, loadings = .72 to .87) contained three items reflecting a *mutual avoidance* subscale (see Table 1-5).

Perceived benefits of avoidance. Perceived benefits of avoidance of domestic labor conflict was measured using an 8-item scale developed for this study. As this scale had not been used previously, a principal components analysis with varimax rotation was conducted to determine how the items grouped into components. Criteria for determining components were: (1) Kaiser's criterion of an eigenvalue of 1 or greater; (2) at least two items per component; (3) primary loadings of .60 or greater and secondary loadings less than .40; and (4) conceptual coherence among items forming each component. One of nine initial items that did not meet these criteria was dropped from the analysis, which was then rerun. The final 3-component solution accounted for 67.28% of the variance. The first component (variance = 25.62%, loadings = .68 to .84) contained three items reflecting a perception that it is easier to simply do the work than ask for help (i.e., *easier to do it myself*). The second component (variance = 21.64%, loadings = .83) contained two items reflecting a perception that engaging in conflict won't improve the situation (i.e., *not going to improve*). Finally, the third component (variance = 20.01%, loadings = .66 to .81) contained three items reflecting a perception that it is not appropriate to engage in conflict over household labor (i.e., *not worth fighting about*; see Tables 6-9).

Tests of Nonindependence

Given that marital dyads were the focus of this investigation, the first analytical task was to determine whether the data should be treated as *dyadic*, using couple as the unit of analysis, or as *independent*, using individual as the unit of analysis. Data in which dyad members are linked, or *nonindependent*, require different analytical procedures than data in which individuals are independent. Treating nonindependence dyadic data as independent violates the assumptions of traditional statistical procedures and runs the risk of inflating Type I and Type II error rates (Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2006)

For dyads in which members are distinguishable (e.g., husband and wife), Kenny, Kashy, and Cook (2006) recommend assessing nonindependence by computing Pearson product-moment correlations among dyad members' scores on the dependent variable(s). Kenny and colleagues (2006), following others (e.g., Myers, 1979), also recommend using a liberal test for nonindependence by selecting a two-tailed alpha value of .20. This suggestion derives from the observation that in order to adequately power (power = 80%) a test of nonindependence using a traditional alpha level (two-tailed alpha = .05), a sample of 753 dyads would be required to detect a small effect. Given that dyadic data is often relatively difficult to obtain, Kenny and colleagues recommend using a liberal test of nonindependence when a study lacks a very large sample.

Table 10 summarizes the Pearson correlations actors' and partners' dependent variables in this study, along with their means and standard deviations. For all but one of the dependent variables, dyad members' scores are significantly correlated at the .20 level. Thus, dyad is treated as the unit of analysis for this study.

Dyadic Analyses

This study employs three separate approaches to dyadic data analysis: structural equation modeling, repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), and actor-partner-interdependence models using multilevel modeling.

Repeated measures MANOVA. The primary purpose of repeated measures analyses for dyadic data is to test for differences between dyad members. In repeated measures MANOVA, multiple dependent variables that are thought to be correlated are predicted on the basis of the repeated-measures factor. Whereas in traditional repeated measures MANOVA, the repeated measures factor represents multiple measures from one individual (e.g., across time periods, or across multiple instruments), for dyadic analysis, the repeated factor represents the two data points from the dyad corresponding to each member of the couple. The repeated measures MANOVA produces a multivariate test and overall model effect size in addition to the univariate tests of the separate dependent variables (Kenny, et al., 2006). In this study, repeated measures MANOVA is employed to test for differences between husbands and wives on global and task-specific response thresholds.

Structural equation modeling. Structural equation modeling (SEM) is a very useful, and in some circles, preferred method of analyzing dyadic data (Kenny, et al., 2006; Wendorf, 2002). SEM is unique in that it allows the research to conduct analyses employing latent (unobserved) variables which are modeled as a function of two or more observed variables. Structural equation models account for nonindependence in dyad members' scores by allowing the error terms of the exogenous variables to be correlated. For this study, a single structural equation model was estimated to examine influence of global response thresholds on domestic labor allocation.

The actor-partner-interdependence-model using multilevel modeling.

The majority of the hypotheses and research questions in this investigation will be evaluated via a series of actor-partner-interdependence models using multilevel modeling. The APIM is a highly versatile procedure for dyadic analysis. First, the APIM allows for the simultaneous estimation of actor, partner, and role (e.g., male vs. female) effects, and MLM allows the researcher to estimate these effects while controlling for nonindependence in dyad members' scores. Actor effects refer to the influence of one individual's score on a predictor variable on his/her own score on the dependent variable (e.g., how does one's response threshold affect one's own conflict behavior). Partner effects refer to the influence of one's partner's score on one's own score on the dependent variable (e.g, how one's spouse's response threshold affects one's own conflict behavior). The APIM can also be used to estimate role effects (e.g., husband vs. wife) when roles are distinguishable (e.g., do husbands or wives have lower response thresholds).

Second, the APIM allows for the analysis of *mixed* variables. Most MLM techniques allow for the analysis of between-dyads variables (i.e., those for which both members of a dyad have the same score, such as length of marriage) and within-dyad variables (i.e., those for which scores differ across dyad members but each dyad has the same average score, such as sex for cross-sex dyads). The APIM allows for the analysis of *mixed* variables, in which scores vary both between-and within-dyads (i.e., scores vary between partners but scores of dyad members are more similar than the scores of two randomly matched participants; Kenny, et al., 2006). One drawback to using MLM is that the APIM can only be used to predict one dependent variable at a time. Therefore, for this investigation, which includes three measures of the dependent variable *response threshold*, multiple actor-partner-interdependence-models must be estimated for each hypothesis or research question.

For each of the hypotheses employing the APIM, preliminary analysis were conducted to screen for two-way (e.g., actor by sex) and three-way (e.g., actor by partner by sex) interactions. Non-significant higher-order interactions were removed and models were re-run as hypothesized. Significant interactions were interpreted by plotting simple slopes using an Excel program developed by Dawson (2012) in accordance with methods suggested by Aiken and West (1991) and Dawson and Richter (2006). The Excel program uses standardized estimates for independent variables, moderators, and intercepts to compute simple slopes. Following Kenny et al.'s (2006) recommendation, all predictor variables were centered at the grand mean prior to conducting analyses. Finally, all APIM

analyses included actors' and partners' weekly hours spent in paid work as a covariate, to account for the fact that this sample includes both dual-earner and traditional couples.

Sex Differences in Response Threshold

Global response threshold. Hypothesis 1 predicted that wives would report lower global response threshold levels than husbands. A repeated measures MANOVA was conducted to test H1, with three measures of global response threshold (i.e., gradated response threshold measure, snapshot response threshold measure, and disorder tolerance measure) as the composite dependent variable, and role (husbands vs. wives) as the independent variable. Correlations between the dependent variables (i.e., the three measures of global response threshold) ranged from .36 to .84, with Bartlett's test of sphericity, $\chi^2(5) = 409.75, p < .001$, confirming the appropriateness of treating the three measures of global response threshold as a composite in a multivariate analysis. The results of the MANOVA indicated that men's and women's reports of global response threshold differed significantly, $F(3, 152) = 7.12, p < .001$, Wilks' Lambda = .88, with role accounting for 12% of the variance in the composite measure of global response threshold. The accompanying univariate tests revealed that women reported lower global response thresholds than men across the three response threshold measures: *gradated response threshold*, $F(1, 154) = 19.86, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .11$; *snapshot response threshold*, $F(1, 154) = 7.70, p = .006$, partial $\eta^2 = .05$; and *disorder tolerance* measure, $F(1, 154) = 8.88, p = .003$, partial $\eta^2 = .06$. Thus, H1

was supported. Women reported lower global tolerance for household disorder than men for all measures in this study (see Table 11).

Task-specific response threshold. RQ1 asked whether wives or husbands would report lower response threshold levels for a) cleaning the bathroom, b) making beds, c) clearing clutter, d) cleaning dishes, d) dusting, e) doing laundry, f) cleaning kitchen surfaces, g) taking out garbage, and f) vacuuming/sweeping floors. To assess RQ1, three separate repeated measures MANOVAs were conducted corresponding to the three measures of response threshold. A MANOVA was estimated to examine role differences in the six tasks measured using the *gradated response threshold* measure. Correlations between husbands' and wives' task-specific response thresholds as measured by the gradated response threshold measure ranged from .19 to .41, with Bartlett's test of sphericity, $\chi^2(20) = 459.38, p < .001$, confirming the appropriateness of examining the six tasks together in a multivariate analysis. The results of the MANOVA indicated that men's and women's reports of task-specific response threshold differed significantly, $F(6,149) = 4.54, p < .001$, Wilks' Lambda = .85, with role accounting for 15% of the variance in the group of task-specific response thresholds. The accompanying univariate tests revealed that wives reported lower global response thresholds than husbands for laundry, bed making, bathroom cleaning, cleaning dishes, and clearing clutter (Significant univariate effects means, and standard deviations, for all three measures are reported in Table 11).

A MANOVA was also estimated to examine role differences in the six tasks measured using the *snapshot response threshold* measure. Correlations between husbands' and wives' task-specific response thresholds as measured by the snapshot response threshold measure ranged from .06 to .43, with Bartlett's test of sphericity, $\chi^2(20) = 234.14, p < .001$, confirming the appropriateness of examining the six tasks together in a multivariate analysis. The results of the MANOVA indicated that men's and women's reports of task-specific response threshold differed significantly, $F(6,154) = 4.11, p = .001$, Wilks' Lambda = .85, with role accounting for 15% of the variance in the group of task-specific response thresholds. The accompanying univariate tests revealed that wives reported lower global response thresholds than husbands for laundry, bed making, bathroom cleaning, cleaning dishes, and clearing clutter (Table 11).

Finally, A MANOVA was estimated to examine role differences in the six tasks measured using the *disorder tolerance* measure. Correlations between husbands' and wives' task-specific response thresholds as measured by the gradated response threshold measure ranged from .10 to .20, with Bartlett's test of sphericity, $\chi^2(44) = 734.18, p < .001$, confirming the appropriateness of simultaneously examining the nine tasks measured by the disorder tolerance measure in a multivariate analysis. The results of the MANOVA indicated that men's and women's reports of task-specific response threshold differed significantly, $F(9,126) = 4.26, p < .001$, Wilks' Lambda = .77, with role accounting for 23% of the variance in the group of task-specific response thresholds. The accompanying univariate tests revealed that wives reported lower

global response thresholds than husbands for laundry, bed making, bathroom cleaning, cleaning dishes, and clearing clutter (see Table 11).

Taking into account the univariate effects across all three measures, wives reported significantly lower response thresholds than husbands for all domestic tasks but dusting. Means and standard deviations for husbands' and wives' global and task-specific response thresholds are reported in Table 3.

Response Threshold and Domestic Labor Performance

Global response threshold. Hypotheses 2 through 4 predicted that wives' global threshold (H2), husbands' thresholds (H3), and the interaction between the two (H4), would predict wives' performance of domestic labor. Hypotheses 2 through 4 were tested via a structural equation model with husbands', wives', and husband-threshold-by-wife-threshold as latent variables predicting wives' proportion of domestic labor performance. Husbands' and wives' threshold levels were each modeled as latent variables comprised of three indicators corresponding to the three measures of response threshold used in this investigation (i.e., gradated response threshold, snapshot response threshold, disorder tolerance measure; see Figure 1).

Multiple indices were used to evaluate model fit. Specifically, the χ^2/df , Comparative Fit Index (CFI), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) are reported for the model. A χ^2/df of 3.00 or less (Carmines & McIver, 1981) indicates a good fit. A CFI between .95 and .98 is considered a very good fit, and between .90 and .94 an acceptable or adequate fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). An RMSEA of less than .06 indicates an excellent fit (Hu &

Bentler, 1999) and a value of .07 to .10 indicates adequate fit (Browne & Cudek, 1993). Based on these criteria, the model demonstrated adequate to good fit, $\chi^2(27) = 75.04$, $p < .001$, $\chi^2/df = 2.77$, CFI = .93, RSMEA = .11.

The path analysis for the model in Figure 1 provided support for hypotheses 2 and 3. Wives' global response threshold levels were negatively associated with wives' performance of global domestic labor (H1) and husbands' global response threshold levels were positively associated with wives' performance of global domestic labor (H2). Thus, the lower wives' tolerance for domestic labor, the greater proportion of domestic labor will be performed by wives. Conversely, the *higher* husbands' tolerance, the greater proportion of domestic labor will be performed by wives. The hypothesized interaction effect of wives' and husbands' response thresholds (H4) was not significant.

Figure 1. Path Model for Response Threshold on Proportion of Household Labor Performed by Wives

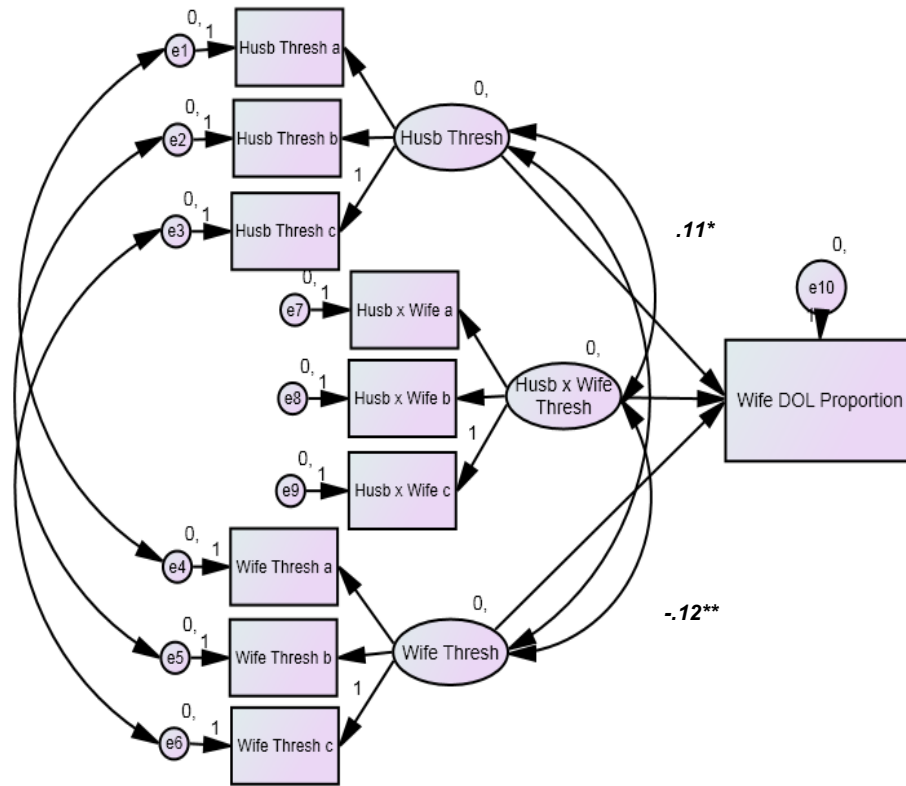


Figure 1. Standardized estimates for significant actor and partner effects are italicized.

* $p < .20$. ** $p < .05$.

Task-specific response threshold. Hypotheses 5 through 7 predicted that actors' task-specific thresholds (H5), partners' task-specific thresholds (H6), and

the interaction between the two (H7), would predict actors' performance of each of the following tasks: a) cleaning the bathroom, b) dusting, c) doing dishes, d) picking up clutter, e) taking out garbage, f) vacuuming, g) doing laundry, h) cleaning the kitchen, and i) making beds. Hypotheses 5 through 7 were tested using a series of APIMs. For each task, three separate APIMs were estimated, one for each of the measures of the dependent variables.

Hypothesis 5 was supported for eight of nine tasks. Significant actor effects emerged for bathroom cleaning, bed making, clearing clutter, cleaning dishes, cleaning kitchen surfaces, laundry, taking out garbage, and vacuuming/sweeping floors (significant effects are reported in Table 12.) Individuals' response thresholds negatively associated with their performance of each of these tasks. The actor effects for taking out garbage and vacuuming/sweeping were each qualified by an interaction between actor response threshold and actor role (husband vs. wife). Examination of the simple slopes revealed that the effect of actor threshold on these two tasks is stronger for husbands than wives (See figures 2 and 3). Among husbands, performance of trash removal and vacuuming/sweeping is negatively associated with response threshold: the lower husbands' thresholds, the greater their contributions to trash removal and vacuuming/sweeping, respectively. For wives, however, response threshold for these two tasks is minimally effective. Wives' contributions to trash removal and vacuuming/sweeping are essentially identical regardless of response threshold. A key distinction between these two tasks, however, is that on average, wives perform more trash removal but less vacuuming/sweeping than husbands.

Figure 2. Actor-Threshold-By-Role Interaction on Trash Removal

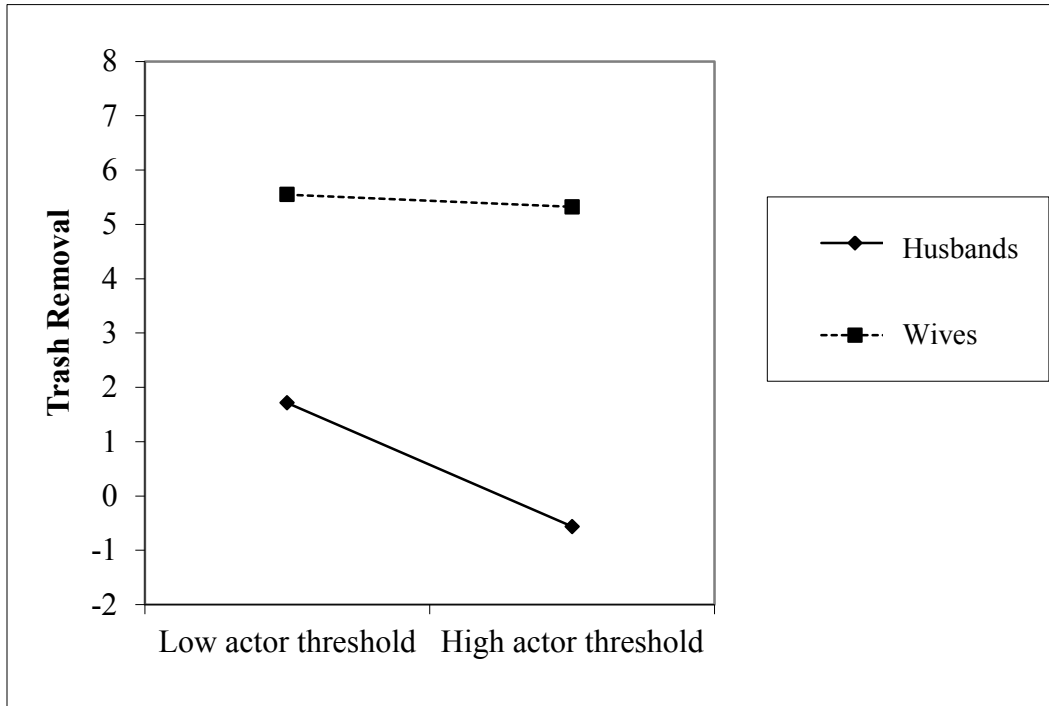
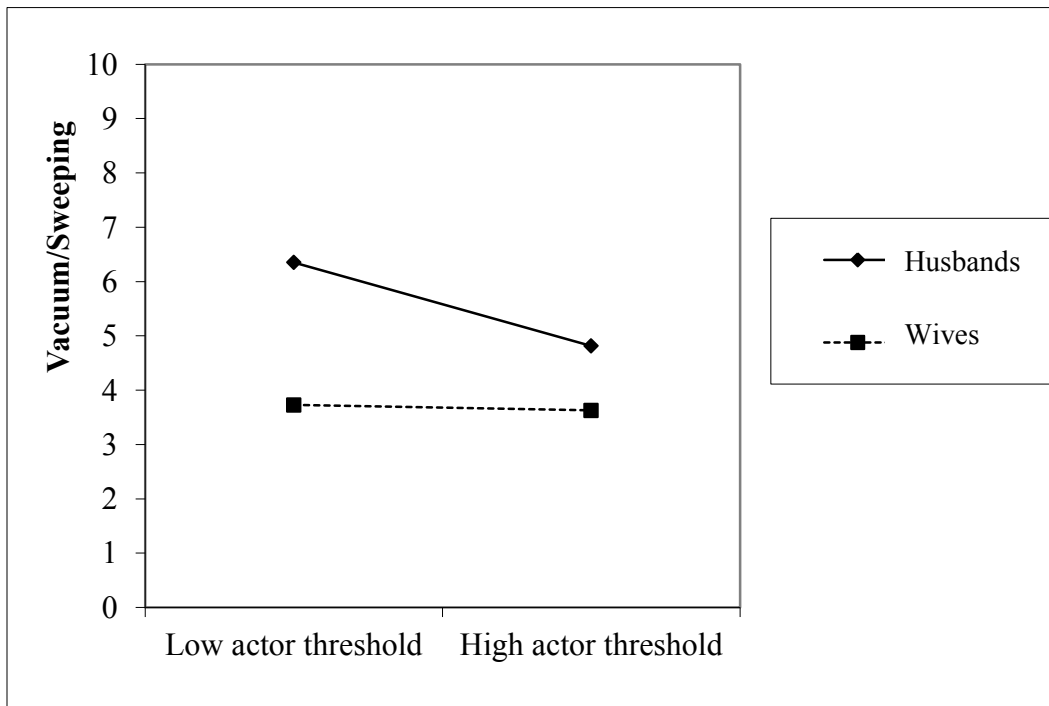
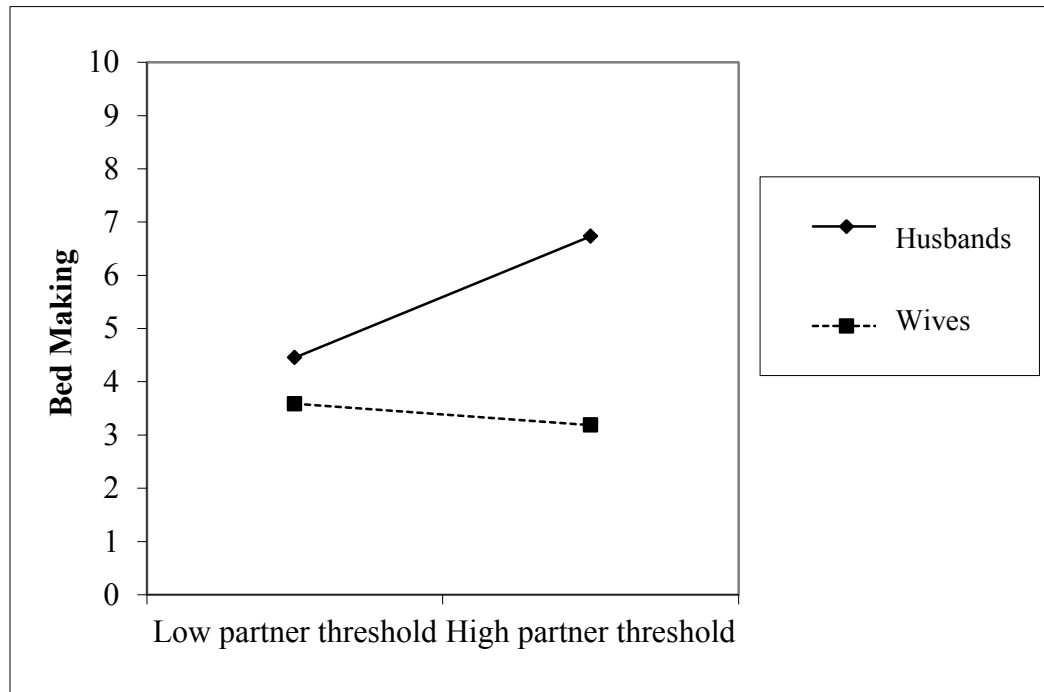


Figure 3. Actor-Threshold-By-Role Interaction on Vacuuming/Sweeping



Hypothesis 6 was supported for four of nine tasks. Significant partner effects emerged for bed making, clearing clutter, cleaning dishes, and taking out garbage (Table 12). Individuals' *partners'* response thresholds positively associated with individuals' performance of each of these tasks. The partner effect for bed making, however, was qualified by an interaction between partner response threshold and partner role (husband vs. wife). Examination of the simple slopes revealed that the effect of partner threshold is stronger for husbands than wives (See figure 4). Among husbands, performance of bed making is positively associated with partners' response threshold: the higher husbands' partners' thresholds, the greater husbands' contributions to bed making. For wives, however, partners' response threshold is minimally effective. Wives' contributions to bed making are essentially identical regardless of their partners' response threshold.

Figure 4. Partner-Threshold-By-Role on Bed Making



Hypothesis 7 predicted an interaction between actors' and partners' response thresholds to predict task-specific domestic labor performance. Examining actor-partner interactions provides a way to examine the importance of dyad members' response thresholds *relative* to each other. Hypothesis 7 was supported for four of nine tasks. A significant actor-by-partner interaction effect emerged for cleaning bathrooms, making beds, cleaning laundry, and vacuuming/sweeping. For bed making and vacuuming/sweeping, examination of simple slopes revealed that individuals report the most performance of that task when they possess a relatively low threshold and their partner possesses a relatively high threshold. Conversely, actors contribute the least when they report relatively high thresholds and their partners report relatively low thresholds (see Figures 5 and 6).

Figure 5. Actor-Threshold-By-Partner-Threshold Effect on Bed Making

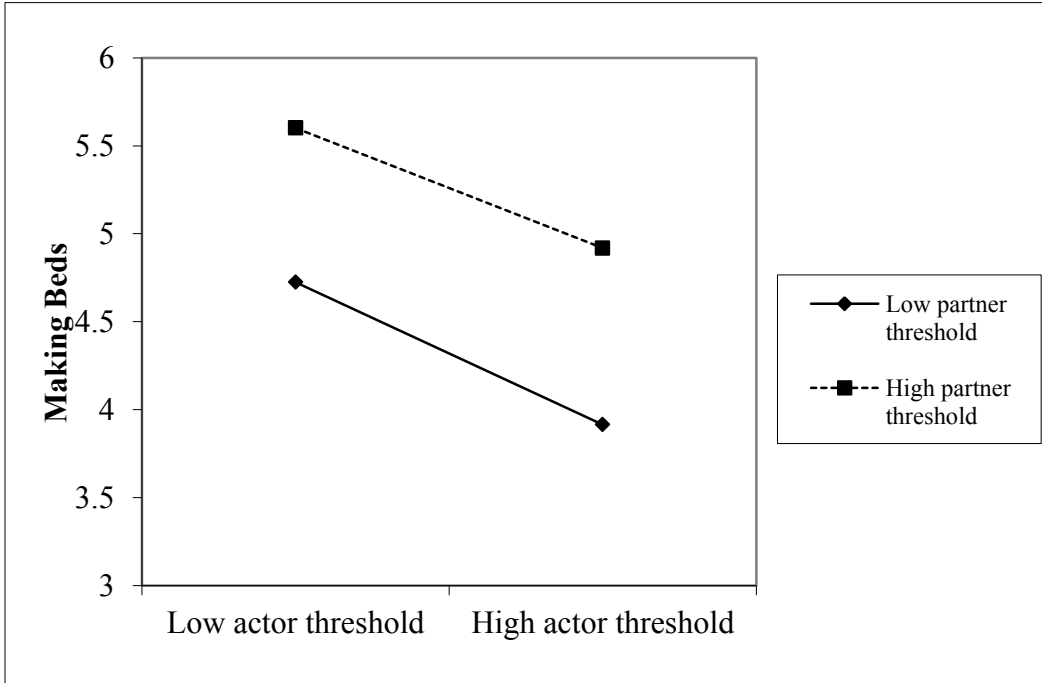
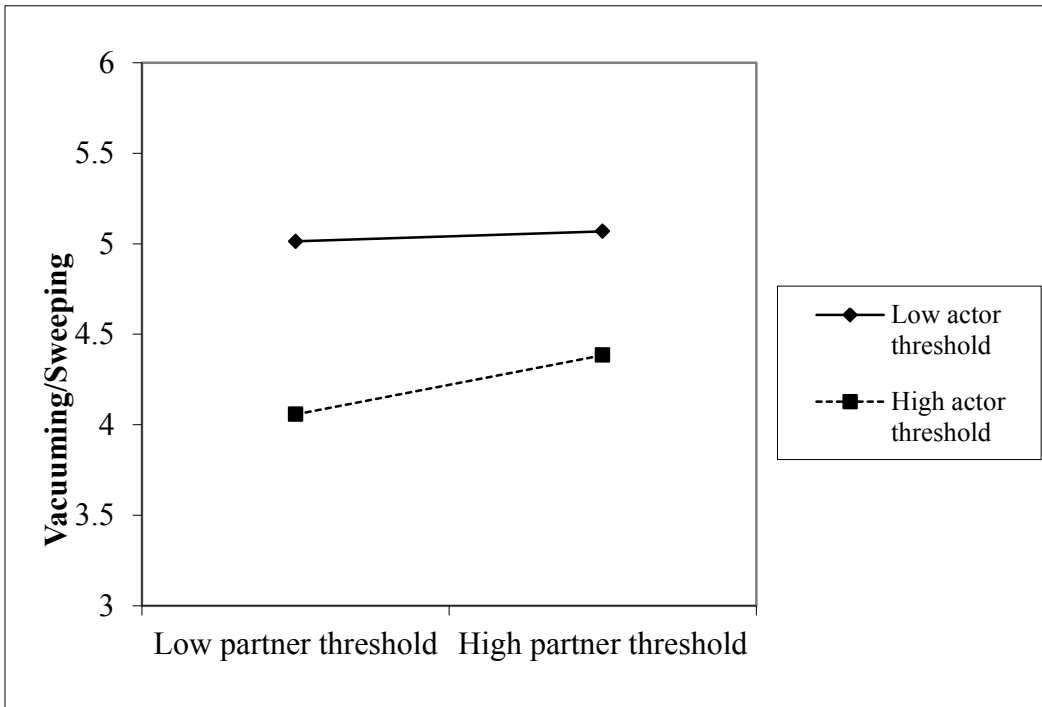


Figure 6. Actor-Threshold-By-Partner-Threshold Effect on Vacuuming/Sweeping



The significant actor-partner interaction for bathroom cleaning and laundry were each qualified by role, thus only the 3-way (actor-by-partner-by-role) interactions are interpreted for those tasks. For laundry, performance among wives and among husbands with relatively low thresholds increases as one's partner's threshold increases. For husbands with relatively high thresholds, however, performance of laundry decreases as their wives' threshold increases (Figure 7). For bathroom cleaning, examination of the simple slopes revealed two distinct patterns. For husbands with relatively high thresholds and wives with relatively low thresholds, contributions to bathroom cleaning increase as their partners' threshold increased. By contrast, among husbands with relatively high thresholds and wives with relatively low thresholds, contributions to bathroom cleaning *increased* as partners' threshold increased (Figure 8).

Figure 7. Actor-Threshold-By-Partner-Threshold-By-Role Effect on Laundry

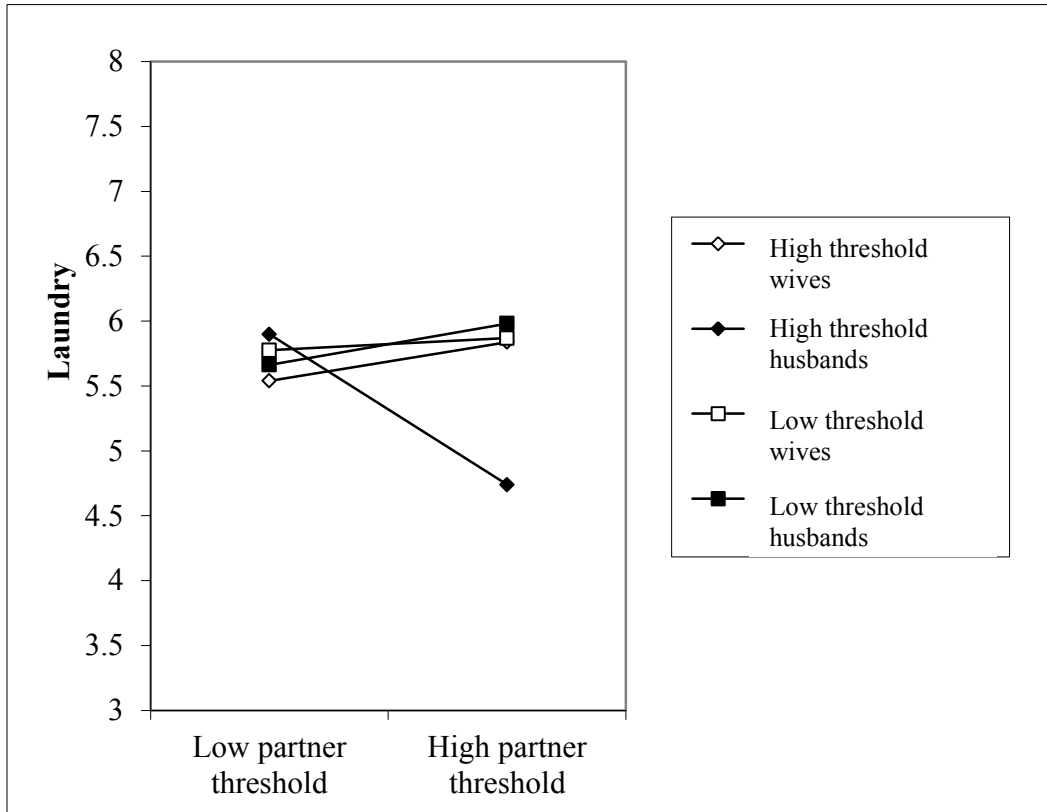
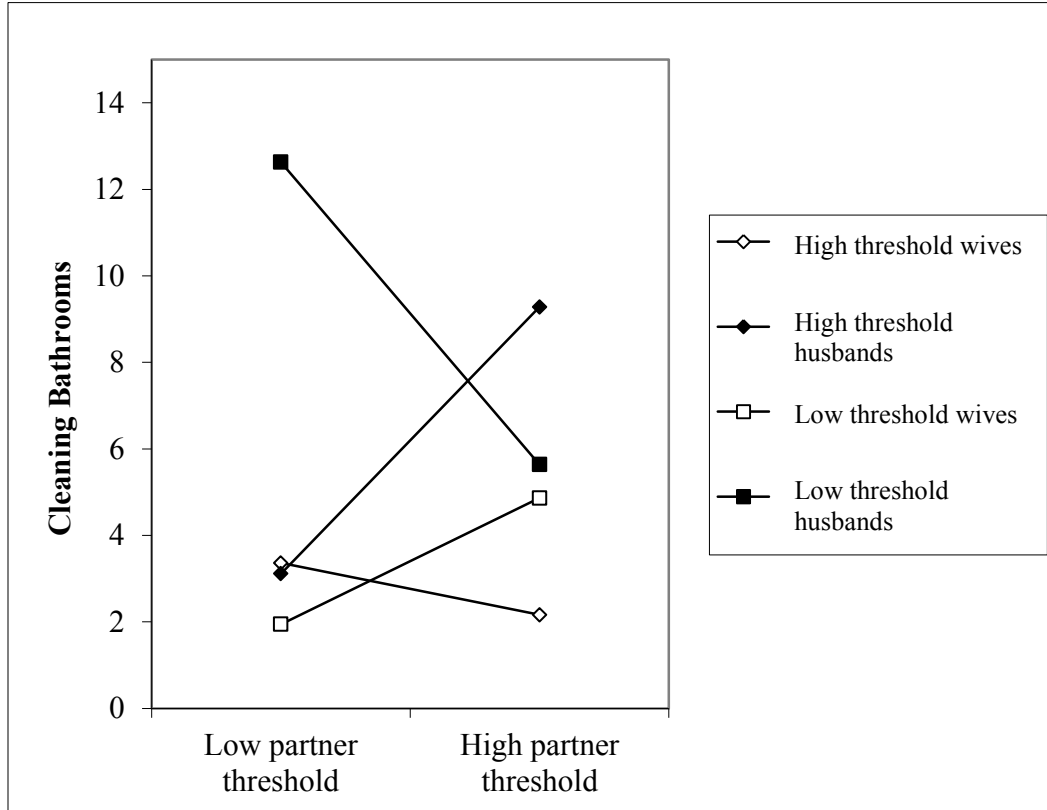


Figure 8. Actor-Threshold-By-Partner-Threshold-By-Role Effect on Cleaning Bathrooms



Response Threshold and Dyadic Conflict Patterns

Conflict frequency.

Hypothesis 8 predicted that actors’ and partners’ global response threshold levels would interact to predict actors’ reports of division of labor conflict. The hypothesized actor-partner interaction was not significant for any of the three measures of global response threshold. Thus, Hypothesis 8 was not supported.

Conflict behavior.

Constructive communication. Hypothesis 9 predicted that actors’ and partners’ global response threshold levels would interact to predict actors’ reports of mutually integrative division of labor conflict. The hypothesized actor-partner

interaction was not significant for any of the three measures of global response threshold. Thus, Hypothesis 9 was not supported.

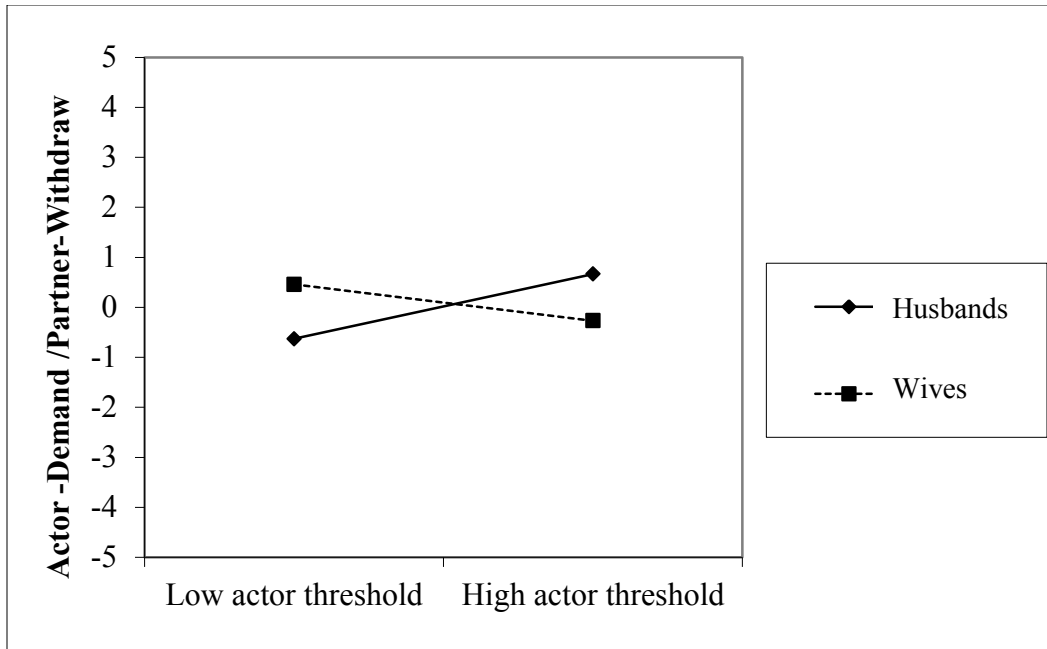
Demand/withdraw.

Actor-demand/partner-withdrawal. Hypotheses 10 through 12 predicted that actors' global response thresholds (H10), partners' global response thresholds (H11), and the interaction between the two (H12), would predict actors' reports of actor-demand/partner-withdrawal. Research questions 2 through 4 asked whether the hypothesized actor, partner, and actor-by-partner interaction effects were qualified by actor role (husband vs. wife). To evaluate the hypotheses and research questions, a series of APIMS were estimated, one for each of the measures of response threshold. Table 13 summarizes the significant effects obtained in these APIMs.

Hypothesis 10 predicted that actors' global response threshold levels would negatively associate with their reports of actor-demand/partner-withdrawal during division of labor conflict. (i.e., the lower an actor's threshold, the more he/she demands while his/her partner withdraws). Research question 2 asked whether the relationship between actor global response threshold and actor-demand/partner-withdrawal differed according to the actor's role (husband vs. wife). No significant actor effects emerged for global response threshold on actor-demand/partner-withdrawal across the three measure of response threshold. However, in response to research question 2, a significant interaction effect emerged for actor-threshold-by-role on actor-demand/partner-withdrawal for the

snapshot response threshold measure. Examination of the simple slopes revealed that wives engage in more actor-demand/partner-withdraw as their threshold decreases, whereas for husbands, the opposite is true. Men engage in less actor-demand/partner-withdrawal as their threshold decreases (see Figure 9).

Figure 9. Actor-Threshold-By-Role Effect on Actor-Demand/Partner-Withdrawal

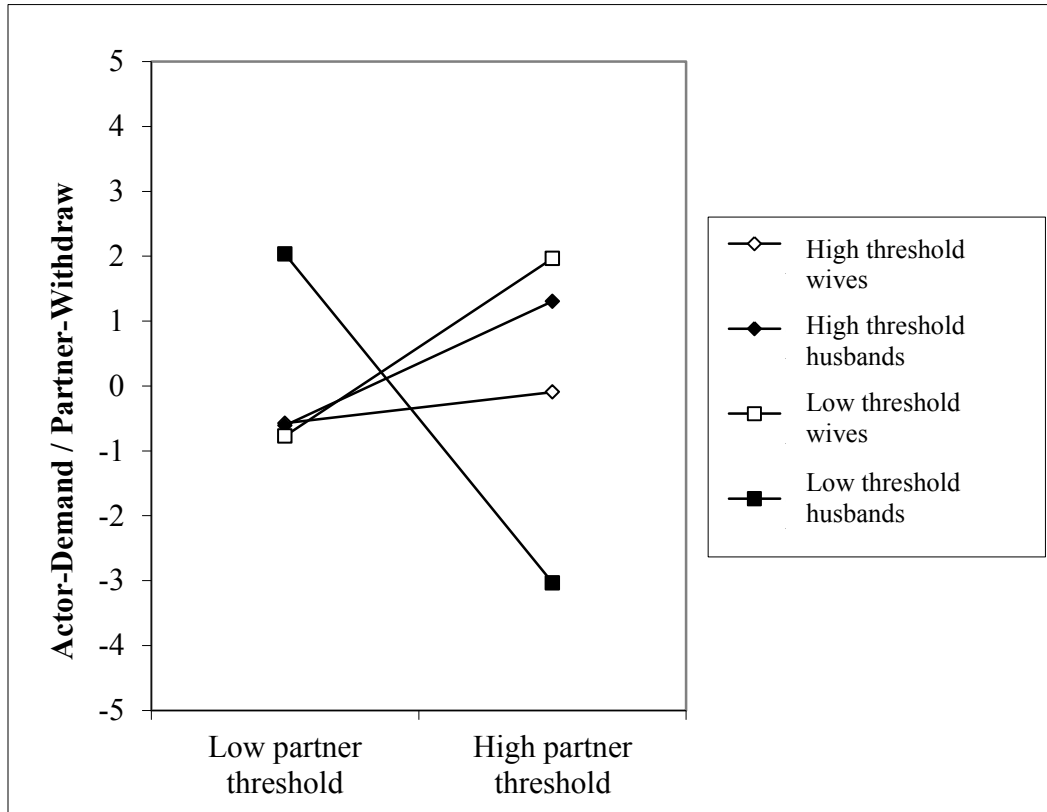


Hypothesis 11 predicted that partners' global response threshold levels would positively associate with actors' reports of actor-demand/partner-withdrawal during division of labor conflict (i.e., the higher a partner's threshold, the more the actor demands while the partner withdraws). Research question 3 asked whether the relationship between partners' global response threshold levels and actors' reports of actor-demand/partner-withdrawal varied according to the actor's role (husband vs. wife). No significant partner effects, nor any partner-by-role effects, emerged across the three measures of response threshold. Thus, hypothesis 11 was not supported, and no conclusions could be drawn in response to research question 3.

Hypothesis 12 predicted that actors' and partners' response thresholds would interact to predict actor reports of actor-demand/partner-withdrawal during division of labor conflict. Research question 4 asked whether the hypothesized interaction effect for actors' and partners' response thresholds on actor-demand/partner-withdrawal was qualified by actor role (husband vs. wife). No significant actor-by-partner interaction effects emerged across the measures of response threshold. However, a significant actor-threshold-by-partner-threshold-by-role emerged for the *graded response threshold* measure. Examination of the simple slopes revealed that the source of the interaction resides among husbands with lower thresholds (see figure 10). For all other groups (i.e., husbands with higher thresholds, as well as wives regardless of threshold level), actor-demand/partner-withdrawal increases as partners' threshold increases. In other words, demand-withdrawal is more likely to the extent that one's partner has a

higher threshold. By contrast, among husbands with lower thresholds, reports of actor-demand/partner-withdrawal *decrease* as their wives' threshold increase.

Figure 10. Actor-Threshold-By-Partner-Threshold-By-Role Effect on Actor-Demand/Partner-Withdraw



Partner-demand/actor-withdrawal. Hypotheses 13 through 15 predicted that actors' global response thresholds (H13), partners' global response thresholds (H14), and the interaction between the two (H15), would predict actors' reports of partner-demand/actor-withdrawal. Research questions 5 through 7 asked whether the hypothesized actor, partner, and actor-by-partner interaction effects, respectively, were qualified by actor role (husband vs. wife). To evaluate the hypotheses and research questions, a series of APIMS were estimated, one for

each of the measures of response threshold. Table 13 summarizes the significant effects obtained in these APIMs.

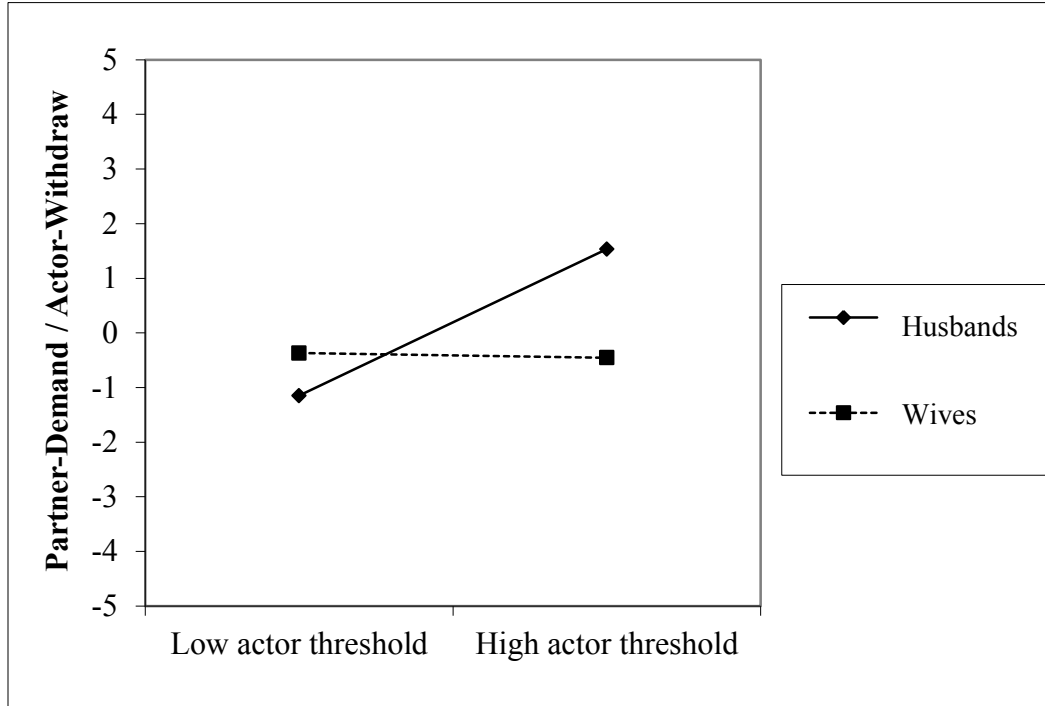
Hypothesis 13 predicted that actors' global response threshold levels would positively associate with their reports of partner-demand/actor-withdrawal during division of labor conflict (i.e., the higher an actor's threshold, the more his/her partner demands while the actor withdraws). Research question 5 asked whether the relationship between actor global response threshold and partner-demand/actor-withdrawal varied according to the actor's role (husband vs. wife). A significant actor effect emerged for global response threshold on partner-demand/actor-withdrawal for both the *gradated response threshold* and *snapshot response threshold* measures. Thus, hypothesis 13 was supported. In response to research question 5, no significant actor-by-role effects emerged. In sum, for both husbands and wives, the higher one's threshold, the more likely one is to report partner-demand/actor-withdrawal in division of labor conflict.

Hypothesis 14 predicted that partners' global response threshold levels would negatively associate with actors' reports of partner-demand/actor-withdrawal during division of labor conflict (i.e., the lower a partner's threshold, the more he/she demands while the actor withdraws). Research question 6 asked whether the relationship between partners' global response threshold levels and actors' reports of partner-demand/actor-withdrawal varied according to the actor's role (husband vs. wife). A significant partner effect emerged for global response threshold on partner-demand/actor-withdrawal for the *snapshot response*

threshold measure. Thus, hypothesis 14 was supported. In response to research question 6, no significant partner-by-role effects emerged. In sum, for both husbands and wives, the lower one's partner's threshold, the more likely one is to report partner-demand/actor-withdrawal in division of labor conflict.

Hypothesis 15 predicted that actors' and partners' response thresholds would interact to predict actor reports of partner-demand/actor-withdrawal during division of labor conflict. Research question 7 asked whether the hypothesized interaction effect for actors' and partners' response thresholds on partner-demand/actor-withdrawal was qualified by actor role (husband vs. wife). A significant actor-by-partner interaction effect emerged for the *gradated response threshold* and *snapshot response threshold* measures. Thus, hypothesis 15 is supported. Examination of the simple slopes revealed that the effect of actor threshold on partner-demand/actor-withdrawal is stronger when individuals' partners have relatively low thresholds (see Figure 11). For individuals whose partners have relatively low thresholds, partner-demand/actor-withdrawal increases as the actor's threshold increases. However, among individuals whose partners have relatively high thresholds, partner-demand/actor-withdrawal is essentially unaffected by actor's threshold. In regards to research question 7, no significant actor-by-partner-by-role effects were obtained.

Figure 11. Actor-Threshold-By-Partner-Threshold Effect on Partner-Demand / Actor-Withdraw



As described in the preceding paragraphs, none of the significant actor, partner, or actor-by-partner interaction effects for partner-demand/actor-withdrawal was qualified by the role variable (husband vs. wife). However, there was a significant *main* effect for role on partner-demand/actor-withdrawal for both the *snapshot response threshold* measure and the *disorder tolerance* measure, such that husbands report more partner-demand/actor-withdrawal in division of labor conflict than do wives.

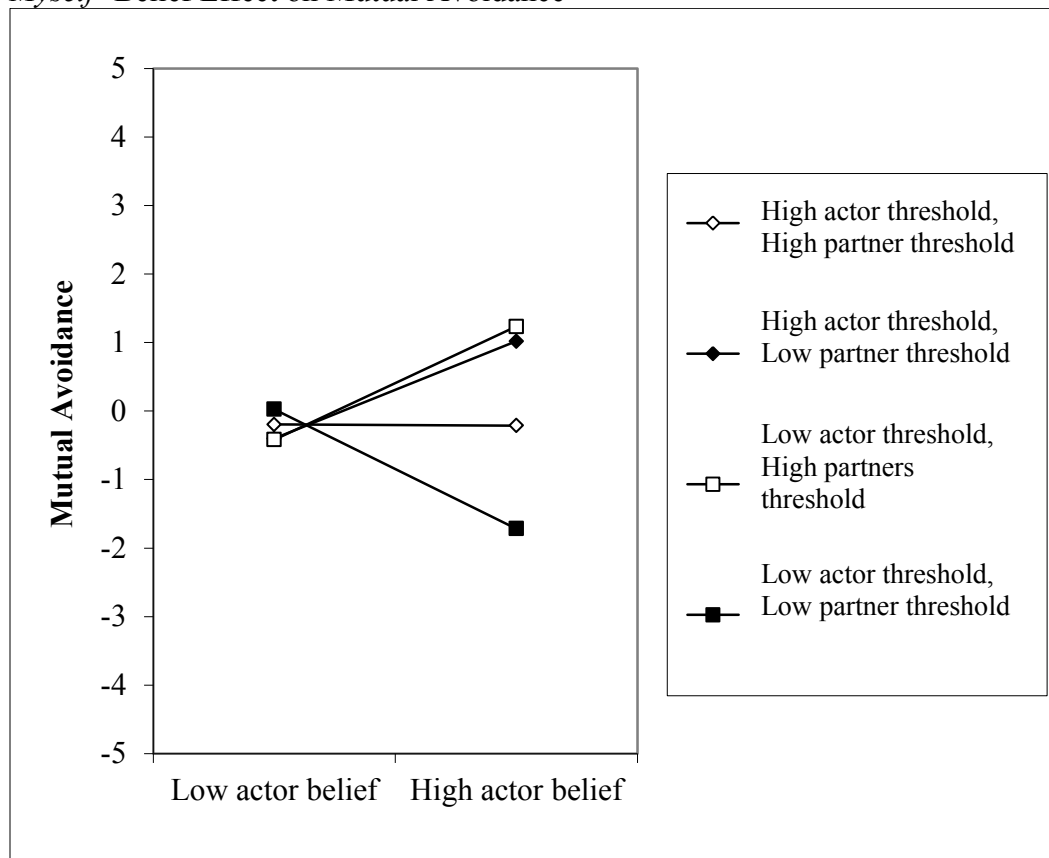
Avoidance. Hypothesis 16 predicted that actors' and partners' global response threshold levels would interact to predict actors' reports of mutual avoidance during division of labor conflict. The hypothesized actor-partner interaction was not significant for any of the three measures of global response threshold. Thus, hypothesis 16 was not supported.

Research question 8 asked whether the hypothesized interaction effect of actors' threshold and partners' threshold on avoidance was qualified by actors' perceived benefits of avoidance. As described previously, the principal components analysis of the perceived benefits measure revealed three distinct factors: 1) the perception that it is easier to simply do the work than ask for help (i.e., *easier to do it myself*), 2) the perception that engaging in conflict won't improve the situation (i.e., *not going to improve*), and 3) the perception that it is not appropriate to engage in conflict over household labor (i.e., *not worth fighting about*). The effects of each of these perceptions were estimated separately. Therefore, a total of nine APIMs were estimated, one for each of the three perceptions, crossed with each of the three measures of response threshold. Several main and interaction effects emerged; table 14 summarizes the significant effects obtained.

First, a main effect emerged for the *easier to do it myself* belief. Actors' perception that it is easier to do household work oneself than to negotiate help from one's partner is positively associated with their reports of mutual avoidance of division of labor conflict. This belief was also found to interact with actors' and partners' response thresholds to predict mutual avoidance. Examination of the simple slopes revealed three distinct patterns embedded within this interaction (see Figure 12). For individuals who have relatively low thresholds and whose partners have relatively high thresholds, mutual avoidance is more likely to the extent that actors perceive that it is easier to do the work oneself than to engage in conflict. This pattern also holds true for individuals who have relatively high

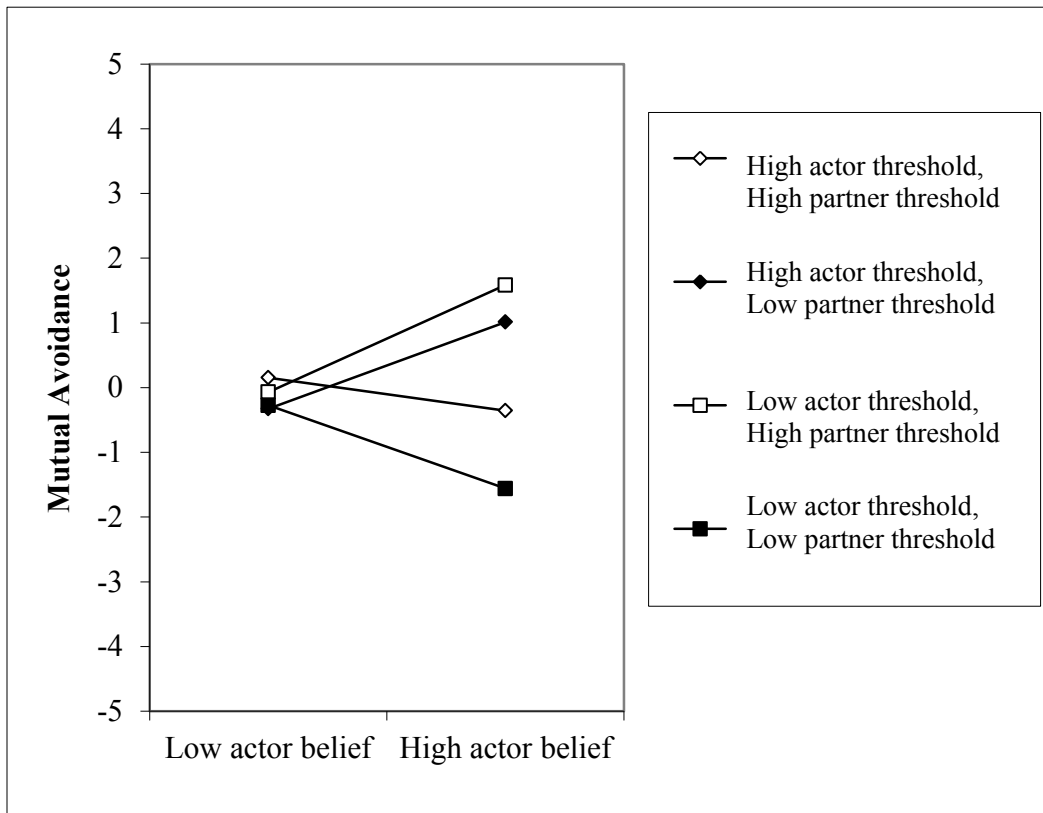
thresholds and whose partners have relatively low thresholds. The opposite pattern is true among individuals who have a relatively low threshold and whose partners have a relatively low threshold as well. For actors in these dyads, mutual avoidance is less likely to the extent that actors espouse the belief that housework is less work than conflict over housework. Finally, among individuals who have relatively high thresholds and whose partners have relatively high thresholds as well, reports of mutual avoidance are unaffected by the perception that housework is less demanding than household labor conflict.

Figure 12. Actor Threshold-By-Partner-Threshold-By-Actor-*Easier-To-Do-It-Myself*-Belief Effect on Mutual Avoidance



Finally, a main effect for the *not worth fighting about* belief also emerged. Actors' espousal of the belief that it is not appropriate to engage in conflict over household labor positively associated with actors' reports of mutual avoidance of domestic labor conflict. The *not worth fighting about* belief was also found to interact with actors' and partners' response thresholds to predict mutual avoidance. Examination of the simple slopes revealed two distinct patterns embedded within this interaction (see Figure 13). For dyads in which partners are more *dissimilar* in response thresholds, mutual avoidance is more likely to the extent that actors perceive division of labor conflict to be *not worth fighting about*. For dyads in which partners are more *similar* in response thresholds, mutual avoidance is *less* likely to the extent that actors perceive division of labor conflict to be *not worth fighting about*.

Figure 13. Actor Threshold-By-Partner-Threshold-By-Actor- *Not-Worth-Fighting-About* -Belief Effect on Mutual Avoidance



Chapter 5

DISCUSSION

Summary and Implications

According to the integrated theory of the division of domestic labor (Alberts, et al., 2011), response threshold is an important individual difference contributing to the allocation of domestic labor in heterosexual households. Previous research has demonstrated that response thresholds associate significantly with domestic labor contributions and domestic labor conflict among same-sex roommates. Through the present study, I sought to extend this literature through a focus on domestic labor allocation and domestic labor conflict in heterosexual marriages.

Through this study I also sought to complicate our understanding of reasons for avoidance of household labor conflict. Researchers interested in the management of household labor conflict have noted that dissatisfaction with division of domestic labor does not always produce explicit conflict (Weismann, et al., 2008). Previous research based on qualitative interviews has suggested possible reasons for stoicism in the face of dissatisfaction with labor allocation, such as the perception that household labor is an unworthy conflict topic (Weismann, et al., 2008). Given these suggestions by previous research, and given that avoidance of domestic labor conflict tends to be associated with negative relational outcomes, the present study was also a means to find empirical evidence of various “logics” of household labor conflict avoidance.

A unique feature of the present investigation is its focus on marital *dyads*. The focus on dyads confers benefits in regards to both method and theory. Methodologically, dyadic analysis allows for the examination of the effects of features of each spouse on their own behavior, as well as their influence on their spouse. In terms of testing theory, dyadic analysis is preferable because it allows for the examination of tenets of the integrated theory of the division of domestic labor at *two levels*. At the individual level, the influence of response threshold on individual behavior is examined. At the dyadic level, the interaction among dyad members' response thresholds is modeled. The latter is a critical component for testing the integrated theory of the division of domestic labor, given that it claims explicitly that domestic labor allocation is co-produced among members of the household.

Role differences in response threshold. In this study, wives reported significantly lower global response thresholds across the three measures – the gradated response threshold measure, snapshot response threshold measure, and disorder tolerance scale. Also, wives reported significantly lower task-specific response thresholds than husbands for all tasks except dusting. In other words, wives are disturbed sooner than husbands by household disorder and tasks undone. This finding supports an important tenet of the integrative theory, that on average women are likely to possess lower threshold levels than men and that this difference contributes to their over-performance of domestic labor. Although we now know that threshold level is associated with sex, it is not yet clear why this is true. Alberts et al. argue that women's lower threshold may be due to their

greater sensitivity to smells and more keen awareness of details (Doty, Applebaumk, Zushos, & Settle, 1985; Thuerlauf et al., 2009; Sax, 2005). They also hypothesize that it may also be due, in part, to role socialization (Babcock & Laschever, 2003; Canary & Emmers-Sommer, 1997; Maccoby, 1990; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Both of these explanations, as well as others, need to be studied so that we can better understand the origin of this role difference.

Significant role effects in this study should also be interpreted in light of the modest effect sizes obtained. Role accounted for 12% of the variance in the composite measure of global response threshold. For task-specific response thresholds, variance explained ranged from 4% to 11% depending on the task. Therefore, sex explains a substantial, but not an overwhelming, portion of the variance in individual response threshold. Moreover, it is important to not overlook instances in which husbands possess lower thresholds than their wives. In this study, although wives had lower response thresholds in the aggregate, husbands reported lower global thresholds in roughly one-third (36%) of dyads. Therefore, future research should tease out other factors that contribute to response threshold (e.g., personality factors), conditions in which men are likely to be bothered sooner, and how this affects both household labor allocation and communication about housework.

Task performance as a function of response threshold. For global housework, as well as all tasks except dusting, actors made greater contributions to domestic labor the lower their response thresholds – that is, the more disturbed they were by tasks undone. However, for two tasks - trash removal and

vacuuming/sweeping – this effect held for husbands but not wives. Wives' contributions to trash removal and vacuuming/sweeping were essentially identical regardless of their level of disturbance.

For global housework, as well as five tasks - making beds, clearing clutter, cleaning dishes, and taking out garbage - actors made greater contributions to household labor the greater their partners' thresholds – that is, the less disturbed their partners were. For bed making, however, this effect held for husbands but not wives. Wives' contributions to bed making were essentially identical regardless of how bothered their husbands' were.

These significant actor and partner effects validate a central claim of the integrative theory of the division of domestic labor: individuals with lower threshold levels, and those whose partner possess higher thresholds, perform more domestic labor. This is true both globally and for specific domestic tasks. These findings suggest, then, that threshold level differences provide at least a partial explanation for the allocation of domestic labor among heterosexual couples. The results are important for two reasons. Foremost, this is the first theory of household labor allocation, apart from sex role theory, to receive empirical support. This finding allows us to better understand the individual characteristics that impact the performance of household labor. In addition, the findings provide a theoretical explanation that models behavior by both sexes. That is, for most tasks, threshold levels predict domestic labor performance regardless of an individual's sex.

The integrated theory of the division of domestic labor also predicts that the effect of *both* spouses' thresholds, relative to one another, explains the allocation of domestic labor. Previous research (O'Colmain & Alberts, 2008; Riforgiate, 2011) found that one partner's report of threshold differences among dyad members associated with greater disparities in global household labor performance. In the present study, the impact of dyad members' relative threshold levels was assessed through the examination of actor-partner interaction effects. The predicted actor-partner interactions were observed for only two tasks (i.e., making beds and vacuuming/sweeping). For two additional tasks (i.e., bathroom cleaning and laundry) an actor-partner effect emerged but was qualified by role, creating a pattern that deviated from the predictions of the theory. For the remaining tasks, as well as for global thresholds, no significant actor-partner interactions emerged.

The failure in the present study to replicate the findings of Riforgiate (2011) and O'Colmain and Alberts (2008) may be due to differences in the populations under investigation. For instance, it may be the case that *discrepancies* in threshold serve as a larger determinant of labor allocation among same-sex roommates compared to marital dyads, given that in the latter, partners also contend with gender performance and marital role expectations (Davis, Greenstein, & Gerteisen Marks, 2007). Alternately, the difference in findings could be attributed to a difference in method of measuring partners' relative thresholds between previous investigations and the present study. Previous research has relied on one partner's reports of the discrepancy in response

thresholds within the dyad. For example, O'Colmain and Alberts (2008) asked participants to rate their own threshold in comparison to their partner (e.g., dusting left undone “would bother me and my roommate equally,” vs. “would bother me a lot more”). By contrast, in the present study, discrepancies in threshold are modeled as an interaction term encompassing *each* spouse's reports of their own threshold. This approach is advantageous in that collecting data from both spouses probably produces more accurate estimates of threshold differences. The drawback is that statistical interactions are difficult to detect after controlling for main effects. Thus, for the purposes of this study, threshold influences at the dyadic level can really only be examined in terms of separate actor and partner main effects. This fact doesn't detract from the integrative theory, however. Despite the fact that few significant interaction effects were obtained, it is clear from these data that both spouses' thresholds impact domestic labor allocation.

Based on the relative number of actor effects detected relative to partner effects, the larger estimates for actor versus partner effects, the larger proportion of variance accounted for by actor effects compared to partner effects, and the mostly nonsignificant interaction effects, these data suggest that one's own threshold is a stronger determinant of behavior than one's partner's threshold or the difference between the two. This is not surprising, given that in most social- and behavioral-scientific research, individuals' behavior is more strongly linked to their own attitudes rather than others' attitudes. In this case, one's own threshold likely serves as a kind of “anchor” for one's performance. One's

partner's threshold may “check” that behavior, depending on his/her threshold level for a given task.

The relative influence of response threshold versus role. In this investigation, actors' response thresholds accounted for substantial proportions of the variance in performance (range = 2% to 19%, mean = 7.1%), yet these were smaller than the proportion of variance accounted for by role (range = 5% and 51%, mean = 26.1%). At face value, role is the more robust predictor of domestic labor performance. However, these findings do not necessarily detract from the importance of response threshold as a construct, nor undermine the theory being tested. The integrative theory of the division of domestic labor (Alberts et al., 2011) posits that the influence of one's threshold on performance over time leads to a division of labor that is implicitly agreed-upon but relatively firm. In the words of Alberts et al. (2011), various tasks come to be understood in the dyad as “belonging” to the individual who performs them frequently. In this way, Alberts et al. argue, even small initial sex differences in threshold can become exaggerated into large sex differences in performance. This line of thinking is helpful in interpreting the findings of the present study. The comparatively smaller effect of response threshold may be due to the fact that at the time of this cross-sectional investigation, couples had been married an average of approximately 20 years, and therefore initial individual differences in threshold have over time been sedimented into implicit task assignments by role. Previous research on other forms of domestic labor has shown that the sedimentation process can happen rather quickly. In the case of infant caretaking (Hrdy, 1999),

very small sex differences in responsiveness to an infant's cry exhibit a schismogenetic effect, leading to a major inequality in caretaking responsibility while the child is still very young. It is reasonable to conclude, therefore, that the observed effects of threshold and sex in the present study are not mutually exclusive. Rather, response threshold, in addition to operating as a predictor in its own right, is arguably partly constitutive of the observed sex differences in performance.

Response threshold and demand/withdraw patterns. The findings for the demand/withdrawal pattern in this study support the integrative theory of the division of domestic labor as well as contribute to the literature on the *structure* of demand/withdrawal in marital conflict. Partners' response thresholds affect the presence of demand/withdrawal in domestic labor conflict, and importantly, influence *who* demands and *who* withdraws.

The findings for individuals' reports of *partner-demand/actor-withdrawal* (i.e., individuals reporting that their partner pursues while they avoid or flee the discussion) were relatively straightforward. Both husbands and wives reported that their spouse demand, and they withdraw, the lower the spouse's threshold. Husbands and wives also reported that their own thresholds effected partner-demand/actor-withdraw (i.e., partner-demand/actor-withdraw increased as actors thresholds increased), but only if they were married to someone fairly disturbed by household disorder. The lower one spouse's level of disturbance (i.e., the higher one spouse's threshold), the less that one's own threshold affects partner-demand/actor-withdrawal.

The findings for actor-demand/partner-withdraw were more complex. Wives report that the higher their disturbance by household disorder, the more they demand and their husbands withdraw. For husbands, the opposite is true. The more disturbed husbands are, the less they demand and the less their wives' withdraw. To further complicate matters, the effects of one's *partner's* threshold effects husbands and wives differently. Wives, regardless of their own threshold, are more likely to report that they demand and that their husbands withdraw the higher their husband's thresholds. However, the effect of wives' thresholds on husband-demand/wife-withdraw differs depending on husbands' own threshold. Husbands with relatively high thresholds report demanding more the higher their wives' thresholds. Husbands with relatively low thresholds (i.e., those who are more disturbed by household disorder) actually demand *less* the higher their wives' thresholds. One possible explanation for this difference is men's greater likelihood of experiencing emotional flooding during conflict. Emotional flooding refers to an overwhelming and diffuse physiological arousal that disrupts men's ability to remain engaged in conflict (Gottman, 1999). Perhaps for men with low threshold levels, their dissatisfaction with their partners may create negative emotions that instead of motivating them to confront, compels them to avoid or withdraw. This may also help to explain patterns observed in previous research whereby husband-initiated topics are more likely to produce husband-withdraw/wife-demand (Holtzworth-Munroe, et al., 1998; Klinetob & Smith, 1996; Papp, et al., 2009).

The above findings are consistent with previous demand/withdraw research suggesting that *sex* and *topic initiator* work in concert to influence the structure of demand/withdraw (Holtzworth-Munroe, et al., 1998; Klinetob & Smith, 1996; Papp, et al., 2009). That is, wives' demanding behavior is a function of the degree to which they seek change in the status quo – evidence of the importance of the structure of the conflict. However, the same is not true for husbands, which is evidence for the importance of marital role. The latter suggests that with respect to housework, husbands do not report responding to the role of “complaine” in the same way that wives do. In all, the data in the present study suggest that the role of topic initiator is at least as influential in demand/withdraw patterns as is role: the summed effect sizes for actor threshold, partner threshold, and the actor by partner threshold interaction indicate that those three effects account for 12% of the variance, compared to a range of 5-8% of variance accounted for by actor role.

Finally, the findings here demonstrate a discrepancy in husbands' and wives' reports of wives' demanding behavior and husbands' withdrawing behavior. There was a significant sex difference in reports of partner-demand/actor-withdrawal, such that husbands report more partner-demand/actor-withdrawal in division of labor conflict than do wives. That is, husbands report that their wives demand more than vice versa. However, there was not a statistically significant difference between husbands' and wives' reports of their *own* demanding behavior. Thus, husbands report that wives demand more, but wives do not necessarily agree. On one hand, there may be a social desirability

bias operating in that women are reticent to report that they demand. On the other hand, cultural stereotypes hold that women complain more than men, which may be activated when husbands and wives are asked to describe the conflict roles taken on by their spouses.

The logic of avoidance. It is somewhat of a curiosity to scholars that individuals who are overburdened by domestic labor should not always engage in explicit conflict about it. In the face of inequity, whereas some individuals engage in overt conflict, still others exhibit a sort of stoicism, silently enduring unfairness and at times making concessions alone to make the workload more manageable (Weismann, et al., 2008).

Previous literature has hinted at some of the reasons why individuals might avoid conflict in the face of inequity. Based on this literature, three reasons were assessed and tested in this study. Support was found for two – the perception that it is *easier* to perform household labor oneself than to engage in conflict about it, and the perception that household labor is not a *worthy* or *appropriate* topic for conflict. Taken together, these findings expand our understanding of the dynamics of domestic labor conflict, but also push the boundaries of how scholars should study the division of domestic labor in marital households.

It was found that actors *generally* report more mutual conflict avoidance in the dyad to the extent that they perceive it to be easier to perform household labor themselves than to engage in overt conflict about it. A significant 3-way interaction revealed that this effect held for dyads in which partners have the most discrepant thresholds (with either the actor or the partner reporting the lower

threshold), but was reversed for those in which dyad members have similarly high thresholds. (For couples who had similarly low thresholds, mutual avoidance was unaffected by perception that performing housework is easier.) One interpretation for this finding is that among the most threshold-discrepant dyads, the difference in standards makes common ground more elusive and thus the difficulty of engaging in conflict is made more salient. What is interesting, however, is that this effect occurs for actors *both* when they possess the lower threshold as well as when they report a *higher* threshold than their partner. The former invokes images of stoicism described in previous research, whereby a lower-threshold-possessing, overburdened, partner performs the lion's share of housework rather than trying to negotiate change with a reluctant partner. The latter, however, may represent scenarios in which the higher-threshold possessing partner *conforms* to the standards of his/her spouse, even though he/she is not yet bothered by it. Regardless of who is accommodating whom, a key implication of these findings is that marital dyads appear to be weighing the physical labor of performing common household tasks against the emotional labor (Erickson, 2005; Hochschild, 1983) of explicit negotiations about housework.

It was also found that actors generally reported more conflict avoidance in the dyad to the extent that they espoused the belief that household labor was *not worth fighting about*. As with the *easier to do it myself* belief, a significant interaction effect revealed that this pattern held only for couples with dissimilar response thresholds. The importance of the *not worth fighting about* belief is probably best gleaned by examining it in its historical context. I would argue that

the perception that household labor is not a worthy or appropriate source or topic of conflict is at least partly a remnant of thinking about the private sphere that emerged in the United States as a result of the industrial revolution. Prior to the industrial revolution, there was no division of public and private spheres of work, as families in agrarian economies worked as a unit to feed, clothe, and provide shelter for members. Whatever could not be produced by the family unit could be traded or bartered for with other families in the community. With the advent of industrialization, however, the shift to mass production divided family members into those who worked in public production for pay, and those who worked in familial production for the upkeep of the household. As sociologists and historians have pointed out (Siegel, 1994; Williams, 2000), the cultural legacy of this logistical change was that the private sphere came to be understood as a place of refuge or respite from the harried life of the public sphere. As Siegel explains, in the post-industrial private sphere, a husband found he could:

[Seek] refuge from the vexations and embarrassments of business, an enchanting repose from exertion, a relaxation from care by the interchange of affection: where some of his finest sympathies, tastes, and moral and religious feelings are formed and nourished, - where is the treasury of pure disinterested love, such as is seldom found in the busy walks of a selfish and calculating world. (p. 1196)

As such, the private sphere was transformed from a place in which business transactions were a regular part of everyday life, to a place not to be sullied by rational bargaining. The result of this ideology has been observed throughout

American political culture, not least in American family law, where attempts to collect entitlements for domestic work – say, in the case of a failed marriage – have been labeled “cold” or “calculated” (Williams, 2000)

I would argue that traces of this ideology also permeate *interpersonal* interactions surrounding household labor, and such is the reason that we see participants avoiding division of labor conflict because they believe it is not “appropriate.” Individuals’ reticence to engage in overt negotiations of “who will do what” may be, at least in part, a result of an ideology that in so doing, the concept of marriage or romance is somehow corrupted or demeaned. The material consequence of such a belief, of course, is that couples are more likely to rely on implicit arrangements that, if this study is any indication, benefit the higher-threshold possessing partner.

Taken together, the findings on reasons for avoidance make three contributions to the study of household labor conflict avoidance. First, although mutual avoidance is associated with negative relational outcomes, it may a reasonable choice that is best for individuals and couples who feel they have more to lose than gain by initiating conflict. Second, this study provides further evidence for the inclusion of emotion work in conceptualizations of household labor. Finally, these findings suggest that more research is needed to understand the potential “chilling effect” of a perception that household labor is somehow an unworthy or inappropriate conflict topic. As I have argued here, that is probably best done in light of the politico-cultural context in which couples negotiate their private lives.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Although this study uncovered several findings that contribute to our understanding of household labor allocation and conflict, and in so doing supported and refined the integrative theory, it is not without limitations. First, this study relied on self-reports of *general* conflict behavior. A potential disadvantage of this form of self-report data compared to diary methods is that self-report assessments usually rely on participants' ability to recall information and generalize about conflict patterns. That limitation could potentially be countered in future research if a focus on a specific conflict episode (i.e., the most recent conflict over the division of domestic labor), rather than a global assessment of domestic-labor-related conflicts, were employed.

Second, the couples in this sample were fairly satisfied with the division of labor in their homes and did not engage in division of labor conflict very frequently. This pattern is typical in social scientific studies that rely on non-random volunteer samples, wherein more satisfied couples are more likely to participate. Moreover, given the association between division of labor conflict and marital difficulty, and the fact that the couples in this sample had been married an average of twenty years, these couples ostensibly represent those who have resolved (or suppressed, perhaps) the majority of their division of labor disagreements. Therefore, the findings of this study are most generalizable to non-distressed couples. Future research should attempt to replicate the findings among moderately or even highly-distressed couples, particularly because those

are the couples for which the deleterious effects of household labor inequity might be the most salient. Future research should also examine dyads at different stages of coupledness (e.g., newlyweds, new parents), as well as examine the influence of individuals' pre-cohabitation response thresholds on labor allocation and domestic labor conflict after the couple has moved in together.

Third, although hours spent weekly in paid work were entered as control variables, the analyses here did not account for presence of children in the home, nor children's contributions to household labor. Both of these factors should be considered in future studies, given that the presence of children can certainly add to, as well as relieve (for better or worse), the burden of domestic labor on one or both parents.

Finally, this program of research can be greatly enhanced through a better understanding of the composition and features of response thresholds: To what extent are response thresholds biologically based? To what extent are thresholds a product of modeling and/or socialization? How rigid or stable are individual response thresholds? Are threshold levels influenced by life events such as change in marital status, occupation change, or the birth of children? To what extent do spouses influence each other's response thresholds? Answers to these and similar questions will both clarify the nature of this newly articulated theoretical construct as well as illuminate its role in couples' communication about unpaid domestic labor.

Conclusion

This study provides initial support for the integrative theory of the division of domestic labor among heterosexual married couples; it provides evidence that individuals' response thresholds are influential in their and their partners' domestic labor performance, as well as dyadic domestic labor conflict patterns. In so doing, it helps to further our understanding of the reasons that women often shoulder a heavier burden of domestic labor, even when controlling for hours spend by partners in paid work, while simultaneously highlighting the fact that in roughly a third of dyads, husbands are more disturbed by household disorder than their wives. This study also extends our understanding of both the demand/withdraw and mutual avoidance conflict patterns, which are particularly important given the negative relational outcomes associated with deploying these two strategies in response to dissatisfaction with allocation of household labor. This investigation also contributes an innovative method of measuring the construct of response threshold, one that more clearly operationalizes "disorder" and "disturbance." Perhaps most importantly, this study has examined these relationships from a dyadic perspective – looking at the complementary behaviors of dyad members, as well as assessing the effects of both dyad members on domestic labor performance and communication about it.

Table 1

Factor Loadings for Exploratory Factor Analysis With Varimax Rotation of The CPQ-SF

<i>When issues or problems arise related to housework or household chores, how likely is it that...</i>	<i>Actor-Demand / Partner Withdraw</i>	<i>Partner-Demand / Actor-Withdraw</i>	<i>Mutually Constructive</i>	<i>Mutually Avoidant</i>
You criticize while your partner tries to ignore you	0.85	0.09	-0.09	-0.02
You attempt to discuss the problem while your partner tries to avoid the topic	0.85	0.20	0.01	0.11
You complain, but your partner doesn't even want to talk about the issue	0.82	0.18	-0.10	0.10
You nag or demand while your partner withdraws, becomes silent, or refuses to discuss the matter further	0.82	0.11	-0.17	0.04
Your partner nags or demands while you withdraw, become silent, or refuse to discuss the matter further	0.13	0.86	-0.11	0.08
Your partner complains, but you don't want to talk about the issue	0.15	0.85	-0.05	0.09
Your partner criticizes while you try to ignore him/her	0.23	0.81	-0.16	0.07
Your partner attempts to discuss the problem while you try to avoid the topic	0.10	0.80	-0.13	0.21
Both partners suggest possible solutions or compromises	-0.18	-0.14	0.87	-0.14

Both you and your partner try to constructively discuss the problem	-0.18	-0.16	0.86	-0.15
Both you and your partner express your feelings to each other	0.02	-0.10	0.81	-0.27
Neither you nor your partner brings up the issue	-0.05	0.05	-0.14	0.87
Neither you nor your partner talk about the problem	0.07	0.11	-0.20	0.82
Both you and your partner avoid discussing the problem	0.19	0.26	-0.192	0.72

Note. Factor loadings > .50 are in boldface.

Table 2

Intercorrelations for Items Forming the Actor-Demand /Partner-Withdraw Factor of the CPQ-SF

<i>When issues or problems arise related to housework or household chores, how likely is it that...</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
1. You criticize while your partner tries to ignore you	-			
2. You attempt to discuss the problem while your partner tries to avoid the topic	.62***	-		
3. You complain, but your partner doesn't even want to talk about the issue	.62***	.74***	-	
4. You nag or demand while your partner withdraws, becomes silent, or refuses to discuss the matter further	.68***	.60***	.56***	-

* $p < .20$. ** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$.

Table 3

Intercorrelations for Items Forming the Partner-Demand / Actor-Withdraw Factor of the CPQ-SF

<i>When issues or problems arise related to housework or household chores, how likely is it that...</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
1. Your partner nags or demands while you withdraw, become silent, or refuse to discuss the matter further	-			
2. Your partner complains, but you don't want to talk about the issue	.69***	-		
3. Your partner criticizes while you try to ignore him/her	.68***	.66***	-	
4. Your partner attempts to discuss the problem while you try to avoid the topic	.63***	.61***	.65***	-

* $p < .20$. ** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$.

Table 4

Intercorrelations for Items Forming the Mutually Constructive Factor of the CPQ-SF

<i>When issues or problems arise related to housework or household chores, how likely is it that...</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>
1. Both partners suggest possible solutions or compromises	-		
2. Both you and your partner try to constructively discuss the problem	.76***	-	
3. Both you and your partner express your feelings to each other	.64***	.63***	-

* $p < .20$. ** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$.

Table 5

Intercorrelations for Items Forming the Mutually Avoidant Factor of the CPQ-SF

<i>When issues or problems arise related to housework or household chores, how likely is it that...</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>
1. Neither you nor your partner brings up the issue	-		
2. Neither you nor your partner talk about the problem	.61***	-	
3. Both you and your partner avoid discussing the problem	.52***	.50***	-

* $p < .20$. ** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$.

Table 6

Factor Loadings for Exploratory Factor Analysis With Varimax Rotation of Perceived Benefits of Avoidance of Domestic Labor Conflict

<i>Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements.</i>	<i>Easier to do it myself</i>	<i>Not worth fighting about</i>	<i>Not going to improve</i>
It is easier to just do household work myself than try to get my partner to help	0.85	0.09	0.18
It is easier to do household work on my own than explain to my partner what needs to be done	0.85	0.08	0.16
I would rather just do housework myself than get in a disagreement with my partner about it	0.70	0.23	-0.07
I do not think housework is worth having a disagreement about	0.03	0.81	0.01
Problems with the division of housework are not worth mentioning	0.28	0.73	0.24
Discussing who does which household chores is not appropriate	0.13	0.67	0.14
Having a disagreement about the division of housework with my partner will lead to positive change (reversed)	0.04	0.13	0.87
Having a disagreement over housework with my partner will improve the situation (reversed)	0.16	0.15	0.84

Note. Factor loadings > .50 are in boldface.

Table 7

Intercorrelations for Items Forming the “Easier to Do it Myself” Factor of the Perceived Benefits of Avoidance of Domestic Labor Conflict Scale

<i>Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements.</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>
It is easier to just do household work myself than try to get my partner to help	-		
It is easier to do household work on my own than explain to my partner what needs to be done	.67***	-	
I would rather just do housework myself than get in a disagreement with my partner about it	.43***	.43***	-

* $p < .20$. ** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$.

Table 8

Intercorrelations for Items Forming the “Not Worth Fighting About” Factor of the Perceived Benefits of Avoidance of Domestic Labor Conflict Scale

<i>Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements.</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>
I do not think housework is worth having a disagreement about	-		
Problems with the division of housework are not worth mentioning	.45***	-	
Discussing who does which household chores is not appropriate	.28***	.41***	-

* $p < .20$. ** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$.

Table 9

Correlation for Items Forming the “Not Going to Improve” Factor of the Perceived Benefits of Avoidance of Domestic Labor Conflict Scale

<i>Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements.</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>
Having a disagreement about the division of housework with my partner will lead to positive change (reversed)	-	
Having a disagreement over housework with my partner will improve the situation (reversed)	.54***	-

* $p < .20$. ** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$.

Table 10

Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations for Dependent Variables

Variable	Husbands		Wives		<i>r</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Global Domestic Labor Perf. (Hours	3.93	4.31	10.55	7.89	-.03
Task-Specific Domestic Labor Perf.					
Clean bathroom(s)	2.71	1.62	5.64	1.68	-.73***
Make bed(s)	2.95	1.83	5.06	1.93	-.68***
Pick up clutter	3.48	1.44	5.33	1.31	-.46***
Clean dishes	3.46	1.68	4.95	1.61	-.72***
Dust	2.56	1.73	5.83	1.76	-.60***
Laundry	2.23	1.54	5.84	1.56	-.85***
Kitchen Surfaces	3.33	1.51	5.46	1.48	-.64***
Take out trash	5.19	1.54	3.19	1.78	-.69***
Vacuum / Sweep floor	3.26	1.83	5.19	1.86	-.68***
Global Response Threshold (Gradated	2.11	0.43	1.95	0.36	.36***
Global Response Threshold (Snapshot	2.68	0.81	2.47	0.77	.33***
Global Response Threshold (Disorder	3.86	1.31	3.43	1.49	.21***
Task-Specific Response Threshold					
Clean bathroom(s)	2.21	0.56	1.98	0.50	.26**
Make bed(s)	2.15	0.75	1.91	0.80	.41**
Pick up clutter	1.82	0.54	1.63	0.44	.25**
Clean dishes	1.95	0.49	1.79	0.40	.38**
Laundry	2.38	0.48	2.29	0.43	.29**
Take out trash	2.15	0.36	2.10	0.34	.20*

(continued)

Variable	Husbands		Wives		<i>r</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Task-Specific Response Threshold					
Clean bathroom(s)	2.73	1.22	2.34	1.21	.18*
Make bed(s)	3.03	1.32	2.85	1.45	.43**
Pick up clutter	1.86	1.13	1.40	0.70	.06
Clean dishes	2.53	1.23	2.27	1.14	.32**
Laundry	3.18	0.94	3.16	1.01	.14
Take out trash	2.75	0.81	2.82	0.80	.21**
Task-Specific Response Threshold					
Clean bathroom(s)	3.52	1.55	3.14	1.87	
Make bed(s)	4.77	1.82	4.45	2.17	.19*
Pick up clutter	3.71	1.71	3.01	1.77	.20*
Clean dishes	3.24	1.68	2.83	1.75	.21**
Dust	4.53	1.61	4.39	1.76	.16*
Laundry	3.79	1.77	3.72	2.11	.18*
Kitchen Surfaces	3.46	1.70	2.75	1.72	.15
Take out trash	3.56	1.89	2.84	1.75	.20*
Vacuum / Sweep floor	4.14	1.56	3.73	1.84	.20*
Division of Labor Conflict Frequency	2.48	1.43	2.32	1.44	.42***
Mutual Avoidance	2.71	1.49	2.51	1.60	.38***
Mutual Constructive	4.61	1.53	4.61	1.87	.32***
Actor-Demand/Partner-Withdraw	2.17	1.22	2.18	1.53	.86***
Partner-Demand/Actor-Withdraw	2.37	1.46	1.79	1.25	.08

* $p < .20$. ** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$.

Table 11

Significant Univariate Effects for Role Differences in Response Threshold

Dependent Variable	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	Partial η^2
Global ^a	1,154	19.86***	0.11
Global ^b	1,154	7.70**	.05
Global ^c	1,154	8.88**	.06
Make bed(s) ^a	1,154	12.98***	0.08
Clean bathroom(s) ^a	1,154	20.1***	0.12
Clean bathroom(s) ^b	1,147	7.51*	0.05
Clean bathroom(s) ^c	1,134	4.82*	0.04
Clean dishes ^a	1,154	15.91***	0.09
Clean dishes ^c	1,134	5.19*	0.04
Pick up clutter ^a	1,154	15.11***	0.09
Pick up clutter ^b	1,147	18.08***	0.11
Pick up clutter ^c	1,134	14.22***	0.10
Laundry ^a	1,154	4.71*	0.03
Take out trash ^c	1,134	16.85***	0.11
Kitchen Surfaces ^c	1,134	16.34***	0.11
Vacuum / Sweep floor ^c	1,134	5.05*	0.04

Table 12

Summary of APIM Analyses Predicting Task Performance From Response Threshold

Domestic task	Significant Predictors	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	β	<i>t</i>	η^2
Clean bathroom(s)	Actor threshold ^a	1,108	5.56**	-0.89	-2.47	0.05
	Actor threshold ^b	1,123	2.8*	-0.17	-1.67	0.02
	Actor threshold x partner threshold ^a	1,81	0.08**	1.13	2.63	0.08
	Role ^a	1,92	34.01** *	-2.29	-5.83	0.27
	Role ^b	1,92	52.53** *	-2.67	-7.25	0.36
	Actor threshold x partner threshold ^a x role	1,89	7.42**	-2.16	-2.72	0.08
Make bed(s)	Actor threshold ^a	1,108	26.15** *	-1.08	-5.11	0.19
	Actor threshold ^b	1,106	9.24**	-0.37	-3.04	0.08
	Actor threshold ^c	1,121	8.68**	-0.2	-2.95	0.07
	Partner threshold ^a	1,108	9.48***	0.98	3.7	0.11
	Partner threshold ^b	1,106	3.55**	0.47	2.91	0.07
	Partner threshold ^c	1,126	4.13**	0.26	2.8	0.06
	Actor threshold x partner threshold ^a	1,88	3.11*	0.26	1.77	0.03
	Role ^a	1,91	7.12**	-1.1	-2.67	0.07
	Role ^b	1,91	14.8***	-1.58	-3.85	0.14
	Role ^c	1,88	15.76** *	-1.65	-3.97	0.15
	Partner threshold x role ^a	1,165	4.35*	-0.67	-2.09	0.03
	Partner threshold x role ^b	1,158	6.96**	-0.48	-2.64	0.04
	Partner threshold x role ^c	1,118	4.7*	-0.24	-2.17	0.04

(continued)

Domestic task	Significant Predictors	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	β	<i>t</i>	η^2
Clear clutter	Actor threshold ^a	1,143	7.95**	-0.61	-2.82	0.05
	Actor threshold ^b	1,144	4.09*	0.21	-2.02	0.03
	Partner threshold ^a	1,131	3.11*	0.37	1.76	0.02
	Role ^a	1,96	20.24** *	-1.28	-4.5	0.17
	Role ^b	1,96	22.75** *	-1.37	-4.77	0.19
Clean dishes	Actor threshold ^a	1,121	16.97** *	-1.27	-4.12	0.12
	Actor threshold ^b	1,114	3.7*	-0.22	-1.92	0.03
	Actor threshold ^c	1,142	4.21*	-0.12	0.21	0.00
	Partner threshold ^a	1,114	11.58** *	1.03	3.4	0.09
	Role ^a	1,93	4.47*	-0.76	-2.12	0.05
	Role ^b	1,96	4.86*	-0.8	-2.21	0.05
Dust	Role ^c	1,85	52.31** *	-2.65	-7.23	0.38
Laundry	Actor threshold ^a	1,104	2.83*	-0.49	-1.68	0.03
	Actor threshold ^c	1,106	3.67*	-0.16	-2.03	0.04
	Actor threshold x partner threshold ^c	1,84	1.1**	-0.12	-2.62	0.08
	Role ^a	1,94	90.66**	-3.45	-9.52	0.49
	Role ^b	1,94	96.64**	-3.55	-9.83	0.51
	Role ^c	1,90	87.29**	-3.36	-9.34	0.49
	Actor threshold x partner threshold x role ^c	1,89	6.24**	0.21	2.5	0.07
Kitchen surfaces	Actor threshold ^c	1,137	5.98**	-0.16	-2.45	0.04
	Role ^c	1,95	18.19** *	-1.38	-4.26	0.16

(continued)

Domestic task	Significant Predictors	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	β	<i>t</i>	η^2
Take out trash	Actor threshold ^a	1,111	10.38** *	-1.96	-4.01	0.13
	Actor threshold ^b	1,119	5.71**	-0.63	-2.85	0.06
	Partner threshold ^a	1,113	8.42**	1.04	2.9	0.07
	Partner threshold ^b	1,120	3.34*	0.28	1.83	0.03
	Role ^a	1,93	67.46** *	2.78	8.21	0.42
	Role ^b	1,89	50.64** *	2.43	7.12	0.36
	Role ^c	1,89	53.06** *	2.6	7.28	0.37
	Actor threshold x role ^a	1,149	8.76**	1.61	2.96	0.06
	Actor threshold x role ^b	1,121	4.53*	0.51	2.13	0.04
	Vacuum/Sweep	Actor threshold ^c	1,120	7.81***	-0.41	-4.11
Actor threshold x partner threshold ^c		1,77	4.92*	0.07	2.22	0.06
Role ^c		1,86	5.77**	-0.95	-2.4	0.06
Actor threshold x role ^c		1,121	7.01**	0.36	2.65	0.05

Note: APIM = actor-partner interdependence model. For role, husbands served as the reference group. Degrees of freedom were rounded.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

^aGradated response threshold APIM. ^bSnapshot response threshold APIM.

^cDisorder tolerance APIM.

Table 13

*Summary of APIM Analyses Predicting Dyadic Conflict (Demand-Withdraw)
from Response Threshold*

Dependent Variable	Significant Predictors	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	β	<i>T</i>	η^2
Actor-Demand / Partner-Withdraw	Actor threshold x role ^b	1,155	6.82*	-0.51	-2.61	0.04
	Actor threshold x partner threshold x role ^a	1,90	4.11*	-1.15	-2.03	0.04
Partner – Demand / Actor-Withdraw	Actor threshold ^a	1,138	3.04*	0.65	2.31	0.04
	Actor threshold ^b	1,148	5.36*	0.29	2.38	0.04
	Partner threshold ^b	1,146	1.18*	-0.22	-1.8	0.02
	Actor threshold x partner threshold ^a	1,84	0.09*	-0.69	-1.81	0.04
	Actor threshold x partner threshold ^b	1,82	0.56*	0.09	-1.85	0.04
	Role ^b	1,88	6.82*	0.49	2.61	0.07
	Role ^c	1,86	4.34*	0.39	2.08	0.05

Note: APIM = actor-partner interdependence model. Degrees of freedom were rounded.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

^aGraduated response threshold APIM. ^bSnapshot response threshold APIM.

^cDisorder tolerance measure APIM.

Table 14

Summary of APIM Analyses Predicting Dyadic Conflict (Mutual Avoidance) from Response Threshold

Dependent Variable	Significant Predictors	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	β	<i>t</i>	η^2
Mutual Avoidance	Actor “easier to do it myself” ^a	1,174	15***	0.16	3.87	0.08
	Actor “easier to do it myself” ^b	1,169	9.64***	0.13	3.1	0.05
	Actor “easier to do it myself” ^c	1,161	5.68*	0.1	2.38	0.03
	Actor “not worth fighting about” ^a	1,160	11.42** *	0.15	3.38	0.07
	Actor “not worth fighting about” ^b	1,157	7.39**	0.12	2.72	0.05
	Actor “not worth fighting about” ^c	1,166	7.42**	0.13	2.73	0.04
	Partner threshold x actor “easier to do it myself” ^a	1,148	4.24*	0.24	2.06	0.03
	Actor threshold x partner threshold x actor “easier to do it myself” ^a	1,153	13.2***	-0.6	-3.63	0.08
	Actor threshold x partner threshold x actor “easier to do it myself” ^b	1,150	10.16** *	-0.17	-3.19	0.06
	Actor threshold x partner threshold x actor “not worth fighting about” ^a	1,126	7.95**	-0.6	-2.82	0.06
	Actor threshold x partner threshold x actor “not worth fighting about” ^b	1,114	6.55*	-0.17	-2.56	0.05

Note: APIM = actor-partner interdependence model. Degrees of freedom were rounded.

p* < .05. *p* < .01. ****p* < .001.

^aGraduated response threshold APIM. ^bSnapshot response threshold APIM.

^cDisorder tolerance APIM.

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