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Men today are doing more household labor than in previous generations,

but research suggests that gender still strongly influences household labor. A

great deal of labor goes into creating family rituals, which may be central

carriers for gender construction. Weddings, in particular, are rituals based on a

gender dichotomy that influences the division of labor. This qualitative study

examined how couples constructed and negotiated gender in wedding planning.

Spouses in 21 first-time married couples were interviewed separately within

one year of marrying. Questions focused on how weddings were planned and

who was responsible for what tasks. Analysis, which was guided by the gender

perspective (Thompson, 1993), revealed that gender typically was constructed

in ways that replicated dominant gender norms, but some couples did show

resistance to the social structure.

At the aggregate level, brides tended to do more wedding work than grooms, but there was a range of gendered behavior at the dyad level. Similar to previous research, three couple types emerged. In *traditional couples*, brides planned their weddings with the help of other women, and brides and grooms were satisfied with this arrangement. In *transitional couples*, grooms helped out more, but brides still were responsible for most of the labor. These couples experienced occasional conflict when they tried to share work equally yet fell back into stereotypical roles of involved brides and distant grooms. Brides and grooms in *egalitarian couples* shared work more equally, and were more likely than the other two groups to question gendered traditions. Traditional and transitional couples used gender strategies that reproduced dominant gendered norms, whereas egalitarian couples did not use such strategies. Gender strategies revolved around: (a) the sociohistorical ideology that weddings are for women, (b) brides' presumed organizational skills, (c) grooms' peripheral involvement, (d) gendered employment and home environments, and (f) gender assessment between brides and grooms and from others. Overall, the dominance of the cultural script that weddings are for women influenced traditional and transitional couples' gender strategies and wedding work. Wedding planning was more likely to be shared when weddings were seen as for couples rather than for women.

"Doing Weddings": Couples' Gender Strategies in Wedding Preparation

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the couples I interviewed. I was privileged and honored that they let me into their homes and into their lives.

"DOING WEDDINGS": COUPLES' GENDER STRATEGIES IN WEDDING PREPARATION

Chapter 1: Introduction

Congratulations!

You're engaged-- and looking forward to a beautiful wedding. During the next several months, there'll be parties to attend, gifts to accept, and an amazing number of decisions to make.

Every bride starts with a vision of what she wants her wedding to be, but not many have any idea how to turn that dream into reality. Suddenly, everything's a question: What does a wedding cost? Who will pay for it? How do I find the perfect dress, wedding site, honeymoon destination?

No matter what kind of wedding you're planning-- a romantic garden party in your parents' backyard or a black-tie dinner at the most lavish hotel in town-- getting organized is the secret to a celebration that you and your guests will love.

If you're like most brides, you're working, in school, or both. You're overextended, time is at a premium, and you wonder if planning a formal wedding is even doable.

The unequivocal answer is yes-- if you enlist help. That's where *BRIDE'S Wedding Planner*, newly revised and updated, comes in. (Condé Nast Publications, 1997, p. ix)

Weddings are a common family ritual overlooked in research on family work and ignored by family researchers in general (Ingraham, 1999). Yet they do not happen on their own-- someone has to plan for these celebrations. Who does this work? Who becomes responsible for this work? Di Leonardo (1987) pointed out that family rituals such as Christmas time and birthday celebrations were, in essence, opportunities for the extension of women's everyday domestic responsibilities. Family rituals, therefore, may be powerful venues for the social construction of gender. Coltrane suggested that "because society now has fewer

outward mechanisms for regulating gender, family rituals and other family practices have become central carriers for the meaning of gender" (1998, p. 19).

Are future brides typically responsible for planning weddings and do they embrace such a role, or are grooms now involved more in planning weddings? How is gender negotiated in these situations? Very little relationship research exists on doing gender outside of marriage (South & Spitze, 1994) despite the fact that patterns of interaction in married couples have a basis in premarital interactions. How do couples who are married develop gendered patterns of interacting with each other? Cheal had noted that weddings might be an important step toward such gendered interaction.

> In the period between betrothal and marriage, for example, it is not uncommon to find rituals that have as much to do with adjusting the individual's changing relationships to stratified sex groups as they do with the acquisition of the role of husband or wife. (Cheal, 1989, p. 89)

Nevertheless, individuals are not passive actors in a social system, merely acting in a way they think society has told them they should act. Brides and grooms may resist societal expectations about weddings in various ways. If resistance is possible, however, how it takes place is not clear.

This dissertation seeks to develop a greater understanding of how gender is negotiated in committed heterosexual romantic relationships. I study a neglected area of research for couples prior to marriage: I examine how newly (first-time) married wives and husbands negotiated gender in the unpaid labor

involved in planning a wedding. I focus on two aspects of this negotiation: (a) how some couples may *conform* to gendered expectations, and (b) how couples also may *resist* (or attempt to resist) the larger societal context by negotiating gender in a nonstereotypical way. Examination of how gender is negotiated in premarital relationships is important because the patterns developed early in relationships may set the stage for later patterns of behavior in marriage. Resistance is of particular interest, because, if equality is to be achieved by moving beyond gender as an organizing principle of human behavior, then examination of individuals who move beyond this organizing principle is necessary (Risman & Johnson-Sumerford, 1998).

I use the gender perspective (Ferree, 1990; Thompson, 1993) to guide my analysis. The gender perspective explains how gender differences result from a variety of factors such as social norms existing at the structural level, a person's position (e.g., their race) within that context, their interactions with others, how they were socialized, and their personal beliefs (Ferree, 1990). This perspective allows for the possibility that individuals will act in ways other than how they were raised, thus recognizing the complexity of gender in relationships. Additionally, it acknowledges that gender relations can be contentious at times when some individuals want to keep gendered patterns the same whereas others seek to change them (Ferree, 1990).

The gender perspective pays careful attention to the variety of ways in which gender is socially constructed (Ferree, 1990) and how gender may intersect with other positions in the social hierarchy such as race and class (Ferree, 1990; Thompson, 1993). The social construction of gender is "a cognitive and symbolic construct that helps individuals develop a sense of self, a sense of identity that is constructed in the process of interacting with others" (Reid & Whitehead, 1992, p. 2). Rather than being an unchanging individual attribute, gender is negotiated, confirmed, challenged, and changed in everyday interactions. Construction of gender takes place at various levels in ways that legitimize personal and societal benefits accrued to men at the expense of women (Thompson, 1993; Wood, 1995). As suggested by Thompson (1993), I examine this construction at multiple levels: the broader sociohistorical context, the immediate situation, interactional processes, and individual outcomes.

The *broader sociohistorical context* pays attention to structural and symbolic conditions (Ferree, 1990; Thompson, 1993). It examines how gender is a feature of institutions and how those institutions may change throughout history, and how gender exists on a symbolic level through ideologies, meanings, images, and myths, all of which are prevalent in weddings. At the *immediate situation*, "social expectations and practical demands and constraints" (Thompson, 1993, p. 562) are examined for their contribution to the social construction of gender. For example, the amount of money a couple

has to spend on a wedding or amount of time they have to plan their wedding may affect how gender is negotiated. The question is whether women and men will act in similar ways when faced with the same situation (Risman & Schwartz, 1989). Gender at the *interactional level* reveals ways in which interactional processes may create and sustain unequal positions (Wood, 1995). "Of central interest is how particular outcomes are produced and legitimated, and, by extension, how they might be altered" (Wood, 1995, p. 108). The process of *doing gender* can be explored (Deaux & Major, 1987; West & Zimmerman, 1987). One way of doing gender is to communicate verbally and nonverbally one's beliefs and expectations about gender (such as what areas of wedding planning a person expects her or his partner to be responsible for) during an interaction with a partner. How the partner responds will be evaluated on the basis of how well the response fits the actor's gendered beliefs. Finally, the construction of gender can be analyzed in *individual outcomes*, which are outcomes of the processes previously described (Thompson, 1993). Outcomes may be actual gender differences (e.g., how many hours brides versus grooms put into planning a wedding), gender consciousness (how feminine or masculine a person feels when planning a wedding), and women's and men's personal well-being (e.g., differences in brides' and grooms' levels of satisfaction after planning a wedding) (Thompson, 1993). In the next section, I review selected literature with these four levels of analysis in mind.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter, I discuss characteristics of the broader sociohistorical or structural context that affects wedding preparation. I describe how patriarchy and capitalism affect weddings, and how the culture of romance is a reflection of both factors. I review literature on race, ethnicity, class, and religion, factors that may affect how people interpret capitalism and patriarchy and how they plan a wedding. Gynocentric feminism assumed that women, as a group, were homogenous in nature (Nicholson, 1999), and that this homogeneity led to all women being different from men. Such homogeneity, however, never existed. Women have different experiences from each other based on characteristics such as race, ethnicity, class, and sexual orientation; therefore, these factors need to be considered in wedding preparation. Although these factors interact with each other to produce complex outcomes, I portray each factor (e.g., race versus class) separately for ease of discussion.

Within this section, I point out how certain aspects of the immediate situation may affect gender negotiation. Then, I review research on wedding preparation, which focuses mainly on gender at the individual outcome level. Although the interactional level of analysis rarely is used, I point out how several studies provide a glimpse into possible interactional processes. I also refer to relevant research on rituals and kinkeeping, key areas related to understanding the importance and dynamics of weddings. To conclude, I

demonstrate how the literature review leads to the research question and I note the importance of the study.

Structural Context of Wedding Preparation

There are several elements of the structural context that may affect how gender is negotiated in wedding preparation. Patriarchy can affect how individuals view weddings. Capitalism and consumerism may make it difficult for couples to fight the momentum of having a big formal wedding. Characteristics such as a person's race, ethnicity, social class, or religion may interact further with gender and each other to produce more variation in wedding planning.

Patriarchy

Although wedding rituals occur in virtually every culture, they rarely are studied in family studies or sociological research (Ingraham, 1999). Ingraham asks "how can [weddings] be so present in popular culture yet so absent from scrutiny?" (1999, p. 3). This may be because a critique of weddings is a critique of patriarchy and of the status quo. Historically, many marriage reform activists have been censured and jailed for trying to eliminate marriage and institutionalized heterosexuality (Ingraham, 1999). A lack of attention to weddings in current research might be an extension of this silence.

In a patriarchal society, heterosexual marriage is assumed to be the primary way in which women obtain emotional intimacy and economic security

(Geller, 2001). The institution of marriage helps ensure that women are psychologically bound to men, which Rich (1980) suggests might not be women's natural inclination. Women also earn less money than men in a patriarchal society, therefore marriage appears to be the most logical way to improve their financial situation (Cheal, 1989; Lorber, 1988). A stratified labor force reinforces traditional views about gender, and resulting unequal income patterns influence and reinforce ideas of responsibility linked to gender. Men are expected to take care of their families financially because of their greater earning power whereas women typically become responsible for unpaid work in the home regardless of whether they are employed.

Women's greater involvement in the unpaid work involved in wedding planning can be seen as an extension of women's unpaid domestic responsibilities. Expectations about women's involvement in wedding planning also can be linked to a broader context in which their self-identities are expected to be strongly tied to marriage. Because a woman's social status is changed by marriage more than a man's social status is, wedlock may be more important to women than men (Cheal, 1989). This greater importance could be another reason why women do the majority of the labor for a ritual signifying the transition to married life.

Geller (2001) argued that marriage is not a personal choice but rather a choice that must be examined within a particular structural context- a

patriarchal context consisting of various institutions (laws, religions, media, etc.) sending the message that commitment, sexual enjoyment, financial security, and emotional closeness cannot be achieved in any relationship other than a marital one. Although individuals may not agree with this message, this context still can affect them because institutions at the structural level can create or constrain individual and family outcomes (Thompson, 1993). Historically, for example, governments and other organizations have provided financial incentives to heterosexual married individuals while notably excluding individuals in other intimate relationships from receiving benefits (Ingraham, 1999). Even though a couple may wish to remain unmarried, certain constraints or rewards may push them toward marriage. Nevertheless, throughout history some people have resisted this message as well.

Capitalism

In the United States, capitalism helps shape what weddings look like and how they are experienced. Marriage increases the opportunity for consumption and accumulation (Ingraham, 1999), therefore it is linked strongly to capitalism and consumerism. A couple may feel they cannot have the perfect wedding and therefore the perfect ever-after heterosexual marriage if they do not spend sufficient money on all the right details. Attention to detail creates the increasing amount of work needed to plan a wedding (Currie, 1993). Moreover, because attention to detail is seen more as women's work than men's

work (Currie, 1993), increased attention to detail increases women's workloads rather than men's workloads. Additionally, middle- and upper-class couples may want an elaborate wedding to get a "good return" (i.e., lots of good gifts from guests) on the wedding.

How capitalism affects individuals will differ, however, based on factors in the immediate situation such as individuals' actual incomes or their beliefs about money and status. For example, some individuals may want a big wedding but not be able to afford it. Features of a wedding also may depend on characteristics of the bride and groom's families and the services and products they feel they need to have in order to demonstrate a particular status to others. Weddings often bring together kin, therefore they may incur certain expectations from kin that have financial ramifications. Similar to the pressure mothers experience about making Christmas a perfect event for family members (Seery, 1997), couples may feel pressure to make the wedding as romantic or special as possible. They may be pressured to do certain things such as buy corsages for all female relatives or pay for out-of-town relatives' accommodations. There are many familial expectations that can increase a wedding's cost. These are features that can be explored using the gender perspective, which asks, "how does the immediate situation -- social expectations and practical demands and constraints-- contribute to the social construction of gender" (Thompson, 1993, p. 562)?

Culture of Romance

Patriarchy and capitalism interact together to create the *culture of romance*, which Firestone (1970) described as one feature of the patriarchal structural context. This culture encourages women to be emotionally dependent on men through a focus on heterosexual partnership as a great adventure and the ultimate fulfillment for women (Rich, 1980). As women have become less needful of marriage for economic security, the role of the culture of romance has increased to ensure that women continue to be psychologically bound to men (Firestone, 1970; Steinem, 1993). The proliferation of how-to-find-a-husband self-help books, such as *The Rules: Time Tested Secrets for Capturing the Heart of Mr. Right* (Fein & Schneider, 1996), during the 1990s suggests a recent intensification of this ideology (Geller, 2001).

Additionally, romance increasingly has been commodified to the point that it might be the act of consumption itself that makes a moment romantic (Illouz, 1997), therefore romance cannot be separated from capitalism. A 32 billion dollar (Ingraham, 1999) (and increasing) wedding industry helps sustain the importance of marriage for women. This industry focuses mostly on women, although recent appearances of wedding magazines and books focused at grooms (e.g., a men's magazine called *For the Groom*) may suggest some change. This change might be reflected in how couples construct gender in their weddings.

The increase in self-help books and the increasing commodification of romance in and beyond the wedding industry suggests that the culture of romance remains strong at this particular point in history. Ultimately, the culture of romance, achieved in part through the wedding industry, encourages women to be more involved and invested than men in the labor of planning wedding rituals. How women's and men's actions coincide with this structural context will be affected by a number of factors including their position in the social structure. I turn now to examining additional factors in the structural context that might affect how individuals plan weddings.

Other Structural Factors

Construction of gender is contextual, therefore characteristics of individuals, couples, and situations can affect how work is carried out in relationships (Thompson, 1993). Class, race, ethnicity, and religion are aspects of the structural context that can interact with gender to affect how individuals interpret capitalism and patriarchy. This, in turn, can result in different rituals, constraints, and ways of planning.

Research on the effects of social class on housework in married couples has produced mixed results. Some studies find that location in the class structure has little effect (Wright, Shire, Hwang, Dolan, & Baxter, 1992) whereas others find that social class does make a difference (Perry-Jenkins & Folk, 1994). How social class interacts with gender to affect premarital labor in

wedding preparation also is not clear, as previous wedding studies have involved only middle-class individuals (e.g., Smith, 1997). Yet, men in different social classes may have varying ideas about how involved they should be in wedding preparation or the areas of preparation in which they should be involved. Similarly, "signifiers of femininity vary from class to class because women in each class have different responsibilities for socializing their families to take their 'place' in capitalistic patriarchy" (Ingraham, 1999, p. 101).

The effects of class on wedding preparation may be complex, possibly working in opposite directions. On one hand, attention to detail, such as different types of flowers throughout a church or reception hall or increasingly elaborate wedding invitations, makes weddings more expensive, and it is women who are more responsible for attending to these details (Currie, 1993). Middle- and upper-class couples are more likely to achieve this higher standard because they have the money to do so. This makes sense because as a powerful group of consumers, they have helped create the standard in the first place. Unless brides and grooms are able to buy out of such labor through engaging the services of a wedding consultant, therefore, middle- and upper-class women may have higher levels of involvement than women and men in all other social classes. Notably, wedding marketing campaigns are targeted toward White middle-class women, who are more likely to consume wedding products than any other group (Ingraham, 1999).

On the other hand, women with higher levels of education or careers might demand more involvement from their husbands. This may occur as a result of more liberal attitudes, because they have less time due to job demands, or because they have higher income levels that result in higher levels of power in their relationships. As a result, middle- and upper-class women might report more attempts at resistance to the structural context, which may be revealed through conflict with partners over their involvement in wedding planning. Respondents' experiences might be paradoxical-- conforming to the effects of capitalism on women's unpaid labor because they have the income to do so, yet resisting the effects because they have the ideology or interpersonal power to do so.

Finally, as noted earlier, middle- and upper-class couples may have an expensive wedding in order to receive nice gifts from guests. Couples with less money may not have such a luxury. This constraint may reduce the amount of preparation needed and how preparation is divided between individuals. Nevertheless, many couples report struggling to keep costs down, and regardless of income, most couples usually spend more money than they anticipated (Ingraham, 1999).

How race and ethnicity intersect with gender to affect wedding planning is not clear. In general, housework in various racial and ethnic groups appears to be more egalitarian than in White families (Cohen, 1998; Hossain &

Roopnarine, 1993), but how this translates into similar patterns in wedding preparation is unknown, as studies of weddings have focused on White respondents. Even though African Americans and Hispanics are less likely to marry than Whites (McLoyd, Cauce, Takeuchi, & Wilson, 2000), many of them do marry, and it is possible that different attitudes toward marriage or different cultural traditions may result in different ways of doing gender in wedding preparation.

For example, African American couples may report or be more open about reporting more tension in wedding planning because they are more tolerant of open conflict than individuals of European background (McLoyd et al., 2000). Additionally, the average incomes of various groups such as African Americans and Hispanics are lower than Whites (White & Rogers, 2000), which will affect their consumption patterns. African American couples, for example, spend significantly less on weddings than White couples do-- an average of $10,000 for African Americans versus $19,104 for Whites (Ingraham, 1999). It is not surprising, therefore, to find that the wedding industry focuses on White middle-class women. Since 1959, for example, only four covers of *BRIDE'S* magazine have featured women of color, and pictures of women of color are more likely to be in the back half of bridal magazines than in the first half (Ingraham, 1999).

In addition to race and ethnicity, individuals' religious backgrounds might play a role in gender negotiation in wedding preparation. Religions legitimate marriage (Ingraham, 1999) and affect how gender is interpreted and constructed (Bartkowski, 1999). Some ceremonial rituals construct gender in the roles they prescribe for brides and grooms, such as a Jewish bride circling the groom to protect him from evil and to symbolically bind herself to him. Individuals' level of religiosity probably will affect how closely they follow religious customs. Resistance may be shown by choosing not to follow certain customs such as circling a groom, having a priest announce "I now present Mr. and Mrs. John Doe," or saying vows in which brides but not grooms vow to obey their future spouses.

Religiosity may influence division of wedding labor. Although religion rarely has been considered as a factor that might affect division of household labor, one study has studied this relationship. Using a nationally representative data set, Ellison and Bartkowski (2002) found that fundamentalist and evangelical Protestant wives performed an average of 4.1 hours more housework a week than nonevangelical wives, particularly in routine work traditionally defined as female tasks. Men in same-faith conservative relationships, however, performed the same low amount of female tasks as their nonconservative counterparts. The impact of religion on division of labor deserves further examination. For example, the Quaker religion not only

encourages austere, simple ceremonies, but also promotes equal relationships between women and men. As a result, division of wedding labor in Quaker couples might be relatively equal. Alternatively, Southern Baptists' belief that "a woman should submit herself graciously to her husband" (Ingraham, 1999, p. 72) could result in traditional gendered patterns and unequal decision making for Baptist couples.

Are those who plan civil weddings any different? This is not known, as studies to date have focused only on Christian couples who have religious ceremonies. Couples may have secular weddings because they do not have strong religious beliefs or because they want to include rituals that their religion will not allow. Perhaps individuals have civil ceremonies only because they are cheaper or less stressful. For example, couples may chose to have civil weddings to reduce their parents' influence on wedding planning. Consequently, the decision to have a civil ceremony may reflect differences in the immediate situation rather than increased liberal attitudes about women's and men's roles. In summary, racial, ethnic, social class, and religious factors may affect how individuals interpret patriarchy and capitalism, thereby affecting negotiation of gender in weddings. Structural factors, however, rarely have been studied. In the next section, I review what the wedding literature *has* found, noting how it focuses on individual outcomes at the expense of other levels of gender analysis.

Wedding Preparation

Why is gender so prevalent in weddings? An examination of weddings as rituals and kinwork is helpful in understanding why gender is constructed time and again in stereotypical ways. Individuals also are under tremendous pressure to make weddings romantic. This intense focus on romance may be the manifestation of the structural level at the interactional level. Yet, the few existing studies tend to focus on gender at the individual level of analysis, with little attention given to interpersonal negotiation. Using a theoretical slant unlike the perspectives used in these studies, I note how the construction of gender could be analyzed in different ways.

Weddings as Rituals

Weddings are rituals, and rituals are distinct, powerful ways of constructing gender in families and in society (Coltrane, 1998). They are influential because they are based in tradition (especially formal celebrations), and tradition may be associated with traditional beliefs about gender. In such cases, it may be difficult to break out of gendered patterns of behavior in rituals despite possible changes in other areas of one's life or in one's attitudes (Perry-Jenkins, 1994). Rituals often are public displays of celebration in which people feel the need to present themselves in certain ways (Goffman, 1973). Such self-presentations may be congruent with societal beliefs about gender. Moreover, some researchers have suggested that in recent years, family rituals may have

increased in their power to affect individuals' actions and beliefs. The ability of rituals to construct and reproduce gender in contemporary society exists not only because of tradition but also in response to macroenvironment changes that may have resulted in less traditionalism in other areas of people's lives (Coltrane, 1998).

Weddings as Kinwork

The pervasiveness of gender in family rituals also may be related to the kinkeeping or kinwork aspect of rituals. Kinwork includes:

> the conception, maintenance, and ritual celebration of cross household kin ties, including visits, letters, telephone calls, presents, and cards to kin; the organization of holiday gatherings. . . . decisions to neglect or intensify particular ties, the mental work of reflection about all these activities. (Di Leonardo, 1987, p. 442)

Although women and men both engage in kinwork, women do more of it and typically are considered to be responsible for it (Di Leonardo, 1987; Pett, Lang, & Gander, 1992). Engaging in this work takes "time, intention, and skill" (Di Leonardo, 1987, p. 443), and it often is done during women's leisure time. Women are often, in fact, more likely than men to describe leisure as including some form of work (Shaw, 1992) and caring for others can prevent women from experiencing true leisure (Henderson & Allen, 1991). Vacations, for example, are not experienced as leisure unless women go alone because otherwise they, rather than others, still are responsible for typical domestic responsibilities such as cooking for everyone. Similarly, women may not be

able to experience Christmas as true leisure because they first have to create it (Seery, 1997). In general, family rituals have tremendous social meaning, and women tend to be the ones responsible for creating the appropriate environment in which kin can connect with each other. In such situations, they are at risk of *gender assessment* (West & Zimmerman, 1987), of having their worth as a woman evaluated on the basis of the success of the social event, praised or taken for granted if things go right, but blamed if things go wrong.

The social context of weddings can be seen in Cheal's (1989) description of wedding showers. Showers are just one of several potential wedding activities that bring kin together, and women typically are responsible for arranging them. After attending several showers, Cheal concluded that female showers reinforced a nurturing attitude that women were expected to have, resulting in the unpaid work of gift giving that has been identified as an aspect of kinwork. As requested, most gifts given at wedding showers were household equipment with the intention of being used to serve and nurture other people through the preparation of food. Men were minor figures, peripheral to the action, and therefore not expected to be involved in a major way in kinwork. Cheal's research hinted at how women and men constructed gender at the interactional level. Women and men were doing gender (West & Zimmerman, 1987), interpreting the situation as an appropriate opportunity to demonstrate their femininity or masculinity. He noted how involvement in

bridal showers resulted in a female, not a feminist, consciousness. Similarly, Ingraham (1999) noted how many women comment in bridal magazines that they became more feminine when they planned a wedding, despite not being typically feminine in other areas of their lives.

Weddings are a ritual in which gender is constructed in interactional processes, but research rarely focuses on this. Cheal's study suggests the construction of gender through interpersonal processes, but a more effective analysis of interactional processes would have explored how women and men developed things such as norms, rules, and roles about weddings showers in their interactions with each other. Moreover, his study only examined one aspect of weddings: wedding showers. Wedding studies have focused mostly on gender at the individual level, examining gender consciousness (previously noted) (Cheal, 1989; Ingraham, 1999), feelings experienced (Smith, 1997), and division of labor or interests (Currie, 1993; Lowry & Otnes, 1994). I review this research in the remainder of this chapter, paying particular attention to interactional processes hinted at in these studies.

Emotions

Smith (1997) examined emotions in weddings. Using a nonprobability sampling method, she interviewed 12 couples who had been referred to her by a premarital counselor at a religious organization. Respondents were homogeneous in their backgrounds: mainly White, in their midtwenties,

middle- to upper-class, childless, and Christian. Smith conducted semistructured interviews separately with wives and husbands. She asked numerous questions about what feelings respondents reported others expected them to feel (feeling norms), incidences when they felt different from those expectations (emotional deviance), and how they managed *deviant emotions* at such times (managing emotions, or *emotion work*).

Smith (1997) found evidence of gendered feeling norms around weddings. Women were supposed to feel excited and happy about planning the wedding and men were supposed to be disinterested in the whole event, although the latter feeling norm seemed to be changing somewhat. Smith called for more research to explore how men might be sanctioned for expressing interest and how feeling norms, emotional deviance, and emotional management may be affected by gender.

Smith's research pointed to weddings as situations in which various emotions were expected because of the public nature of the event. Her focus on emotions meant that neither the structural context nor the division of labor in planning weddings was explored in great detail. The actual dynamics of planning a wedding need attention as they surely will have an influence on the feelings experienced by brides and grooms. Additionally, her study focused on emotion work only at the individual level rather than at the interactional level. Emotion work related to *others'* emotions was not explored. What kind of

emotion work do brides and grooms engage in to help each other feel better? Furthermore, given that weddings bring kin and other important people in a person's life together, what kind of emotion work do they engage in to ensure that the needs of kin, friends, and guests are met? These are the types of questions that could be asked to reveal the social construction of gender through interactional processes. During analysis, I will be attentive to ways in which emotion work is a part of couples' negotiation of gender in wedding planning.

Division of Labor

In addition to emotion work, gender is constructed through division of labor, and two studies (Currie, 1993; Lowry & Otnes, 1994) explored this. Currie (1993) interviewed 13 brides and 3 grooms in a pilot study. Interviews were open-ended and unstructured, with the purposes of exploring why traditional weddings remain popular with couples and the role weddings may play in the construction of gender. Currie noted an incongruency that women did the majority of the work for a ceremony in which vows were changing to reflect more egalitarian roles for wives and husbands. A focus on the small details of weddings was what created the majority of the work of planning a wedding, and this attention to detail was influenced strongly by the wedding culture (Illouz, 1997, had noted that people had to go out of their ways to personalize their weddings because the commodification and mass consumption

of romance had resulted in standardized products). The consumption of goods and services was viewed as women's work, and although men's roles were peripheral to detailed planning, they could veto any decisions their fiancées had made. This was consistent with Ferree's point that, "even though women do the work of consumption, they do not necessarily control the priorities that guide it" (1990, p. 878).

I also observed this veto power in a nonacademic publication called *What the Hell Is a Groom, and What Is He Supposed To Do?* The author, a recent groom, called this veto power the *right of first refusal pledge* (Mitchell, 1999). The pledge, which he encouraged women and men to abide by, suggested that it was the obligation of the bride to choose whatever she wanted for wedding-related products and services. Once she had made her decision she was to consult with the groom before finalizing any contract or making any purchase. If the groom rejected the idea (he should only veto if he absolutely hated it), the bride selected another alternative. This veto power could be used by women as well, but because men did little planning according to the author, it appeared that women would have very little opportunity to use the right of first refusal.

Both Mitchell's book and Currie's study suggest the presence of *hidden power* (Komter, 1989) in wedding preparation, although this has not been investigated in any detail. Hidden power exists when (a) no conflict is reported

because individuals have anticipated the wishes of their more powerful

partners, (b) when individuals report resignation about a situation because they

believe they cannot change it, or (c) when no change in a situation is pursued

because individuals are fearful of upsetting their partners (Komter, 1989). How

couples deal with conflict or challenges may be important in understanding how

gender is negotiated through interactional processes. Being informed about

these subtle dynamics of power, I will be open to any examples of power within

general issues of wedding planning that individuals describe.

Construction of gender through interactional processes, however, is

more than just about who has power or who does what activities. Individuals

may find out things about their partners they never knew or anticipated, such as

a groom's emerging disinterest in having a formal bachelor's party or his views

about what he considers masculine or nonmasculine. Likewise, individuals may

observe things that solidify their beliefs about their partner, such as a groom not

being surprised to learn that his bride did not want to have a garter ritual during

the reception. Individuals also may learn more about how their partners

approach kinwork-- how important they think it is and how involved they think

they should be in kinwork. Issues such as these have not been explored at the

interactional level of analysis.

The second study focusing on division of labor issues in weddings

looked at brides and grooms' priorities for goods and services (Lowry & Otnes,

1994). Separate focus groups were held for 19 brides and 14 grooms, who were recruited through newspaper ads and notices at bridal shops. Clear gender differences emerged in aspects of the weddings that women and men felt were important. Wedding gowns, related accessories, ministers, music, and churches were particularly important for brides whereas items for receptions (e.g., food) and photographs were important to grooms. Wedding preparation was believed to be for women and any noticeably high levels of involvement by men were seen as unmasculine and therefore discouraged. The authors suggested that differences in priorities might be related to who pays for a wedding. Similar to how money means power in capitalism, so too may money be connected to power in weddings. Whoever pays for the wedding may have more power and control over planning. Because brides' families traditionally pay for weddings, brides are more involved than grooms. Some couples in Lowry and Otnes' study attempted to create more equitable divisions of labor, and notably, they were more likely to be paying for some or all of the wedding costs. Who pays for a wedding warrants further examination, as it may be a feature of the immediate situation that has an impact on how gender is negotiated.

There were three other limitations to Lowry and Otnes' study. First, they only reported on work leading up to the wedding. As rituals, weddings have clearly defined stages of preparation, implementation, and follow-up (Burr, Day, & Bahr, 1993; McCubbin & McCubbin, 1988; Roberts, 1988),

therefore gender construction should be examined not only in wedding preparation but also in wedding follow-up. Second, Lowry and Otnes suggested that attitudes about gender appeared to be the strongest factor determining how couples approached this rite of passage, yet respondents' gender attitudes or beliefs were not measured. As a result, it is difficult to assess the true influence of gender beliefs on their experiences and actions. Furthermore, although the authors use the term "couples," they do not mention whether any of the brides and grooms were married to each other. Except for a description of two couples, findings are described separately for brides' and grooms' focus groups rather than as couple analyses. Nevertheless, their findings suggest the possibility that gender can be negotiated in different ways in wedding planning and that resistance is possible. Studies of same-sex weddings or commitment ceremonies also demonstrate that weddings do not have to be organized on the basis of gender (Ayers & Brown, 1994; Butler, 1990).

Resistance

Resistance in weddings rarely has been studied. It occurs when the structural context of inequality is not replicated at the individual level. Oswald (2000) identified resistance to heterosexism in a study of nonheterosexual individuals. Using critical theory and a focus group format, she explored the experiences of 45 gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered individuals who attended heterosexual weddings. They were expected to act as heterosexuals,

but some resisted these expectations through ways such as dancing together at the reception or wearing clothes in which they were comfortable. How resistance to patriarchy is played out by heterosexual couples during their own weddings has not been explored in detail in research to date.

Negotiation of gender in ways that do not replicate the social structural context may require *vigilance*, a deliberate monitoring of equality in relationships (Blaisure & Allen, 1995). Blaisure's (1992) dissertation, on which the previous article is based, briefly discussed weddings as an opportunity for couples to publicly symbolize their commitment to equality in their marriage and to monitor their contributions to the relationship. Strategies used by individuals in feminist marriages consisted of changing vows or ceremonial procedures they found offensive, planning the wedding together, and not viewing the wedding day as only for the woman. Blaisure's study only examined *feminist* marriages, however, and the topic of weddings was only a small part of the larger study.

How individuals in a variety of relationships (i.e., feminist and nonfeminist) negotiate gender in weddings in nonnormative ways, and whether they are successful in doing so, has not been explored. There are several elements of resistance that can be considered. Resistance in wedding planning likely will exist across a continuum, ranging from small acts such as changing a word in a vow to larger ways such as making sure a groom is highly involved in

the planning process. Resistance may vary in how successful it is. It will be important to document ways in which individuals attempt resistance, regardless of whether they are actually successful in doing so, because attempts illustrate that individuals are not passive actors within the structural context. It also will be important to identify why individuals engage in acts of resistance. Although I am most interested in resistance on the basis of a person's gender ideology, resistance may be based on other things such as a reaction to consumerism or family dynamics. Finally, I will look for how resistance occurs at different levels of gender construction, such as through interactional processes or in individual outcomes, which are levels of analysis that have not been identified clearly in research to date.

Summary

Little attention has been given to negotiation of gender in heterosexual relationships prior to marriage and little is known about how gender is constructed in wedding preparation. Previous research has found that women typically are responsible for planning weddings although sometimes men are involved. Yet, gender analyses focus primarily on gender at the individual level rather than analyses that incorporate the structural level, immediate situation, and interactional processes.

Variation in how gender is constructed at interactional and individual levels will be affected by the immediate situation (e.g., demands or

expectations from family members) and the structural context. Brides and grooms are likely to be affected by the larger sociohistorical context in which patriarchy and capitalism are experienced. Gender may interact with factors such as race, ethnicity, social class, and religion to affect how this larger culture is experienced. The influence of a person's social location on wedding preparation has not been studied, as studies to date have used small nonprobabilistic sampling methods resulting in very specific populations such as White, middle- to upper-class respondents with Christian backgrounds.

My research question is: How *do* women and men negotiate gender when planning their wedding? I focus on variability in aspects such as processes, interactions, and situations and how those affect negotiation of gender. I pay careful attention to how individuals or couples may show compliance or resistance to the larger structural context.

This proposed dissertation contributes to the literature in several ways. I identify how wedding planning is gendered work and how there is variation within this work, thus contributing to the literature on gender and family work. Thompson (1993) noted that gender could be examined at different levels of analysis and that more research was needed to explore how one's social position affects gendered behavior. This research contributes to an increased understanding of how gender is constructed in wedding planning by examining how factors such as race and class may affect it. This dissertation also examines

the construction of gender at various levels of analysis. Additionally, it identifies ways in which individuals may resist the larger culture, which typically is not addressed. An examination of resistance is important if individuals are to move beyond gender as an organizing principle of their behavior. Doing gender usually is studied in married rather than dating couples. This dissertation adds to the literature by examining this process earlier in relationship development. Finally, it studies an understudied but common family ritual that is significant in constructing and reinforcing gender.

Chapter 3: Method

A qualitative exploratory approach was used. This approach was appropriate for the gender perspective because it allowed for greater exploration into the complexity of gender construction and negotiation. Respondents wanted to talk about their weddings, but needed direction to tease out the different shades and nuances of gender construction. Additionally, because gender has not been a frequent focus of research on interpersonal dynamics in nonmarital relationships, this study was exploratory in nature. The qualitative design was helpful for gaining a deeper understanding of individuals' actions, thoughts, and feelings (Rohlfing, 1995), and was effective for exploring how "families create, sustain, and discuss their own family realities" (Daly, 1992, p. 4). Qualitative interviewing allowed for narratives to emerge while using probes for deeper analysis. Finally, this method was chosen to diminish objectivity and distance while providing an interpretive and reflective account of women's lives (Olesen, 1994; Thompson, 1992), consistent with a feminist framework (Sollie & Leslie, 1994).

Sampling Procedure

To obtain as demographically diverse a sample as possible, I selected participants from three different counties (referred to as Counties A, B, and C) that encompassed a large Northwestern city, the largest city in the state. This particular city was chosen as a source of participants because it provided a

relatively diverse sample relative to other city populations within the state. The counties differed from each other in various ways such as income, race, and ethnicity. The median yearly income for male full-time workers is approximately $7,000 less in County A than in the other two counties ($36,000 versus $43,000); the median yearly income for female full-time workers differs by about $2,000 between County A (approximately $29,000) and County C (approximately $31,000), with County B in between these two figures ([city name] State University Population Research Center, 2002). Compared to County B, County A has a higher percentage of African American, Asian, and Hispanic individuals and County C has a higher percentage of Hispanic and Asian individuals ([city name] State University Population Research Center, 2002). All three counties, however, are predominantly White (County A- 82.6%, County B- 93.5%, County C- 84.9%).

I accessed microfiche marriage license records at each county's records office for couples who had applied for a marriage license between 6 and 8 months earlier (May, June, and July of 2001). I recorded by hand the names and addresses of every couple in which (a) both individuals were marrying for the first time; (b) both individuals were 18 years or older; and (c) at least one person had listed an urban address in the city. These criteria resulted in lists of 75 couples for County B, 90 couples for County C, and 642 couples for County A.

First marriages were chosen because they tend to be more elaborate events than second or third weddings (Ingraham, 1999). Additionally, couples did not have previous experience in planning a wedding as future brides and grooms, experience that could affect the way they planned any subsequent weddings. Moreover, married couples may describe their weddings in different ways depending on when they are interviewed. Holmberg and Veroff (1996) found that when couples were interviewed following one year of marriage, they focused on the tensions involved in planning their weddings. When they were reinterviewed three years later, their comments focused less on tensions and more on describing the wedding as a social event. Consequently, couples were interviewed within approximately one year of their wedding to maximize memories about specific details involved in wedding preparation.

I used a systematic sampling procedure to draw from each county list a sample of 30 couples that I would attempt to contact by phone. Systematic sampling involves choosing a random element from a list, and then choosing every k^{th} element after that number based on the number of elements desired (Rubin & Babbie, 1997). Because 30 couples were desired from each county list, every 2nd couple was sampled for County B, every 3rd couple was sampled for County C, and every 21st couple was sampled for County A.

The city phone directory was used to identify phone numbers for each of these couples. Couples were contacted by phone (see Appendix A for

telephone script) and asked if they would like to participate in the study. To be eligible for participation, the couple still had to live in the metropolitan area and both partners had to be willing to be interviewed separately and to have their interviews audiotaped.

The original goal was to interview the first 10 couples from each county sample who agreed to participate in the study, with a final sample consisting of 30 couples, 10 from each county. The first sampling round, however, resulted in interviews with 6 couples from County C, 6 couples from County B, and 5 couples from County A. Consequently, a second round of 30 couples was solicited from each county list using the same systematic sampling procedure as the first time. This resulted in only 4 more couples being interviewed: 1 from County C, 1 from County B, and 2 from County A.

The final sample, therefore, consisted of 21 couples (42 individuals), 7 couples from each county. Given 180 possible couples to interview in both sampling rounds, the *total response rate* (Neuman, 2003) was 12%. Considering that phone numbers could not be found for 63 couples, an additional 34 were wrong phone numbers, 19 had been disconnected, and some couples ($n = 12$) were never reached (they were called seven times before determining that they could not be contacted), the *contact rate* (Neuman, 2003) was 29% (52 of 180). Of those who were contacted, I interviewed 21 couples, for a *completion rate* (Neuman, 2003) of 40% (21 of 52 couples).

Couples' reasons for not participating varied, with no clear pattern emerging among White, non-Hispanic couples. In some couples, one spouse was interested whereas the other one was not, and interest seemed evenly split between wives and husbands. Other couples claimed to be too busy to be interviewed, for reasons such as being in the process of buying a new home. Three couples expressed interest initially, but attempts to set up definite interview times were not successful (they did not answer or return any more phone calls). In some cases, because of my own time constraints, I was unable to interview a few couples.

Couples of other races or ethnicities were difficult to interview. Of the 180 couples selected at random, approximately 10% appeared to have Hispanic, Vietnamese, Eastern European, Asian, or East Indian backgrounds, but I did not obtain interviews with any of these couples. Similar to White couples, a few declined to participate ($n = 6$), the phone number was incorrect or disconnected ($n = 6$), or I did not get an answer ($n = 2$). It was difficult to find the right phone number in the phone book for two couples because they had a very common ethnic name. Two couples declined to participate because of language difficulties.

Description of the Sample

Twenty-one couples were interviewed over a 5-month period between March and July of 2002. They had been married between 8 and 13 months ($M =$

10.52 months, $SD = 1.42$) prior to being interviewed. Their ages ranged from 21.8 years to 33.6 years, with an average of 26.6 years ($SD = 3.21$). Husbands ($M = 27.52$, $SD = 3.18$) were, on average, 1.8 years older than wives ($M = 25.72$, $SD = 3.08$). All respondents were White, non-Hispanic. Two couples had children: One couple had a child prior to getting married, the other couple had one child prior to getting married and twins born 9 months after their wedding. Fourteen couples (67%) had cohabited prior to marrying. The length of cohabitation ranged from 6 months to 66 months, with a median of 21 months ($SD = 19.02$). For all couples, the length of their relationships from when they first met to when they got married ranged from 8 to 74 months (including cohabitation if it occurred), with an average of 42.95 months or 3.6 years ($SD = 18.95$). Both the average length and the mode of the engagement period was 12 months ($SD = 4.94$).

Estimates varied in terms of how much individuals thought their weddings cost, ranging from $80 to $30,000, with an average of $9,504 (median = $8,000, $SD = $6,780$). Weddings were financed through a variety of sources. Most individuals ($n = 28$) said that they and their spouse had paid for the wedding, although this often was combined with other forms of financial assistance from the bride's or groom's parents. Only 6 individuals said that they paid for their wedding without help. The average cost of their weddings was $3,513 ($SD = $3,192$). Similarly, 8 individuals said that they did not contribute

any money for their weddings personally. These individuals had more expensive weddings than those who paid for the wedding just on their own (M = $13,250, SD = $8,362).

It is difficult to access the accuracy of individuals' response on this question. Individuals were asked to include not only ceremony and reception costs, but also expenditures for engagement rings and honeymoons in their estimates, but I had no way of verifying this information. In a few cases, individuals differed from their spouses in their estimates not only of how much the wedding cost but also in who paid for the wedding. Usually, however, estimates were fairly close to each other. Additionally, most couples talked about trying to keep costs of their weddings *low*. With an average of $9,504 spent on their weddings, the cost of their weddings was significantly lower than the national average, which in 1999 was $19,000 (not including honeymoons) (Condé Nast Publications, 2001). This likely reflects a geographical effect, as weddings in the west and southwest (California, Arizona, Texas, and Nevada) are cheaper (average of $17,517) than weddings in the New York Metropolitan area (New York, Connecticut, and New Jersey) (average of $31,777) (Condé Nast Publications, 2001).

Annual incomes, jobs, and education varied among the respondents, demonstrating that a range of socioeconomic statuses was reflected in the sample. For example, in terms of jobs, less than 35% of the sample had

professional jobs such as nurse, engineer, or lawyer. Approximately 25% were

employed as high school teachers or in social work or artistic-related profession

(i.e., graphic designer). The rest of the sample were in sales, administrative

assistance, or a field such as construction. Level and type of religiosity also

fluctuated. Forty-three percent of the sample had no religious affiliation

whereas a number of religions were represented among the remaining

respondents. Finally, twelve individuals said they never attended church, and

for those who did attend (including some who did not identify with a particular

religion at the time they married), attendance ranged from 1 to 96 times a year,

with an average of 27.87 (mode = 48, SD = 31.08). Table 1 summarizes

descriptive data about the sample.

Table 1

Participant Characteristics

Characteristics	Frequency	%
Cohabited prior to marrying		
Yes	28	66.7
No	14	33.3
Highest grade of schooling		
High school or GED	8	19.0
Some postsecondary	9	21.4
4- or 5-year degree	17	40.5
Grad school or professional degree	7	16.7
Employed		
Yes	32	76.2
No	3	7.1
Student	4	9.5
Student and employed	3	7.1
Type of employment (*n* = 35)		
Managerial/professional	12	34.3
School teacher/social worker/artist	9	25.7
Technical/sales	6	17.1

Characteristics	Frequency	%
Administrative/support	1	2.9
Service	1	2.9
Mechanics/repair/construction	6	17.1
Personal income		
Less than $20,000	7	16.7
$20,000 - $29,999	16	38.1
$30,000 - $39,999	10	23.8
$40,000 - $49,999	5	11.9
$50,000 - $74,999	3	7.1
$75,000 - $100,000	1	2.4
Religion at time of wedding		
No religion	18	42.9
Roman Catholic	3	7.1
Baptist	1	2.4
Lutheran	1	2.4
Mormon	2	4.8
Presbyterian	7	16.7
United Church of Christ	1	2.4
Nondenominational Christian faiths	8	19.0
Yoga	1	2.4

Note. Data are for individuals ($N = 42$), not couples ($N = 21$).

Data Collection

I conducted semistructured in-depth interviews separately with wives and husbands. Each member of the couple was interviewed separately to produce greater candor or involvement in the interview because individuals' responses would not be affected by their partners' responses or presence (Hertz, 1995). Separate interviews of spouses helped reveal more deeply "processes of spousal accommodation and negotiation" (Hertz, 1995, p. 434). For example, individuals were able to speak freely about frustrations over their partner's involvement or to provide their unique perspective about a situation. Further, men spoke at length about the topic because they were unable to defer to their wives on the basis of wives' greater involvement in wedding preparation. I had expected that men's interviews typically would be shorter than women's interviews, but this usually was the case only when the husband had very little involvement in planning the wedding. In seven couples, husbands' interviews were longer than those of their wives.

For each couple, I alternated between interviewing the wife or husband first. Interviews took place in a quiet location comfortable to the participants. Sixteen couples were interviewed at their home, whereas four couples were interviewed in coffee shops, one couple in a park, and one couple at the work place. Both spouses in a couple were interviewed on the same date and in the same location except for the couple interviewed in their workplace, and these

individuals were interviewed within three days of each other. All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim. Respondents also completed an informed consent form (see Appendix B) prior to being interviewed.

Interviews (see Appendix C) focused on understanding the culture of wedding preparation. *Cultural interviews* explore how individuals "see, interpret, understand, and experience their world" (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 194). They are appropriate for exploring both everyday and special activities. Cultural interviews consist of small numbers of questions that allow respondents to answer in great detail in contrast to *topical interviews* that involve much more active questioning and rapid exchange of details (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). The interviews began with *natural involvement*, an informal conversation that illustrated to the interviewees that I was interested in the topic and supportive of their participation (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). To initiate this involvement and to build rapport, I asked respondents to tell me how they became engaged, for example, if the man proposed to his wife with a ring, and whether it was a simple or elaborate proposal. Once the conversation was initiated, respondents were encouraged to talk at length about their experiences, starting with their wedding and any special memories or mementos from it, and then moving on to how they planned it. They were asked to describe the wedding and other related events. Questions focused on how individuals planned for all related events.

The interview was pilot tested with two couples prior to data collection. The first couple lived in a small college town in the Northwest and was chosen for convenience. The second couple, the first of ten couples I had randomly selected and attempted to contact for a practice interview who agreed to participate, lived in County A. As a result of these two interviews, three adjustments were made to the interview procedure. First, I gave examples when asking the first question about how couples got engaged so that respondents understood that I was asking about how they became engaged rather than "how they knew this person was the right person for them." On the participant information sheet, I changed the question "how did you finance your wedding?" to "who paid for your wedding?" because respondents thought I wanted answers such as *cash* or *credit cards* rather than *my parents*. When asking if individuals were employed or unemployed, I also added the choice of *student*.

During early interviews, I learned to tell respondents two things prior to beginning the interview. First, I assured them of the confidentiality of their interviews; that is, I told those who were interviewed first that I would not repeat anything they said to the spouse who was to be interviewed later. I told them, essentially, that I would pretend I knew nothing about the wedding when interviewing the second person. This may have helped ensure that the first spouse being interviewed felt more comfortable being open or honest in

responding. I told the second spouses interviewed the same thing; that I would ask the same questions asked of the first spouse, that I would repeat nothing I learned from the first interview, and that I wanted to hear about the wedding in their own words. Interviews with the second spouse were usually, but not always, shorter ($n = 13$), ranging between 10 - 40 minutes shorter. This may have been because I asked fewer probing questions than I did of the first spouse because I already knew many details of their wedding.

Prior to beginning an interview, I also encouraged respondents to be as specific as possible when talking about *who* did what activities or tasks in wedding preparation. Because a wedding is an event that couples plan for themselves *as a couple*, there can be a tendency for individuals to say "we," when, in fact, the task is completed by just one person. Moreover, individuals may take one spouse's interpretation of an event and present it as the couple's version of the event (Hertz, 1995). When this happens, the information garnered about what *one* person did or felt may be inaccurate. This has been identified as a concern when interviewing couples separately. In her research on couples' decision making, in which she interviewed husbands and wives separately, Hertz (1995) noted:

> Couples commonly fall into answering in the plural. It is only through probing that I was able to separate out if "we" means both spouses or "we" if is the unified "we" of marriage even though only one spouse is the key decision maker. (p. 10)

In wedding planning, saying "We did this" also might mean the bride and her mother or the bride and her bridesmaids rather than the bride and groom. As a result of the tendency to use the pronoun *we* fairly often without actually meaning "my spouse and I," I sought clarification at all times regarding what people meant when they used that word. Was it something they did with their spouse, was it something they did with other people, or was it something they actually did on their own?

So that it did not influence their interview responses, a participant information sheet (see Appendix D) was completed by respondents after their interviews. This form asked basic demographic questions as well as how much respondents agreed or disagreed with statements about gender beliefs. These items were included to compare participants' beliefs about gender to national averages for adults who had been married for a similar amount of time (one year or less). Items about gender beliefs were taken from the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH) (Sweet, Bumpass, & Call, 1988), a national longitudinal study of adults 19 years and older. Following previous research, six questions were taken from the NSFH's first wave of data collection in 1988 (e.g., Greenstein, 2000). Respondents were asked to evaluate the extent to which these items (e.g., "it is much better for everyone if the man earns the main living and the woman takes care of the home and family" and "parents should encourage just as much independence from their daughters as in their

sons") described their views about gender. All items were answered on a scale ranging from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree*).

Gender items on the participant information sheet were recoded after initial data entry so that a score of 1 (on the scale of 1 - 5) meant that persons *strongly disagreed* with the statement and a score of 5 meant they *strongly agreed*. Two items from the 1988 NSFH data ("ok for mothers to work full-time when youngest is under 5," and "ok for children under 3 to be cared for all day in a day care center") that originally were coded on a scale of 1 - 7 were recoded on a scale of 1 - 5 so that my sample could be compared with the 1988 data. Recoding was theoretically driven. If persons answered in the extreme (1 or 7) on the first scale, their answer remained at that extreme on the second scale (1 or 5). If persons answered neutrally (the midpoint on the scale of 1 - 7, which was 4) on the first scale, their response still was coded as the midrange on the second scale (3 on a scale of 1 - 5). The only changes made were on the midranges. If a person chose 2 or 3 on the 7-point scale, they were recoded as 2 on the 5-point scale. If a person chose 5 or 6 on the 7-point scale, they were recoded as 4 on the 5-point scale.

Larger or more expensive weddings may involve greater amounts of work. As a result, several items dealing with materialism and consumerism also were included. Three items (such as "I try to keep my life simple, as far as possessions are concerned") measured aspects of materialism. They were taken

from the Values-Orientation Materialism Scale (Richins & Dawson, 1992). As

with the NSFH questions, responses ranged from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 5

(*strongly disagree*). Two additional questions (e.g., "when buying products, I

generally purchase those brands that I think others will approve of") measured

how much individuals were influenced by others in their consumer decisions.

These were taken from the Consumer Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence

Scale (Bearden, Netemeyer, & Teel, 1989) and were measured using the same

scale as the previous items. The primary purpose of the materialism and

consumerism items was to provide other questions in which to embed the

gender questions, which were the main items of interest. Essentially, these

items were included to vary the order of questions, a strategy identified in

planning interviews (Gorden, 1975), and to avoid response sets.

Data Analysis

As noted, every interview was audiotaped and then transcribed

verbatim. Transcription, which began while interviews were being conducted,

resulted in 982 pages of data. I began data analysis by listening to each

audiotape twice and reading the transcripts to become familiar with the data.

Data were analyzed and coded with the help of a qualitative software package,

MAXqda. This program uses a *code and retrieve* process (Kuckartz, 2001) in

which segments can be coded and later retrieved for further examination.

Coding followed general grounded theory guidelines outlined by Strauss and Corbin (1990). I used three levels of coding: open, axial, and selective. *Open coding* was accomplished by reading respondents' descriptions (sentences, paragraphs, or multiple responses) of particular issues or events. Themes were identified and then *labeled*. After labeling, phenomena or concepts were grouped into broader categories through a *categorizing* process. *Axial coding* was used to explore the codes in greater detail, such as conditions that gave rise to a concept or condition, the context in which it took place, strategies used, or consequences of a particular action. For example, I explored various situations (i.e., how available the bride's mother was to help with wedding planning) across couples to see how context affected the manner in which gender was negotiated. I used selective coding later in the data analysis procedure. *Selective coding* consists of examining later data for verification of codes that were developed from earlier data analysis rather than searching for new themes. Because "the move from coding to interpretation involves playing with and exploring the codes and categories that were created" (Coffey & Atkinson 1996, p. 46), the concepts, interpretations, and themes were revisited and revised during multiple readings and draft writing. Additionally, I verified that all segments coded for a particular code were capturing the same phenomenon.

Memos also were created at the time of coding. Memos are written records of analysis that are attached to specific coded segments and can be referred to at a later time. I used three different types of memos: (a) *code memos*, which described a code or initial impressions of a phenomenon; (b) *theoretical memos,* which described aspects such as variations in codes or relationships between codes; and (c) *operational memos*, which included information such as leads to pursue (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Analysis focused on the division of labor and evidence of gender construction in the data. For example, how did respondents interpret weddings as an opportunity to do gender? What aspects of wedding preparation were taken for granted and by whom? Were spouses' interpretations of the experience similar to or different from each other? These questions looked at variations in the negotiation of wedding preparation. Patterns of interaction (e.g., negotiation, decision making, power) within each couple were examined, therefore analysis was at the *dyadic* level (Thompson & Walker, 1982). Further, differences or similarities were noted between brides and grooms, for an analysis at the *aggregate* level. For instance, what activities were brides and grooms responsible for?

To explore this variation in gender construction in greater depth, I asked how the structural context or immediate situation affected planning either by placing constraints or by opening up possibilities. Differences and similarities

in couples' experiences, contexts, and structural conditions were explored. Particular attention was given to how respondents may have resisted traditional scripts of wedding planning through their construction of gender. In addition to describing examples of resistance that were successful, unsuccessful examples also were noted. I sought examples of overt, hidden, and invisible power (Komter, 1989) in such cases. Through axial coding (Straus & Corbin, 1990), I attempted to identify conditions that helped make successful attempts at resistance possible.

During coding and numerous readings of individuals' transcripts, a range of gender negotiation in couples was identified and plotted along a continuum. Then, *ordinal comparison* was used to compare couples with each other. "Ordinal comparison entails the rank ordering of cases into three or more categories based on *the degree to which* a given phenomenon is present" (Mahoney, 1999, p. 1160). Examination of the range of gender construction revealed three types of couples that were similar to previous research (i.e., Hochschild, 1989; Schwartz, 1994): traditional, transitional, and egalitarian or postgender. Common features of each couple type then were identified through *analytic comparison* (Neuman, 2003), a qualitative analytic strategy in which regularities or patterns are identified among categories in a small set of cases. These couple categories are described in the results section.

In addition to using MAXqda, I drew from the participant information sheet respondents completed to report on demographic data. Using SPSS, group averages to the gender attitudes questions were compared to the mean, range, and standard deviation for the same questions from the 1988 NSFH data set for individuals married one year or less. In 1988, individuals over the age of 18 who had been married for 12 months or less ($n = 258$) were an average of 25.02 years old ($SD = 4.94$) when they were interviewed, which was 1.6 years younger than the average age of respondents in this study ($M = 26.62$, $SD = 3.22$). Although the difference was not significant, $t(298) = -1.46$, this finding is consistent with the trend of increasing age at first marriage during the past 20 years (Teachman, Tedrow, & Crowder, 2000). Additionally, 54% ($n = 139$) of the NSFH subsample had cohabited prior to marriage, compared to 67% of my sample, also consistent with the trend of increasing cohabitation (Teachman et al., 2000).

Table 2 compares average responses for the gender items. In general, respondents from the 2002 study espoused more egalitarian attitudes toward women and men than the 1988 sample, corresponding with the belief that American society is moving away from more traditional to egalitarian family roles (Olson & DeFrain, 1994). Independent t-tests revealed that respondents' averages from the 2002 study were significantly different from 1988 respondents' averages on three of six items. As expected, 2002 respondents

agreed more strongly than 1988 respondents that if both husbands and wives worked full-time, they should share housework equally, $t(289) = -4.46$, $p < .001$, and that parents should encourage similar levels of independence in daughters as they do in sons, $t(291) = -3.18$, $p < .005$. Respondents in 2002, compared to 1988 respondents, were less likely to believe that family life would be better if men earned the main living, $t(292) = 5.52$, $p < .001$.

Table 2

Comparison of 2002 Respondents With 1988 NSFH Respondents on Gender Items[a]

Gender item	n	M	SD
It is all right for children under 3 to be in daycare all day.			
1988	253	2.46	1.20
2002	42	2.12	.99
It is ok for mothers to work full-time when their youngest is under 5 years.			
1988	253	2.85	1.16
2002	41	3.00	1.26
If both husbands and wives work, they should share housework equally.***			
1988	249	4.22	.71
2002	42	4.74	.54
It is much better if the man earns the main living.***			
1988	252	3.06	1.18
2002	42	1.98	1.14

(table continues)

Gender item	n	mean	SD
Parents should encourage as much independence from daughters as from sons.**			
1988	251	4.14	.86
2002	42	4.60	.91
Preschool children suffer if their moms are employed.			
1988	252	3.02	1.13
2002	42	2.76	1.39

[a]Scales range from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

**$p < .005$, two-tailed. ***$p < .001$, two-tailed.

Finally, an additional set of independent *t*-tests were conducted to determine whether brides and grooms in the 2002 or 1988 studies differed in their gender beliefs. Brides and grooms in the 2002 study differed on only one item. Although they both generally disagreed with the statement that it was better for family life if men earned the main living, brides ($M = 1.62$) disagreed more strongly than grooms ($M = 2.33$), $t(40) = 2.12$, $p < .05$. In the 1988 sample, women and men differed on two items. Men ($M = 3.94$) agreed less strongly than women ($M = 4.30$) that parents should encourage as much independence in daughters as in sons, $t(249) = -3.35$, $p = .001$. Men ($M = 3.17$) also disagreed

less strongly than women ($M = 2.89$) that preschool children would suffer if their mothers were employed, $t(250) = 1.95$, $p = .05$.

Chapter 4: Results and Discussion

Analysis revealed that gender construction began long before couples married. Gender construction continued throughout the wedding planning process and into couples' weddings, with most couples accepting the gender-based nature of weddings. Nevertheless, although gender construction typically conformed to traditional patterns, there was variation in the 21 couples' experiences. Similar to previous research on how couples negotiate and construct gender in their relationships (i.e., Hochschild, 1989; Schwartz, 1994), three types of couples emerged from these data: traditional ($n = 6$), transitional ($n = 10$), and egalitarian ($n = 5$). In the following examples, I provide composites of each couple type, which are drawn from respondents' experiences.

Traditional couple. Joan was 22 years old and Keith was 24 years old when they got married. Keith put a lot of time and effort into planning how he would propose to Joan because he knew that she would want the moment to be very special. He looked at many engagement rings, and enlisted the help of a friend to keep Joan occupied while he made plans for a romantic dinner at an upscale restaurant. Before proposing, he also asked permission from Joan's father to marry her. As soon as they were engaged, Joan bought several wedding magazines and a wedding planning book she had been admiring for several years. Because Keith had no idea how to plan

a wedding, they agreed that Joan would be responsible for everything. Joan's mother also helped with many things because, as a homemaker, she had the time to help out.

Joan was very organized and enjoyed planning the wedding, but found it very stressful at times trying to remember all the things that needed to be done as well as having to negotiate with various people. Keith felt that the wedding was her special day, so whatever she wanted was fine with him. Joan occasionally wished that Keith might show more interest in the wedding details, but he did not. Nevertheless, she tried to keep him informed of everything that she was doing and she asked for his input before making final decisions. Keith encouraged her not to spend too much time on wedding planning, and he supported her decision to take some time off from her job the week prior to the wedding so that she would be less stressed. He was glad, however, that they did not live together prior to getting married because sometimes he grew tired of her constant focus on the wedding. Joan, in turn, tried not to bother him with too many small details.

Closer to the wedding day, Joan had two bridal showers, and Keith had a bachelor party. Both enjoyed these events. Joan spent the night before the wedding with her bridesmaids, drinking wine, making up bouquets and boutonnieres, and going over eleventh-hour items for the ceremony and

reception, while Keith spent the night at his parents' place. The next morning, Keith got dressed and visited with a few relatives. Joan spent several hours at the hairdresser's getting her hair and makeup done before arriving at the church. The first time Keith saw Joan in her wedding dress was when she walked down the aisle with her father, and this was Keith's most special wedding memory. Over 200 people attended the wedding, which took place in a church that Joan had been a member of since she was a young girl. The wedding was a traditional, religious ceremony, and it was followed by a formal sit-down dinner and reception, complete with toasts, dancing, and rituals such as garter belt and bouquet tosses. The couple spent the night at a hotel, and one day later, they went on a short honeymoon. Their wedding cost around $11,000.

Transitional couple. Kate and Derek had been living together for one year and were both 24 years old when they got engaged. Derek wanted to do something special for their engagement, so he involved their cat, whom they love very much, in his proposal. When Kate came home one night, there was a message and a ring tied around the cat's neck. The message said, "Derek and I would like to know if you would marry him..." Kate was extremely touched at the cat's involvement, and of course, she said "yes."

Derek and Kate both felt that Derek was very involved in planning the wedding. For example, he was responsible for the music, honeymoon, and organization of tuxedos. They did various things together, such as picking out the wedding site and choosing the dinner menu. Kate did more wedding work than Derek, however, because she spent more time researching various options and finding the best prices. She also found many ideas to investigate in the wedding magazines she had purchased. Derek was a little surprised at how much time she spent looking through the magazines because she did not normally read these kinds of publications. As their year-long engagement progressed, they both agreed that Kate was a natural planner, and so it seemed inevitable that she did more work than Derek did. It also was easy for Kate to do some things with her mother, because she and her mother had more flexible employment schedules than Derek.

During the planning, however, Derek and Kate occasionally became frustrated with each other. When Kate felt that Derek was not doing things in a timely manner, she would take over his assigned duties, or sometimes she would not let him be involved in certain things in which he expressed interest. For example, he offered to help write invitations, but Kate and her sister told him his handwriting was not good enough. Derek was annoyed by such occurrences, but admitted that he did not protest too vigorously

because he realized that ultimately it meant he did less wedding work. Still,
he sometimes felt that, as the groom, he did not have much say. Moreover,
Kate became increasingly stressed as she took on more work than was
previously decided by the two of them.

A week before they married, Kate's friends put on a bridal shower
for her, and Derek's friends took him out drinking for his bachelor's party.
Although they had been living together for a year, they decided to stay in
separate places the night before and morning of the wedding. Kate and her
bridesmaids spent the evening at her parents' place, doing their nails and
printing out the wedding programs. Derek spent the night at their place with
his best man. The next morning, Kate checked to see if her mother and her
mother's friends had completed the decorations at the reception hall, and
then went to the hairdresser's to get her hair and make-up done. Derek
played nine holes of golf with his groomsmen, father, and future father-in-
law, and then got dressed. Kate did not let Derek see her in her wedding
dress until they took pictures prior to the wedding. About 120 guests
attended the nondenominational wedding, which took place on a beach. An
evening reception at a nearby restaurant followed, with toasts and dancing.
They almost forgot to do the bouquet toss and garter toss, but fit it in while
a few people still remained at the restaurant. Kate and Derek spent the night

at a local Bed and Breakfast before leaving the next day for a 2-week honeymoon in Hawaii. Their wedding cost around $10,000.

Egalitarian couple. Natasha, 30, and Dean, 29, had been living together for three years when they got engaged. Although they had talked about marrying for several years, Natasha wanted Dean to ask her formally, and she also wanted to have a ring. One afternoon while they were relaxing in a park, he finally asked her to marry him, and the next day they went shopping for an engagement ring.

Rather than Natasha doing most of the work or dividing up the tasks, they preferred to do most things together, such as creating and addressing their invitations and writing thank you cards. They did notice, however, that Natasha seemed to keep track of what needed to be done a little more than Dean. Natasha's mother was not involved in planning the wedding because she and her mother did not have a close relationship.

Dean and Natasha knew that they did not want a wedding that was expensive, formal, or traditional. They rarely looked at bridal magazines, and they only consulted a wedding planning book for an approximate timeline to follow. They did not want to use any vows inadvertently suggesting that a woman should be subordinate to her husband, so they wrote their vows together. They accepted the offers of friends to help out with various aspects of the wedding such as music and photography, and

they bought their wedding attire second hand. Natasha was so excited when she got her dress, that she put it on for Dean as soon as she got home.

Because they did not follow a traditional wedding model, they had some conflict with other people. For example, Natasha told her bridesmaids to wear whatever they liked, but they constantly requested that she tell them what to wear until she relented and chose identical bridesmaid dresses. Additionally, Dean's parents were upset that Natasha and Dean neither wanted nor felt they needed a wedding shower, so they reluctantly compromised by registering at a department store. Dean's brothers were disappointed that he did not want a bachelor party, but he felt there was no need for one last night as a single man because he felt married already. Nevertheless, despite these difficulties, this couple both felt the wedding planning was relatively easy, and they enjoyed planning their wedding together.

Dean and Natasha felt it was silly to be separated from each other the night before the wedding, so they stayed at their house. The next morning, they loaded everything into a trailer and drove out to the park where they were to be married. With the help of their best man and maid-of-honor, they set up the tables and ceremony site. When they were finished, they both cleaned up quickly, changed clothes, and then went to greet all the guests (approximately 45) who were arriving. Some people

were surprised to see them together, but Natasha and Dean said it was important to them to not be separated from each other on such a special day. A justice of the peace performed a short nonreligious ceremony in which the couples' friends also had several roles. An informal, catered reception in the park followed. They spent the night at their house, and had a potluck brunch the next morning with close friends and family. A week later they left for a 2-week camping trip in the mountains. They said their wedding cost around $6,000.

These three composites illustrate how wedding planning was not uniform across couples in my study. In particular, traditional couples were most different from egalitarian couples in their wedding work whereas transitional couples were similar to traditional couples in some aspects of wedding preparation, but occasionally like egalitarian couples in other aspects. The remainder of this chapter focuses on five *gender strategies* (Hochschild, 1989) that resulted in such differentiation between couples in the three categories.

Hochschild (1989) described gender strategies as plans of action and emotional preparedness for putting the plans into action that individuals develop to deal with gendered circumstances. Any time people apply their gender ideology to a particular situation at hand, they are engaging in a gender strategy. I show how use of these five gender strategies resulted in reproduction of dominant gendered norms by traditional and transitional couples.

Conversely, I demonstrate how egalitarian couples' rejection of typical gender strategies resulted in shared wedding planning. Within this discussion, I make note of how the broader sociohistorical context (Thompson, 1993) shaped wedding planning, and I also explore how the immediate situation affected gender construction, pointing out conditions in which resistance to the culture of romance and wedding industry were likely to occur. I conclude by describing how gender assessment was experienced when transitional couples tried to combine traditional and egalitarian beliefs and when egalitarian couples rejected tradition.

Quotes most illustrative of the points are included. Sometimes I present individual quotes from brides or grooms. At other times, I present quotes from a wife *and* her husband. Although wives and husbands in this study seldom had considerably different perceptions from each other, presentation of both spouses' quotes helps reveal decision-making processes and accommodation (Hertz, 1995), and makes the focus on the dyad more evident. Additionally, every quote states whether the person was from a traditional, transitional, or egalitarian couple.

Women's Weddings

Symbolically speaking, prevailing cultural myths, ideologies, and images construct dominant discourses of gender (Thompson, 1993). The cultural script of romance elevates heterosexual marriage as an ideal

relationship above all others. This script is communicated by (a) companies that sell goods directly related to weddings; (b) companies that use the image of the white wedding to sell products indirectly related to weddings, such as life insurance or birth control; and (c) companies that have little or no relationship to the market industry but use the white wedding image to sell their products (Ingraham, 1999). Further, this cultural script is internalized by friends, family members, coworkers, and wedding industry vendors who also communicate it to potential brides and grooms. With such a broad range of communication, this message is pervasive, and it encourages a woman to think about her wedding day as the most important day of her life. That the bride is the object of attention on her wedding day (Currie, 1993) is typically uncontested. A bride is expected to have thought about her wedding day for her whole life.

Traditional and transitional couples demonstrated more of an acceptance of this message than egalitarian couples. They did not question gendered rituals or traditions inherent in weddings (i.e., the giving away of the bride by her father). The day was seen as more for brides than for grooms, and it was grooms who usually verbalized this thought. Nathan (traditional) said, "I wanted to have a nice wedding, and it was her day, I wanted to make it her day more than my day." When asked why he thought it was "more her day," he responded:

> Um, I don't know. I just wanted her to have a really special day
> that day. I think that the honeymoon was going to be my special

time and I wanted the wedding to be hers. And that's just the way-
I don't know if that's traditional or whatever else it is, but that's
why I think that I just kind of wanted it and I did the most that I
could do to help her through that.

Women and men who subscribed to a traditional wedding ideology also

were most likely to report that brides had life-long images of what their

weddings would look like. Five women in traditional and transitional couples

specifically mentioned having thought about their wedding days since they

were young. No traditional men reported similar images, whereas five

transitional men reported images. Not surprisingly, such statements about

weddings only being for women were absent in the egalitarian couples' stories.

For example, Ken (egalitarian) said about his wife, "It wasn't the 50s

homemaker wedding where this has been her dream for her whole life. . . there

was none of that."

Attention to the cultural script of weddings being for women is

important because it structured traditional and transitional couples' wedding

work in three ways. The script structured work through listing tasks for which

brides and grooms were responsible. It was related to wedding work in how the

ideology was used to justify women's greater involvement in wedding

planning. The ideology also was seen in involvement by brides' mothers.

Wedding Work is Based on Ideology

Various documents, web sites, and programs listed different duties for

brides and grooms, and many couples followed these suggestions. Symbolic

distinctions between brides as interested consumers and grooms as reluctant helpmates reinforced a gendered division of labor. The one exception to the pattern of indifferent grooms was engagements, in which men were expected to be interested and involved consumers. Engagements were an aspect of the cultural wedding script that almost every couple reproduced, and expectations about who did the asking were informed by the broader context. In our society, men propose and women accept. Although engagements may seem superfluous to much of the actual work of wedding planning, they are not unrelated to it. Engagements set in motion wedding planning, and they were the one time when women did not engage in or have responsibility for making sure it occurred. Instead, it was grooms who engaged in mental preparation and task accomplishment to make sure the event occurred in the way that women expected it to occur. This may be because engagements are one way in which men are expected to show care for their partners.

Aside from engagements, transitional men were more involved in wedding work than traditional men, but they did little to move beyond gendered suggestions communicated by others.

> I think he looked through one of my books I had, or something,
> and saw what they say the groomsman is *supposed to do*
> [emphasis added], and he pretty much took on that part himself.
> (Rachel, transitional)

Examples of highly gendered activities were invitation and thank you cards. Because rituals involve not only planning and implementation but also a

follow-up stage (Burr et al., 1993; Roberts, 1988), thank you cards are very much a part of wedding planning. Wedding work was not completed until thank you cards were sent to guests, and many individuals, including traditional women, disliked this final, detailed-oriented task. Nevertheless, invitation and thank you cards, an aspect of kinwork (Di Leonardo, 1987) that keeps family members connected with each other, were overwhelmingly monitored and written by women in traditional and transitional couples. For example, Trish (transitional) said:

> The invitations were hell [whispering]. I thought it would be *so cool* to make the invitations. It just took a lot more effort than I ever, ever expected. But I was really excited about it. I made a bunch of different templates that were different styles on the computer, went to the paper store like three million times [laughing] to get different kinds of paper. But eventually I pretty much made them all and he helped me decide which ones he liked and which ones I liked in different styles and stuff and then we finally decided on one that we both liked.

In contrast, men in egalitarian couples were much more involved in wedding planning than men in the other two categories. Division of wedding labor was shared relatively equally, and individuals' descriptions revealed this partnership in many ways. Rather than tasks being divided strictly along gender lines, egalitarian couples did many tasks together, such as buying decorations, writing vows, or creating invitation cards. This likely was because these couples saw the day as for couples rather for women or for the bride. As a

result, egalitarian men had more involvement in determining what their weddings would look like.

For example, invitation cards were more likely to be created and prepared by egalitarian brides *and* grooms, regardless of how much work it took. One egalitarian couple described their teamwork on invitations in very similar terms.

> The wedding invitation thing, that was kind of a process. Cause we were dealing with these friends and trying to get it right. We would go to the person's house and watch him play on the computer and pick out fonts and stuff, and we thought that it would take us a second but it ended up taking so much longer than we thought it would, it wasn't as easy as we thought it would be. (wife)

> [Some friends] actually made our invitations, they had all that kind of stuff on their computer they can do. We both went over there, we had a photo that we both liked that was taken of the two of us, and we took the photo up to their house and kind of figured out the wording and it was pretty much made like a postcard, with that photo on the front and the invitation stuff on the back. (husband)

Furthermore, the husband also wrote out all the thank you cards. Interestingly, his wife described how she was not "well versed" in the world of correspondence, a type of kinwork (Di Leonardo, 1987) that women are expected to perform for families. Because this egalitarian bride had no idea how to "correspond" with others (how to do gender in the typical way), her husband took on this task.

This example points to a further difference between egalitarian grooms and traditional or transitional grooms. Egalitarian grooms did not let dominant gender norms prevent them from engaging in nontypical groom activities, such as flowers and decorations (Lowry & Otnes, 1994). For example, grooms in traditional or transitional couples rarely were involved in decisions about flowers, but Grant (egalitarian) took the initiative to find his wife the expensive flowers she desired but could not afford.

> She wanted these lilies, and they were really expensive to buy at the store, they were like seven dollars each. So we pretty much decided we weren't going to get any flowers, we were just going to pick them cause it was June, lots of flowers around. And we went into town to get some ice and stuff, my friend Rod and I, and we drove by this house that had a whole yard full of these flowers. And so we pulled over and I knocked on the door and said, "Hey, I'm getting married, can I have some flowers?" and the lady was like, "Sure, take as many as you want!"

Equal involvement by brides and grooms in egalitarian couples was not just the result of men's greater involvement, however. In the literature on unpaid family labor, it is suggested that the reduction in the gap between women's and men's unpaid labor has been affected more by large decreases in the amount of time women spend in housework than by small increases in men's time spent in housework (Coltrane, 2000; Robinson & Godbey, 1997). Similarly, more equal wedding work in this study was due to grooms' increases in wedding work *and* to brides' reductions in wedding work. Little attention given to wedding books or magazines, which delineate specific roles for brides

and grooms, and which reinforce the cultural script of weddings being for women, may have helped contribute to the more equal proportion of work done by egalitarian brides and grooms.

Most traditional or transitional women had wedding planners, which they had either bought for themselves or someone had bought for them, and many traditional and transitional women also bought bridal magazines (in some cases, many magazines). Not only did these publications suggest different tasks for women and men, but they also gave readers numerous ideas to consider. Making gift baskets for out-of-town guests, for example, was something that brides would not have done if they had not found the idea in a wedding planning book or on an Internet site. Using such ideas increased the cost of the wedding, the amount of work needed to be done, and the details that needed to be attended to. It was women, as consumers, who attended to these increased details because they were the ones reading wedding magazines and searching Internet sites for ideas. Women in egalitarian couples, however, were less likely to use these as sources of information.

> I bought two bridal magazines for an airplane ride once, and I regretted it. After five minutes of looking at them, I'm like, "This is sick, I can't look at this, I can't look at this." (Bernadette, egalitarian)

It may be simplistic to suggest that bridal magazines and planning books are solely responsible for increasing the complexity of women's wedding work, but Currie (1993) notes that "it is clear they contributed to women's dilemmas"

(p. 416), and as such, deserve contextual analysis. The cultural script of weddings, communicated throughout these publications, was mentioned specifically by one bride, who said:

> We actually did quite a bit together, cause [my husband] wanted it to be about "us" not just "me." People were telling me, "Samantha, you should get what you want" all the time. And I'm like, "Why should I only have what I want, you know? There's another person here too, and his money too!" (Samantha, transitional)

When I asked Samantha why she felt other people told her she should have control, she responded that because bridal magazines told women that it was their day, people came to believe it as such.

Although there were many examples of traditional and transitional brides being savvy consumers, there appeared to be a lack of consciousness about the effects of the wedding industry. In particular, traditional and transitional women rarely mentioned this, even if they may have had such feelings. This does not mean, however, that women were passive dupes of an overriding capitalist and patriarchal culture. As Howard (2000) argued, women do get pleasure from a female beauty-centered culture, and there were some examples of how women resisted marketing pressure. Nevertheless, it was more often *after the fact* rather than in the midst of wedding planning that women could question the things they did and recognize how such marketing strategies or details increased their work and resulting stress. Tamara (transitional) said:

> The more time we had to do stuff, the more complicated things
> became. And it's totally a catch-22. . . for example, my mother
> got these cute little bubbles that were a wedding cake, and people
> blew them, and it ended up being really adorable, but we didn't
> need the bubbles, *nobody* needed the bubbles. If it would have
> been done in a shorter period of time, nobody would have had the
> time to research the bubbles, buy the bubbles, get the bubbles,
> have the bubbles there, would we have missed anything? Probably
> not.

Men were more likely to show criticism of the wedding industry. For example,

Hans (transitional) said, "In my personal opinion, [the wedding magazine] was

marketable, it was excellent marketing, but that's what it was, it was just a tool

for marketing stuff to buy. For one day of your life."

Recognizing the marketing effect on consumers may be easier, however,

than recognizing how a cultural ideology affects one's own actions. Identifying

when the ideology of weddings only being for women affected individuals'

behaviors required a gender consciousness in which the status quo was

questioned. Such a gender consciousness rarely emerged in interviews.

Unsuccessful attempts at resistance were found occasionally in

transitional couples, whereas successful examples of resistance to messages

from the wedding industry and others were most likely to be found in

egalitarian couples. The following quote is an example of how one egalitarian

couple mutually critiqued sexism and gender inequality *and* demonstrated a

gender consciousness in their interview. It also illustrates how this couple

resisted and challenged stereotypical notions of gender by engaging in *acts of*

vigilance, an "attending to and a monitoring of equality, within and outside of

[a couple's] relationship" (Blaisure & Allen, 1995, p. 10).

> We went to a place called _____ Rentals. . . . We did that
> together, although it was very interesting, some of the interactions
> we had there, were I felt pretty, I don't know, pretty sexist I
> guess. They really didn't acknowledge me. The woman that we
> had been working with kept referring to it as the bride's special
> day and so I found it pretty offensive. [pause] I would just kind of
> insert myself or say, "You know I think we really want to do
> this," or whatever. (Kevin, egalitarian)

Had this couple not critiqued the message they were receiving, Kevin's wife

might have done all the negotiating at the rental company, thus increasing her

workload and facilitating a gendered division of labor within this couple. I

observed a range of occasional resistance to the cultural script, but it rarely was

described with this level of gender consciousness.

Ideology Justifies Women's Greater Involvement

A second, and more subtle, yet important way in which the cultural

script structured wedding work was seen in how individuals used the ideology

to justify a woman's greater involvement in wedding planning. If it was her

day, she was responsible for making it happen, and comments about this came

from traditional and transitional couples. Rhonda (transitional) said, "Basically

throughout the whole process [my husband] was, "Whatever you want me on,

I'll help you with, but this is your thing, your deal, your day." Transitional men

might help out, but only when asked.

Traditional grooms' interpretations of the ideology resulted in a different outcome in which they did little wedding work. Although they admired the planning their wives did, they described how it was important to them to get married but not important to them to have an elaborate wedding or to be interested in the details. These behaviors seemed related to *needs reduction* (Hochschild, 1989), which occurs when men, consciously or unconsciously, declare their needs to be very few, thereby creating a natural void in which women see a greater need for work to be done. In this situation, traditional men declared few needs in relation to their weddings, therefore it was left to their partners to put the day together.

Barry (traditional) said, "The fact that it was happening was important to me, the individual events within it were not. So I'll admit, I just, a lot of the times I just went with the flow." Trevor (traditional), whose wife planned an elaborate wedding, said:

> I think I'm probably pretty traditional. I mean I *didn't* have much involvement with the planning of the wedding at all, I just sort of showed up and did my thing. I mean I took it very seriously, what I was doing and saying up there. . . I took what I was doing very seriously and this is a life-long commitment, but the actual planning of it wasn't that important to me.

This type of thinking appeared to give traditional men a legitimate excuse not to be involved in wedding work. Yet, almost every man verbalized in some way that his wedding day was perfect and that there was not one thing he would change about it, so men benefited from the work that others (women)

had done. This approach helped ensure that men from traditional couples were able to appreciate and enjoy the day without experiencing any responsibility or stress while putting it together.

As stated earlier, men were involved in work around engagements, and for couples in which men proposed in elaborate ways that required much thought and preparation, or for couples in which women did most of the wedding work, men's "work" in engagements may have been used as a release from later wedding work. Sophia (traditional), whose husband showed little interest in planning the wedding, yet prepared months ahead of time for their engagement, said:

> He thought it was more nerve wracking to get engaged because to him it was considered, once we got engaged, we're pretty much married he thought, in his head. It's like, "I wouldn't have asked you if I didn't want to marry you, you know, *this is the part that means more to me than the wedding*," [emphasis added] and I thought that was interesting cause that wasn't how I felt.

In contrast, grooms in egalitarian couples moved beyond the early gendered pattern in engagements and were involved equally in wedding preparation. Four of five couples who shared in wedding work, however, also reported simple engagements; the one exception was a feminist couple who proposed to each other in a more detailed way. Even though egalitarian couples reproduced gender in wedding proposals by men rather than women doing the proposing, they may not have subscribed as strongly as other couples to the culture of romance in things such as the level of romanticism and surprise of

the proposal or have used engagement work as a way to excuse themselves from later wedding work.

Couples' justifications for women doing more housework than men often include the reason that it is more important to women (Hochschild, 1989; Thompson, 1991). This reasoning may be evident in engagements as well. If engagements are more meaningful or important than actual wedding ceremonies to grooms, it stands to reason that they will do more work for engagements than later wedding preparation. Similarly, brides will do more work for the wedding ceremony and reception because those are the events that are more important for them. Not surprisingly, more traditionally oriented men did more work for the event that involved very little work (the engagement) than for the events that required a great deal of work (ceremony and reception).

Lack of involvement beyond engagements did not mean that traditional men failed to appreciate the work that was being done, however. On the contrary, despite traditional men's lack of involvement, initiative, or interest in wedding work, they often mentioned how proud they were of all the work their wives did. Gail (traditional) noted how her husband was "one of her biggest supporters," and her husband, in turn, said:

> Gail grew a lot during the wedding planning time, she had to
> make a lot of choices and a lot of decisions and it's not as much
> her character to do that, and that's great, I mean, she did a good
> job. She did a really good job, it was a lot of work for her.

Another bride from a traditional couple said:

> We did a lot of it together, a lot of it [my husband] was just kind of there with me as I was going through. As you can tell it was fairly simple. He was very insistent that I didn't do it all alone, so he was on my case to get other people to help. (Alicia)

Although men's appreciation of women's work can be genuine, it also can be a convenient way of ensuring that women do the work (Hochschild, 1989). Moreover, Thompson (1991) noted how women may overlook the unfairness of a situation when they desire men's supportiveness as a valued outcome. Very few traditional and transitional brides in this study felt they did too much work in comparison to their partners, despite evidence that the workload was unbalanced. Yet, ultimately, traditional grooms' roles as the providers of moral support neither reduced women's workloads or stress nor increased men's participation in wedding work.

Additionally, because men had not been conditioned in a similar fashion as women to look forward to their wedding day for years as the most important day of their lives, it also was assumed that they would not know how to put a wedding together. As a result, grooms were excused from wedding work.

> I had been planning my wedding- I have two sisters and a little brother and so we have always wanted to get married and thought about our wedding day. And so I had already had in my mind a lot of what I wanted for a wedding. And [my husband] didn't. He was, I would think, I would say, he was a little scared. He just didn't know things that I thought people just knew about weddings, he had no idea about. So that was fascinating for me to go, "Oh, you have no idea about, that you're supposed to do this or you're supposed to do that," so he was feeling very not prepared to plan a wedding. So we just decided, and he said, "You

> know, you've been thinking about this forever, I don't really care,
> I trust what you're going to pick, you know," so I said, "Ok, well
> tell me the things that you know you want or don't want."
> (Sophia, traditional)

This discourse was noticeably absent in egalitarian couples' interviews.

Women were not excused from wedding work. Brides were expected to

know what needed to be accomplished and *how* to accomplish it. Janice

(traditional), described how she and other women made flower arrangements

the night before their wedding:

> We made the corsages and the boutonnieres and we made all the
> pew clips up, and we made the bouquets for all of the centerpiece
> type bouquets and then my maid-of-honor made the big bouquets
> that were going on either side of the altar. And then that night
> after the rehearsal dinner, all of the girls in the wedding came
> back and they each made their own bouquet.

Such a description might indicate that making flower arrangements

came naturally to women. Some women were skilled in this area. But an

important point overlooked by most respondents was the fact that brides had to

learn how to do many new things in the time leading up to their wedding. When

women got married, they did not automatically have the skills and knowledge

that others assumed they had as a result of thinking about weddings their whole

life. For example, flowers were a wedding task overwhelmingly performed by

brides, yet two women mentioned how they knew nothing about flowers. One

bride said:

> This [was] really hard for me planning this wedding cause I was
> not one of those kids, these women, the girls that ever dreamed of

> my wedding, "Oh on my wedding day I'll have pink flowers and
> it'll be" [pause]. It just wasn't like that. And so that's kind of
> what was hardest was trying to say, "Well, what would I like?"
> And I knew what I liked in my friends, I knew what I liked and
> didn't like in terms of style of things, but not of me in that picture.
> (Abby, transitional)

Nevertheless, women *learned*, either through reading books or magazines or

through consultations with other women who were knowledgeable about

flowers. In contrast, men had the option of *choosing not to learn*.

In the end, this gender strategy helped make sure that traditional and

transitional women did more wedding work than their partners. The message

from the wedding industry-- that women should be responsible for most things

and men should be responsible for other and fewer things-- was typically

uncontested by brides and grooms. And if it was the bride's day, she, rather

than the couple, had to make it happen. Grooms' moral support of their wives

did not reduce women's workloads or necessarily their stress. Furthermore,

assuming that women intrinsically knew what to do meant that a particular

aspect of women's work was being ignored-- the many hours that brides spent

reading through numerous wedding magazines and books for ideas or

consulting with others on how to do things. Women's time spent in these tasks

may have been defined as leisure by women and men rather than actual work or

learning because women were perceived as enjoying the reading or

consultations. As a result, women's work was, at times, unrecognized.

Brides' Mothers are Expected to be Involved

The gender strategy of weddings being for women also was evident in the fact that traditional and transitional brides did a large portion of wedding planning with their mothers. The presence of brides' mothers (more so than mother-in-laws) was another important factor influencing groom's work in wedding planning. Weddings were not just for brides, they were for women, so other women's involvement was not unusual. Such involvement came from female friends and relatives, but mothers were mentioned much more often than any other person. For example, Sophia (traditional) said:

> The bulk of the planning was done by my mom and I. [My husband] and I, after we got engaged, discussed how much of a part he wanted to be, how much a part I wanted him to be, and we decided that most of the things my mom and I would go do.

If mothers were not able to help out in traditional couples' weddings, traditional men did not step in to help with wedding planning. Traditional brides receiving little help from their mothers ($n = 3$) talked about how strained they felt as they tried to manage everything on their own. Transitional men, however, sometimes took a more active part in wedding planning if their partner's mother was not present or able to help out with plans.

It was interesting to note that older transitional men sometimes suggested that being older was what resulted in their greater involvement in wedding planning. For example, Zachary (transitional), who got married at age 28, and whose wife was several years older than he, said:

> I think us being a little older makes a difference than a younger
> couple where the guy doesn't have a clue or doesn't care, you
> know what I mean? If I had gotten married when I was 21, I'd
> have been, "ohhh," you know.

He felt that being older meant he was more mature and therefore more able and

willing to take on wedding responsibilities and tasks than a younger man. That

egalitarian couples tended to have men who were older than the other categories

supported this view.

Yet, the question can be raised whether older men's involvement was

related to their increasing age and maturity or indirectly through less

involvement from others. One factor influencing the amount of housework

individuals do is the presence of other people, female family members in

particular, to help with that work (South & Spitze, 1994). Cole (transitional),

age 24, said, "I'm thinking about if we were older, 20 years down the road,

maybe we would have less help from her mother or something, so maybe I

would be given extra duties or responsibilities." When asked why he felt it

would be different if he was older, he said:

> What I know from my experience of observing other couples that
> get married later on in life versus like early or mid twenties, that
> typically maybe an older couple would be stuck with more
> responsibilities without help from family members and it might be
> more stressful. . . . I feel lucky that her mom worked as hard on it
> as she did. And I think her mom enjoyed helping us, but I could
> tell that there were times where she got a little stressed out
> herself, there was recently times where I kind of backed off and
> walked away, [laughing] but I think through the most part, it
> worked out really well.

In essence, Cole suggested that older men's greater involvement was more a function of the immediate situation-- of other family members, and mothers of the bride specifically, not willing or able to help out-- rather than a function of men's increasing maturity or liberal gender beliefs. Transitional men typically helped out more only when brides' families lived far away. One bride and groom admitted that the husband probably would have helped out less if the wife's mother had lived closer. For many traditional and transitional couples, therefore, weddings continued to be seen by both women and men as for women rather than for couples. Thus, brides and grooms were happy to have the bride do much of the planning with her mother rather than with her future husband. Thompson (1993) described how men might show family care under certain circumstances (i.e., a pressing need for it). Similarly, in wedding planning, it was only when other women were not able to help out that transitional men became more involved.

Of 10 couples (4 traditional, 5 transitional, and 1 egalitarian) in which the bride's mother was present, able, or willing to help, only one couple deliberately monitored the mother's involvement to make sure she did not take away from the couple working together on the wedding. The bride said:

> I kind of wanted her a little more involved, no maybe I didn't.
> [pause] But you know anything that was really, really important,
> we wanted to do it and we wanted to it together, and that dynamic
> of the three of us working together just didn't work for Kevin.
> And I really had to honor that, "I'm marrying you, Kevin," so I
> need to say, "Mom, you know, we're taking care of it". . . . And

it's not her and I planning the wedding, which I think some
people think.

Not surprisingly, this monitoring was reported by an egalitarian couple.

Because the opportunity for such monitoring only occurred in one egalitarian

couple (other egalitarian couples' mothers were not involved for various

reasons), however, it also cannot be determined whether other egalitarian

couples would have resisted mothers' interest and involvement *if they had*

occurred. This points to a key element of shared wedding planning. Maternal

mothers' participation in wedding work might need to be monitored so that

grooms can be more involved. Such monitoring of mothers' or women's

involvement likely can not take place, however, unless couples question the

taken-for-granted gender strategy of weddings being for women rather than for

couples.

Organized Brides

If the gender strategy of weddings being for women is not questioned, it

falls to women to develop organizational skills around planning such a large

celebratory event. If brides do not develop these skills, their weddings may not

take place or they may not take place in the manner in which they would like.

The theme of women as planners emerged from the data, especially for

traditional and transitional couples. In these couples, it was not uncommon to

hear grooms say things such as "she's a natural planner," "it's in her element,"

or "it comes naturally to her." Women wanting and having control over the

planning process was a pattern that, once more, distinguished traditional and transitional couples from egalitarian couples. An analysis of women's wedding preparation also highlighted a difference between two types of work: managing an activity and actually carrying it out.

Brides Feel a High Need for Control

Women generally liked having control over the wedding planning process. Alicia (traditional), said in a matter-of-fact way, "I'm an organizer [laughing] so there was some [enjoyment] out of it. I really enjoyed what it came to be." Others described how it was important to them to have control over what was happening or how it was difficult for them to relinquish control. Most traditional brides and half of the transitional brides were described as *planners* by themselves or their husbands. The following quote is from a transitional couple.

> I'm really anal about a routine [laughing] in general, and so for things not to be happening as quickly as I had hoped was really starting to freak me out. . . . Anally organized. It's the only way I could really do it, cause I was doing it pretty much all by myself. And I was going to school and I was working, so I was totally busy. (Trish)

> She's pretty organized, so she had our folder all set up with wedding stuff, and I mean that way there was nothing getting forgotten. If we hadn't heard from someone to confirm or whatever, she was on top of it. (Trish's husband)

It also was evident that traditional and transitional grooms were not as willing as brides to spend time on exploring details of different options related to things such as photographers, flowers, food, and wedding invitations.

> [My wife would] get on the Internet and spend two hours a night on weeknights all the time, looking for different aspects of the wedding, that's part of her personality, exhaust every option where I'm just like, "Find something good that we like and go with it." And maybe we miss something but, you know, I didn't spend a lot of time, tons of time doing it. (Zachary, transitional)

Exploring every option may have been pursued for one of three reasons. First, it might result in the romantic, perfect wedding for which a bride was striving, which seemed like the case for several brides. Some women feel they cannot have the day they want without attention to many details such as the perfect wedding cake or the perfect, romantic, and socially proper invitation card. The wedding industry is a strong purveyor of this message, and traditional and transitional women seemed not to question this message.

On a practical level, exploring alternatives could result in spending less money, which also was a concern for many individuals. Consumption is a feminized pursuit (Currie, 1993) in which women are assigned the role of consumer and men are assigned the role of producer (Howard, 2000). In their ascribed roles as conscientious household consumers, women found ways to reduce costs. Having a less expensive wedding, however, did not necessarily result in less work. In fact, it sometimes increased women's work. Making

things such as flower arrangements, dresses, and decorations would save money, but could be quite time consuming at the same time.

Some women engaged in numerous money management strategies to reduce wedding costs. At times, the emotional energy put into these strategies was very stressful for them. Below, Tamara describes her process of trying to reduce wedding costs, which was driven by a strong desire to save money for her parents, who had insisted on paying for parts of the wedding that she felt they could not afford.

> Part of why I drove myself crazy, is I have this budget that I'd itemized everything out, like, "Ok, I estimate this much on flowers and this much on a wedding site, and this much on food, and this much on dress, and this much on this and that," and I didn't feel like I could begin to estimate what something could cost until I would research it. So I would research it and I would estimate it, then I would add it all up and I'd be like, "Ahh! Twelve thousand dollars, no!!" and then I'd be like, "Oh, I gotta research more!" I'd get a recommendation from somebody that flowers were cheap here, and then I'd have to go back and call, and do I change it? And then I'd play around with my numbers till I was crazy, trying to get things down. (Tamara, transitional)

Although grooms (or their parents), might be paying for weddings and might argue over increasing budget costs, grooms seldom seemed to be involved in strategies to reduce wedding costs. Because women had been assigned the role of household consumer, it was left to them to meet the budget parameters, regardless of who was paying for the wedding. This pattern is important to note, because "when men [absent] themselves from wedding preparation and [turn] the consumer role over to their future wives, they

[adhere] to dominant gender norms and a division of labor that [grants] them the more powerful breadwinner role" (Howard, 2000, p. 9).

A third reason traditional and transitional brides spent a lot of time making sure that every detail was taken care of was so that they would feel as though nothing would go wrong on their wedding day. The following quote is an example of how one bride tried to ensure ahead of time that she would not have to deal with any difficulties on the day of her wedding.

> I'm very controlling, I guess you could say. [laughing]. . . I had a printout of who was our person, I had a contact person that, the day of the wedding, had a list of the photographer, their phone number, the florist, their phone number [and so on]. If anything went wrong, if anybody didn't show up, I said, "I don't want to know about it." I said, "Don't tell me anything that goes wrong." (Sophia, traditional)

Such levels of planning did not ensure that nothing went wrong on the wedding day, but it did help brides feel a sense of control over the process as though nothing would spoil what was to be the most important day of their lives. Again, the belief that weddings were for women influenced this strategy, as traditional and transitional brides did everything possible ahead of time to ensure that the most important day of their lives would be perfect. In contrast, grooms were more likely to say that "you can't plan for everything."

Brides and their husbands described how easily such organizational skills came to brides, which I have suggested occurred for three reasons. Yet despite these "natural" organizational skills, some traditional and transitional

brides experienced much stress during planning. High standards, attention to detail, a concern for others and a hesitancy in asking others for help, are characteristics that other researchers (e.g., Dressel & Clark, 1990), have noted exacerbates women's stress. Feeling as though one was responsible for everything also was taxing. Ross (traditional), who helped out very little with planning his wedding, said, "[My wife] was probably stressed out most of the time. She [laughing] probably felt like she *was* the only one doing everything." Similarly, his wife, who said she felt *alone* in planning, recalled a difficult moment the day before her wedding, as she struggled to get everything completed.

> I went to [a grocery store] the day before my wedding, which I
> don't advise you to do. I got there right when it opened, I had my
> day all planned out, I'm going to go to [the store], I'll do this, I'll
> have all this time to set up, I'll help decorate, fine. I'm in [the
> store] and I just had this moment where I just wanted to scream. I
> mean I had four cheesecakes, three sheet cakes, nine packages of
> hamburger buns, and five boxes of frozen hamburgers in this car,
> and people were like, "Oh you must be having a party!" and I'm
> stressing because it's the day before my wedding and I'm like
> waaa! I'm like, "Yeah, just a little one." "Oh, is it a graduation
> party?" "No, it's a wedding." "Oh, well, whose wedding?"
> "Mine." "You really should get people to do this for you."
> "Thanks, I know that now." I just had this moment where I got all
> this stuff and I just wanted to stop and scream, "I'm the bride,
> dammit, it's my day!" [laughing]

Women expecting to be and then being natural planners was a gender strategy that traditional and transitional couples used in wedding planning that helped ensure women did more work than men. Despite the depth of planning

that brides engaged in, however, descriptions of stress-filled situations

suggested that planning was not always natural or easy for them.

The distinction between these two couple categories and egalitarian

couples is that images of women as natural planners and descriptions of stress-

filled planning did not appear in egalitarian couples' stories. This difference is

important because the image of women's organizational skills as natural or as

personal characteristics of women takes attention away from the context in

which women's planning is taking place (Hochschild, 1989). Traditional and

transitional brides' organizational skills may have arisen as a logical response

to an overwhelming situation; one in which there was far too much work to do

and nobody else was taking on the responsibility of that work. Trish, for

example, had noted she was "anally organized" *because* she was doing most of

it herself. That egalitarian couples did not describe women as natural planners

may have reflected the fact that egalitarian grooms were taking on more

wedding planning responsibility.

Management and Task Accomplishment are Separate

An examination of women as wedding planners revealed two aspects of

planning that differed slightly among all three couple types. These two types of

wedding work are wedding management and task accomplishment. *Wedding*

management encompasses a number of decisions, such as deciding what needs

to be done, setting appropriate standards, and monitoring a situation to make

sure tasks are accomplished in a suitable manner. Mederer (1993) had termed such task monitoring of unpaid family labor *household management*, differentiating it from *task accomplishment*, which is the actual carrying out of an activity.

It is not enough to conceptualize household work as mere task accomplishment. The concept of household management captures responsibility for making sure things get done. Similarly, wedding work consists of both task accomplishment and wedding management. A groom may get fitted for his tuxedo and pick it up (task accomplishment), but his partner may have scouted out tuxedo shops to find the most affordable offer, called to set up the fitting appointment, and reminded her partner to call the rest of the wedding party, or made the calls herself, to make sure everyone would be there on the day of the fitting (wedding management).

The model of wedding planning demonstrated by traditional and transitional couples was one in which brides and other women planned their weddings. Brides in both couple types engaged in task accomplishment and wedding management, reflected in the tendency to describe them as "planners." Traditional grooms differed from transitional grooms in task accomplishment. Egalitarian brides and grooms, however, did both types of work.

Brides in traditional couples engaged in wedding management and task accomplishment, whereas traditional grooms did little of either type of work.

Making sure various wedding tasks were completed was easy for women in traditional couples because the women did everything themselves. As a result, wedding management and task accomplishment were intrinsically linked for women in traditional couples, and the difference between the two aspects of work was less obvious. When traditional brides did both wedding management and task accomplishment, the management aspect may have been more likely to go unnoticed. Furthermore, any emotion work (Erickson, 1993) that women engaged in (e.g., managing their own emotions so that they do not bother other people with issues of concern) might have been overlooked. For example, David (traditional) said:

> I'm sure there's a thousand undercurrent things- I mean that's one thing that [my wife] just *does*, just wonderfully- is she smoothes a lot of things over so I just don't even see them. There's probably a thousand things that she worried about that I had never even knew about until they were done. I mean, I know when she did the flowers up on the pews and things like that, but I didn't even realize she was worried about that sort of thing, and later on, she was like, "Yeah, I was kind of worried about that." It was just like, "I didn't even know!"

Grooms in transitional couples were more involved in wedding work than traditional grooms. Couples in this category did more things together, such as evaluating potential wedding sites. In contrast, a bride in a traditional couple would have been more likely to look at wedding sites with her mother and then report back to the groom on possible choices. Transitional grooms might also be responsible for one or two tasks.

Nevertheless, when transitional men took on more task accomplishment, it became evident that they were not automatically doing the corresponding management work necessary to get that task accomplished. Similar to traditional couples, brides in this group still were responsible for planning and overseeing much of the work, and this resulted in high amounts of stress for some women. The difference between wedding management and task accomplishment was much clearer in transitional couples.

If transitional men were not accomplishing their tasks in a timely or appropriate manner, they received a clear reminder of their partners' management roles, as their fiancées reminded them of when and how to complete the task. In a few cases, men's procrastination meant they did not get done what they were supposed to get done. Procrastination might have been a form of opposition that Hochschild (1989) identified, in which many men seemed to "alternate between periods of cooperation and resistance" (p. 201). When they were resisting work, they did tasks in a distracted and dissociated way-- the male way of *playing dumb* (Hochschild). Such behavior forced women into taking on the additional chore of *asking*, which women dislike having to do (Hochschild). For instance, one transitional bride had to keep asking her fiancé if he had developed a guest list yet. Zachary (transitional) said:

> [My wife] said, "Write down the people you want to invite, get
> their names and addresses," which, you know, I got, I was even a

slacker about that. But we still got the invitations out a couple of months, three months ahead, well in advance. We got it done in time, but getting all the names together, it didn't get done, you know, exactly when [my wife] wanted it sometimes, and it upset her a little bit but you know, [she] got over it. We got everything there.

As well, when grooms attended to tasks with little sense of urgency, some brides ultimately felt they had to take over and complete the job. For example, one bride had to arrange for a minister, which she felt her partner should have done months earlier. In large part, grooms did not seem too bothered by their partners taking over, or if they did, they kept it to themselves. The following quote describes how one groom felt when his partner would take over things that they had agreed he would do.

On a daily basis in terms of decisions, we talked about, "I'm calling here, you're going to call there," and then, "Well you just called my place?" It wasn't worth getting *overtly* mad about it because she just had time and she just did it. . . . So obviously there's that apathetic lazy kind of sensibility there, "Oh ok, sure, cool, that's great." (Hans, transitional)

This groom's acknowledgement that he did not fight very hard to make sure his partner did not take over on certain tasks is an example of how couples in this category, despite their initial intentions, conformed to dominant gendered patterns. Despite intentions to share wedding work more equally, transitional grooms' approaches to wedding work, perhaps representative of the disinterested groom norm (Smith, 1997), combined with transitional brides'

management roles, resulted in transitional brides taking on more task
accomplishment than originally planned.

Unlike transitional couples in which men participated in more task
accomplishment but not necessarily in wedding management, men in
egalitarian couples were involved in both wedding management and task
accomplishment. They took responsibility for many tasks such as finding the
wedding or reception site, showed initiative in a number of ways, and had ideas
that were considered and integrated into their weddings. Nevertheless, although
there were no examples of egalitarian brides taking over duties for which their
partners were initially responsible, there was evidence that egalitarian brides
still maintained more of a managerial role than their partners. Vanessa
(egalitarian) said, "In our relationship, I'm the secretary, I do the paperwork,
and Grant's the go-getter. Yeah, that's pretty much how it works. I organize
things and he sees it through." Another egalitarian bride made a similar
comment, yet also demonstrated her awareness of her managerial role through
her comment about "the unspoken patterns."

> For a while I'd write [the thank you cards] or he'd write them,
> write the ones-- we'd take turns and then we'd actually leave
> them open and the other person would sign it and we'd read. And
> then we just started signing each other's names and then he wrote
> the ones for the people that he knew and I wrote the ones for the
> people I know. And I kind of kept track of them and kept the list
> out, it kind of felt like I did kind of stay on it just so it would get
> done, some of the unspoken kind of patterns that we got into, that
> was kind of one of them. But I felt like we shared it, like in terms
> of writing them. I'd much rather organize it than let him just write

them. [laughing] And so that felt easier, [but] it felt shared, I think. (Bernadette, egalitarian)

Despite egalitarian brides taking on similar management roles as traditional or transitional brides, the common patterns found in egalitarian couples' wedding preparation were quite different from those found in traditional or transitional couples. Egalitarian grooms clearly took on more task accomplishment and greater involvement in wedding management than traditional or transitional grooms. And through gender consciousness regarding her greater management responsibility, Bernadette distinguished herself from other brides who engaged in wedding management by being aware of this pattern.

Overall, this gender strategy insured that women's organizational skills, rather than men's, resulted in weddings being planned. Although men's task accomplishment increased as one moved from traditional to transitional to egalitarian couples, women still were responsible for management work in all couples. This pattern was not surprising, as household management is more gendered than task accomplishment (Mederer, 1993). Descriptions of women as *natural* planners, however, only occurred in traditional and transitional couples, and I have suggested that women's managerial work was not necessarily as natural as some couples suggested it was. Rather, traditional and transitional women's planning skills may have been inevitable outcomes within an

environment in which other people (grooms) were not attempting to take on more wedding work and brides often were not expecting them to do so either.

Secondary Grooms

Grooms' wedding involvement was secondary to their partners' wedding work. Their participation often came when brides were overwhelmed with wedding work or when final decisions were being made, rather than through full participation during the entire planning process. On occasion, however, grooms' involvement was monitored or inadvertently minimized by brides, and therefore their secondary involvement may also have been an outcome of women's need to have control over planning. For the most part, monitoring differentiated traditional and transitional couples from egalitarian couples, who did not show the same patterns of men's involvement as other couples. Women's monitoring of grooms' involvement occurred mainly in transitional couples, in which grooms might be expected to have responsibility for certain things, but women needed to supervise to be sure tasks would be completed.

Grooms' Help is a Last Resort

If women in traditional couples were overwhelmed or stressed, they did one of two things. One alternative was to cope on their own because they did not want to burden others, did not trust others to do the job appropriately, or wanted to show care for others by taking on the work themselves (Dressel &

Clark, 1990). Trying to cope with everything on their own, however, resulted in a great deal of stress for brides. Another alternative was to turn to other women rather than their husbands for help.

Similar to how women but not men considered reducing their work hours to cope with work-family conflict (Zvonkovic, Greaves, Schmiege, & Hall, 1996), traditional couples reproduced dominant gendered norms when they did not consider the possibility of the groom helping out when the bride was feeling overwhelmed. A traditional bride was unlikely to turn to her partner for assistance. When either spouse realized the bride was becoming stressed, the strategy was for her to turn to other women for help.

> I should have asked for help more too, cause I kind of took on a
> lot myself. I felt bad asking people to do things, and I felt like,
> you know, "I'm going to have to do it to make sure it's done right,
> kind of thing," which I knew would be fine if other people did it,
> but somehow, you know, I felt like I had to do this, I had to make
> sure that this was right. I would have done that. Yeah, [laughing]
> that's what *attendants* [emphasis added] are for! (Jody,
> traditional)

In situations such as Tatum's (traditional), the bride also had to prepare herself mentally for the fact that her husband-to-be was not going to assist in wedding work. Tatum knew in advance that he would do little to help out, noting, "*He didn't really do anything*, which I didn't expect him to." Nevertheless, she still had to engage in some emotion work (Erickson, 1993) to deal with feeling alone because she was receiving no help or input from her

partner. Although she maintained hope that as the wedding approached and details became solidified, he would show more interest, but he did not.

Transitional couples dealt with bridal stress in a different way. Whereas in traditional couples, brides either coped alone or turned to other women, transitional couples acknowledged men's assistance, but only when it was *needed.* Grooms helped out when they were asked, but they did not initiate helping. Moreover, their help often came only when the bride was frazzled and overwhelmed. Trish (transitional) said:

> The one thing that I really valued during the whole process is that I'd sit down and I'd be like, "I can't do this anymore!" and [my husband was] like, "What can I help with, just give me something to do." So when I was ready to throw it all up in the air, you know, go "I can't do this!" [laughing] he just stepped in and said, "You know, before you get to this point, you need to say, 'Ok, Trish' or you need to say 'Ok, _____, I need your help with this and this,'" and then once he told me that, I was more willing to ask him to help me. And he helped me with anything that I needed help with."

Trish's comment demonstrated that, unlike traditional brides, transitional brides would consider their partners' assistance. Nevertheless, asking her husband to do something did not necessarily mean he would do it, suggesting that this gender strategy was not always effective. Trish said:

> He wouldn't *initiate* anything but if I definitely needed help he was willing to do anything. So if I said, "_____, go outside with the photographer," it's like, "No way!" but when I ask him to go to the photographer with me. . . he was totally willing to do all that.

Her statement shows how her husband actually refused to do something on his own. He would only do the task with his wife, which may not have reduced her burden.

This interactional pattern among traditional and transitional couples demonstrated that men's assistance was not considered a primary form of help. Turning to other women was a gender strategy ensuring that traditional brides and other women, rather than men, continued to do the majority of wedding labor. Transitional men would step in at the last minute if they were asked, but they rarely initiated things on their own, and sometimes the help they provided was questionable. In contrast, men in egalitarian couples were fully involved throughout the wedding planning process, and egalitarian brides did not become stressed as a result of work overload; turning to grooms for help when brides were overwhelmed was not a strategy that egalitarian couples needed.

Grooms are Involved in Final Decision Making

If men were involved in wedding work, it often centered around final decision making. Both traditional and transitional couples followed this pattern. Brides would do the background research and present three or four options to grooms, who would then chose from those options. For example, Sophia (traditional) said:

> [My husband] and I, after we got engaged, discussed how much
> of a part he wanted to be, how much a part I wanted him to be,
> and we decided that most of the things my mom and I would go
> do, and then when it came down to a decision between two things

> or three things, then [he] and I would go, and he would see if he
> had a real strong opinion about any of them. If he didn't, then I
> could choose, but if he did, then we would go with that one.

Her husband noted the ease of this strategy. He said:

> She brought four invitations. "Pick an invitation," and I said, "Oh
> that's my favorite," and she goes, "That was my favorite too."
> Our styles are very similar and there was nothing that I disagreed
> with, I mean, in any choices.

Grooms may have been involved in this final stage because they had

fewer needs around weddings and therefore had fewer ideas compared to

women. Yet, the simplicity with which this strategy is described overshadows

the amount of work that some brides put into identifying final options. For

example, grooms might not know what their preferences were for wedding

invitations, but women did not necessarily know what they wanted either. The

difference was that women figured out what they liked through a lengthy

process. Choosing invitations might mean numerous trips to several stores,

paging through large books of invitation samples, and talking to sales personnel

about possible choices. It also might mean looking through hundreds of font

and wording examples, and consulting with parents and in-laws to determine

acceptable invitation wording.

At times, brides found this process laboring, but they either did not have

or did not perceive the option of not doing it or of simplifying the process. For

example, Samantha, below, described how doing the planning allowed her to

have control over what was chosen. She recognized that this strategy resulted in

her doing most of the wedding work, but acknowledged that the end result was worth it.

> I did the majority of the planning, just 'cause one thing, he's kind of, I don't want to say tacky on certain things, but [laughing] I definitely have a better sense, you can't tell from the apartment right now, but I have a better sense of, not acceptability, but taste. That's what it comes down to. And so by me doing most of the research, I could narrow down what is acceptable and he had control over what those choices were. (Samantha, transitional)

Allowing grooms to be involved only in final decision making was a way in which brides were able to have control over the situation and to maintain their primary role as wedding organizers.

Some brides and grooms saw final decision making as an important aspect of grooms' involvement. Interestingly, a bride occasionally felt she *owed* her partner this much because he was not involved in much else of the process. For example, a bride might feel somewhat guilty that she did not let her husband participate earlier in narrowing down alternatives, even if he did not really seem to care, so she would make sure he was involved in picking from the final choices. In turn, he might feel grateful to her for considering his input at that stage, demonstrating *economy of gratitude* (Hochschild, 1989). *Letting* traditional or transitional grooms participate in final decisions helped couples to feel as if grooms were involved in wedding work, yet this gender strategy masked the work brides were doing leading up to those final decisions.

Brides Monitor Grooms' Work

Men in transitional couples were more involved than men in traditional

couples in wedding planning. Transitional couples did more things together as a

couple, such as tasting food or cake options, and grooms also had one or a few

tasks that were their responsibility. The tasks they were more involved than

their partners were photography (Lowry & Otnes, 1994) and honeymoons.

Grooms also were more likely than their partners to organize music for the

wedding reception. One egalitarian and two transitional grooms, created CDs or

tapes of music and another two transitional grooms intended to make CDs but

never did.

> The *huge* project that I undertook was the wedding favors. That
> pretty much [my wife] left to me. We decided we were going to
> do a couple of disks, compact disks of music. We ended up
> thinking we were going to do one, we ended doing two. . . . I had
> to sneak into my office after hours to burn these things, and then I
> bought a CD burner, which wouldn't work on our machine and I
> had another friend who offered to use his machines and we
> installed that on there so it was this huge long process. It took way
> longer [laughing] than I anticipated or thought it would. And
> finally we got them all done, when we finally got a good system
> down in terms of copying the music and then I did the label for on
> top and then designed the covers. And it was quite a process, but
> it was a really, really fun process. . . . And there was something I
> felt like a *huge* contribution to. (Hans, transitional)

At times, however, I questioned whether men truly had responsibility

for and control over these tasks. It seemed as though their involvement was

monitored. The fact that Hans, above, said that his wife *left* the CDs to him

could imply that she could easily have taken that responsibility away from him

as she did in other areas of the planning. Another man's lack of involvement in overseeing invitations resulted in the maps he had made actually being left out of the invitations. His wife, Diane (transitional), explained:

> My mom wrote up all the invitations, she took it upon herself, she was going, "That's fine, you know, you guys are studying," cause it was near finals and so she's going, "No, I want you guys to focus on school and I'll do the invitations," and so I was really surprised that she wanted to do that and I was like, "Ok, that's fine." And so [my husband] made up all these maps, these little square maps, went to [a photocopy store] and did all of it, and she didn't even put them in so he was very upset and distraught that she didn't do that. I think she was really nervous and just kind of losing her memory or [pause] something like that, just totally forgot.

Moreover, some tasks that transitional men did accomplish also seemed to take on a *fetish* aspect (Hochschild, 1989), in which the *one thing* that the man was responsible for and accomplished came to symbolize much more than it really was worth. Men might say that the honeymoon was their one responsibility, but then further discussion would reveal that planning the honeymoon involved *very little* work. Interviews with their wives also might show that wives were involved in making honeymoon choices or even took over planning the honeymoon. Even though some grooms might be responsible for planning honeymoons, their fiancées still felt they had to make sure that it got planned.

In summary, traditional and transitional men's involvement in wedding planning was auxiliary. Brides turned to grooms for assistance only if other

options did not succeed, and grooms' involvement often came at the point of final decision making rather than throughout the planning process. On other occasions, what little work men did do was elevated to high status, even though they still were doing far less work than women. There also were times when transitional men wanted to be more involved, but somehow their efforts were circumvented.

The contradiction inherent in a bride wanting her partner to have more say in planning the wedding yet limiting his involvement in ways that were preserved her authority occurred only in transitional couples. This interactional pattern suggested the presence of gender assessment (West & Zimmerman, 1987) by transitional brides and grooms toward each other, which I explore in the section on gender assessment. Traditional brides did not monitor their partner's involvement because both traditional brides and grooms generally accepted the division of labor that resulted in brides planning their weddings. Monitoring did not occur in egalitarian couples because weddings appeared to be seen as being for both women and men. As a result egalitarian grooms were interested in taking on responsibility for making sure things got done at all stages of planning, and their fiancées seemed not to need to have control over everything.

Gendered Locations

Gendered environments refer to the spatial separation of women and men from each other in the workforce *and* at home. Women's and men's physical separation, whether longterm or shortterm, resulted in different environments that facilitated traditional and transitional couples' use of other gender strategies such as women's greater involvement in wedding planning or grooms not being involved in early planning stages. Two patterns around spatial separation emerged in this study: one related to employment, the other related to home.

Gendered Paid Work Facilitates Women's Greater Involvement

The first gendered environment pattern was in women's and men's employment. The broader sociohistorical context, which consists of structural and symbolic components (Ferree, 1990), affected traditional and transitional couples' involvement in wedding planning. Structurally speaking, institutions create or constrain individuals' interactions and the social construction of gender. In this study, women's and men's paid work schedules affected the amount of work they did in wedding planning.

Brides were more likely than grooms to be unemployed, to be in shift work, or to work in types of jobs that afforded them opportunities to work on wedding details. Together with their mothers' work schedules, and the likelihood that their mothers were not employed, it made sense that women

joined together to plan the wedding because they had more opportunity and time to do so. Additionally, wedding work remained women's work when mothers took on particular wedding tasks to ease the workload of traditional or transitional brides and grooms. Sophia (traditional) noted:

> The invitations, the selection was really easy, we knew exactly what we wanted, so we bought those. And actually my mom addressed them all for us. [laughing] It was very easy on our part, cause she doesn't work, she's a stay home mom, so she just during the day would address the invitations for us, so that went very smoothly.

Similar to how fathers experience family leisure as leisure rather than work (Freysinger, 1994; Shaw, 1992), so too did grooms benefit from women's labor in this situation. Whether labor was done by the bride, her mother, her mother's friends, or the bride's friends, men were able to enjoy the day without having experienced the stress of putting the day together. Men's employment situations released them from the obligation to do wedding work.

Gender asymmetry (Pleck, 1977) may exist in the permeability of work and family boundaries; women are more likely than men to experience spillover from family to work, whereas men are more likely than women to experience spillover from work to home. Consistent with this suggestion, family-to-work spillover (Crouter, 1984; Kanter, 1977) occurred more often for brides than for their partners. Traditional and transitional brides seemed willing to let wedding planning affect them in their work environment. Cutting back on work was a strategy brides used, but not grooms. In the same way that women quit their

paid jobs to cope with the second shift at home (Hochschild, 1989), so too did a

few brides take time off from employment (e.g., the week prior to getting

married) to deal with final wedding preparation. This family-to-work spillover

occurred in traditional and transitional couples but not in egalitarian couples.

The following two quotes (not from the same couple) are examples of how

brides, more so than grooms, allowed wedding planning to enter into the

workplace environment, and how women's and men's work environments

influenced their involvement in wedding planning.

> [My wife] made probably a lot of the calls. Granted, I have a cell
> phone on me all day long, but when I'm working, I'm working.
> We're around all kinds of saws, I got my ear plugs in so I'm kind
> of in my own little world doing my thing, so it's a lot easier- her
> being in the office, a lot easier for her to make the phone calls to
> just keep all the ducks in a row as we were just planning it all.
> (Greg, transitional)

> I had sort of the flexible job situation, where I could take 20
> minutes and make some phone calls during the day, and wait for
> people to call me back, and [my husband] really didn't. I think he
> was doing it in his own time, but it wasn't on a time schedule that
> I was comfortable with or could really understand, because my
> pressures at work were a lot different than his were. . . Sometimes
> it just felt like, "Can you just make a ten minute phone call?"
> Like, "You can call me for ten minutes, just get off the phone
> with me and somebody else, you know!" But the harder I pushed
> him, the less he was willing to do it. (Tamara, transitional)

Traditional and transitional women were able to integrate wedding work

into their paid labor, whereas their partners were neither able nor willing to do

so. Because wedding planning at work was unseen by partners, women's and

men's different work environments contributed to women's wedding

management and task accomplishment being invisible. Comments related to

women's and men's different employment schedules or family-to-work

spillover did not emerge in egalitarian couples' interviews.

Coresidence is Linked to Division of Labor

A second pattern of spatial separation emerged at home. Although the

majority (14 of 21) of couples in this study were cohabiting, couples with

traditional wedding work arrangements were most likely to live apart prior to

marriage. Only 1 of 6 traditional couples cohabited, whereas 8 of 10 transitional

and all (5 of 5) egalitarian couples cohabited. Living apart supported a gendered

division of labor. If a noncohabiting groom was not nearby when wedding work

was occurring, he could not easily be involved in such work or be drawn into

more work than he preferred, which could result in tension or conflict. This

potential outcome is evident in the following comment by Sophia (traditional):

> My sister actually just got engaged, and it's *very* interesting to
> watch them cause we have seen them doing some fighting and
> things since they got engaged and Jimmy and Karen are like, "Our
> fighting has totally increased since we got engaged," but the
> difference- they live together. And [my husband] kept saying,
> "It's because you live together, man!" He's like, "These women,
> as soon as they get engaged, they're wedding nonstop." He's like,
> "They get crazy," and [he] said that he was able to get away and
> go to his roommate and say, "She is nuts, man, she is crazy," and
> then I would then turn to my girlfriends or my mom and my sister
> and say, "Let's talk wedding, blah, blah, blah!" instead of always
> going to him and talking wedding.

Separate living arrangements could help traditional grooms ignore the

differential investments in wedding labor. If they were not present to observe

women's wedding work, they also might not have an accurate idea of how much work it took to plan a wedding, thus contributing to women's work being invisible.

On one hand, it was not surprising that individuals who did not live together prior to marriage had more traditional wedding work arrangements, given that noncohabiters have more traditional views than cohabiters (Cunningham & Antill, 1995). On the other hand, cohabiting itself did not insure a more equitable division of labor. Many cohabiting transitional couples consisted of involved men but also brides who performed most of the work. Although most transitional and all egalitarian couples cohabited, only egalitarian couples shared work and did many tasks together. Unlike Sophia's husband who was grateful to be separated from his wedding-preoccupied girlfriend, her friends, and her mother, egalitarian men were happy to spend time with their partner leading up to the wedding.

> We were living together before we got married, which was really important to us just in terms of our own sanity in some ways, we bought this house. . . six or seven months before we got married. And that was a huge thing for us, just in planning the wedding alone, just being in the same place, I can't imagine having been separated. . . . It was a very good thing for our relationship and for planning the wedding. (Kevin, egalitarian)

Physically being together allowed for couples to plan the wedding together, which was something egalitarian couples desired.

In keeping with this line of thought, another pattern related to home space differentiated egalitarian couples (cohabiting) from traditional (mostly noncohabiting) and transitional couples (mostly cohabiting). Unlike traditional and transitional couples who spent the night and morning before their wedding apart from each other, egalitarian couples rejected this tradition.

As did traditional couples, transitional couples followed the tradition of not seeing the bride immediately before the wedding. Nine of ten transitional couples spent the night before and morning of the wedding apart. That is, transitional couples made special arrangements to be separated during the final 24 hours or so, despite having lived together in the same dwelling for a number of years. Reasons for being separated were not articulated clearly and seemed part of a larger unquestioned acceptance of wedding tradition. Most respondents from transitional couples felt that being separated was the best way to do things and they liked how it created a sense of anticipation for the event. For example, when asked why he and his cohabiting partner spent the night apart, Phil (transitional) said:

> Not just because of the tradition of that, but for me it was mostly in a way a transformation that would occur for her and for ourselves. So leaving her that night after our rehearsal dinner and everything, and knowing I wouldn't see her until the ceremony itself did a lot of things for me. It created anticipation, I think for the event, and it also kind of created a longing to see her and be with her again. It was a brief period apart, but in light of all that was going on, I did miss her over that period. So I think it was important for those two reasons. And also important that probably

> it just allowed us to separately reflect upon what was happening,
> which was important.

His wife, however, provided a different reason for spending the time apart. She

said, "Cause we just kind of got sucked into the whole traditional wedding

thing."

Egalitarian couples saw little reason to be separated immediately prior

to their wedding. They cited the desire to feel emotionally and physically

connected with their partner. Bernadette (egalitarian) said:

> I had thought about do I spend the night before with girlfriends,
> and do I get a whole bunch of girlfriends together and go get our
> nails done, like I had done that with high school friends that got
> married. And we basically decided, "No, we want to be *together*. .
> . we had decided long before that I wasn't going to hide and come
> out with my dad. . . so it just didn't make sense to not be together
> the whole weekend.

Egalitarian couples also questioned the relevance, tradition, or superstition of

being separated.

> We didn't have any of the separating. . . I think [my wife] had
> never heard of the tradition that much, she was like, "Oh well,
> whatever, that's kind of dumb that we live together and the night
> before we're not going to?" And the other issue was like, "Well
> where would one of us stay all of a sudden?" I mean we could
> have stayed at a friend's house, but again, that seems kind of
> silly. (Ken, egalitarian)

Spending this time together resulted in shared last-minute work. For example,

on the morning of their weddings, egalitarian couples tended to be engaging in

wedding labor together.

> Did we see each other? Oh yeah, we didn't [separate]. There
> wasn't any superstition involved. Yeah, we hung out and
> wandered around aimlessly, talked to people, got ready. Most of
> it, a lot of it was just organizing and, you know, getting things
> ready and putting this here and that goes there. (Grant, egalitarian)

For traditional or transitional couples, however, separate spheres during

the time immediately preceding the wedding helped ensure a gendered division

of labor right up to the moment before the wedding. In fact, grooms were likely

to be relaxing the night or morning before the wedding with family members or

friends. One interesting pattern that arose during the final day of preparation

was grooms going on golfing outings with wedding guests while brides dealt

with last minute preparations. Hans (transitional) said, "[My wife] and the girls

did the final prep for the [wedding site], and they put together, you know,

flowers and table settings and all that, got it ready while us guys went out and

played golf! [laughing]" Such golfing outings occurred for men in one

traditional and four transitional couples and may be related to socioeconomic

status.

Some brides were engaged in leisure activities with other women, but

similar to previous findings that women often combine leisure with work

(Walker, 1996), get-togethers with other women often involved wedding work.

For example, a bride might have her bridesmaids sleep over and they would do

"girly things" such as painting their nails, but they also might be up until 1:30

in the morning printing off final changes to programs or making boutonnieres

and bouquets. There were no examples of men doing such last-minute

preparations unless they had procrastinated on something such as getting a gift

for a groomsman.

> Her [sic] and her bridesmaids were up late that night getting all
> the flowers ready. And my friends and I, we all stayed overnight
> at my friend, George's house, and watched movies and played
> video games and smoked cigars and hung around. Nothing really
> major, I didn't really plan anything in that area. (Lyle, traditional)

> It would have been nice if we could have the programs printed a
> little earlier than we did, so that [*my wife*] [emphasis added]
> wouldn't have had to stress out putting them together at the last
> minute. (Vince, transitional)

Women tended to enjoy these final evenings with their friends, but this finding

points to the inherent contradictions in women's leisure. Women's leisure can

have positive and negative outcomes at the same time-- "providing individual

enjoyment while at the same time reinforcing sexist ideologies" (Shaw, 1994, p.

17). An argument could be made, however, that women painting their nails also

is a gendered construction, and is related to *work* rather than leisure.

In any case, when traditional or transitional couples were separated in

the final hours before the wedding, separate duties for women and men were

reinforced. This separation resulted in women's last-minute task

accomplishment and wedding management being invisible to grooms.

Traditional and transitional grooms also had more opportunities than women

for leisure during such separation. In contrast, egalitarian couples'

commitments to being with each other contributed to shared last-minute work.

Not surprisingly, no brides from egalitarian couples reported being highly stressed immediately prior to or during their wedding.

Gender Assessment

When individuals are evaluated regarding how well they meet gendered expectations, they experience gender assessment (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Such assessment can occur in virtually any context (West & Zimmerman) although there may be certain situations in which gender assessment is more likely to be invoked (Deaux & Major, 1987). Because weddings are highly gendered rituals, gender assessment is likely to occur in a number of ways for the people involved. Individuals will notice or challenge any changes from what they expect to occur (Oswald, 2002).

Gender assessment occurs regardless of whether or not a person fulfills someone else's gendered expectations. When partners confirm each others' gendered expectations, there is little recognition of their actions (Thompson, 1993). If expectations are not confirmed, tension or conflict may occur or individuals may experience criticism from others. Traditional couples confirmed each other's expectations and the expectations of others, so they reported very little conflict. In the previous sections, however, I noted how some brides and grooms resisted various gender strategies. Resistance and attempts at resistance triggered gender assessment. Transitional couples experienced gender assessment *from each other* when they did not confirm each

other's expectations. Because they did not reproduce dominant gendered norms, egalitarian couples were more likely than the other two couple categories to experience gender assessment *from others*. Although each couple type differed from the other in gender assessment, I describe only transitional and egalitarian couples because they questioned and resisted or attempted to resist gendered traditions. Thus, they were the only couples who reported conflict that emerged from gender assessment.

Brides and Grooms Assess Each Other

Compared to the other two groups, transitional couples were more likely to report being surprised by something their partner did, such as a groom's involvement or lack of involvement, his interest in flowers, or a bride's use of bridal magazines. A transitional bride described being surprised by her husband's involvement, even though he showed initiative only on tasks deemed appropriate by the wedding industry for grooms.

> I was surprised at how [Eddie] took on the whole getting the tuxes and stuff. It was done before I knew it. And that was his thing, he said, "That's my thing and I'm going to take care of that." He was really good, I think he looked through one of my books I had and saw what they say the groomsman is supposed to do, and he pretty much took on that part himself. He said, "Ok, I'm going to do this and this," and he always asked if we needed help, but my mom and I really enjoyed kind of doing it ourselves, so it was kind of fun for us, and I think he knew that. He did a few things, but pretty much let us do the flowers and all the girl stuff.

Grooms in transitional couples also were surprised by their partners. In particular, several men were surprised by the intensity of their fiancées' involvement in the wedding culture. Hans (transitional) said:

> When she started, we had more wedding magazines and literature than I've ever seen in my life and don't ever want to see again! Because, I mean, just from like a social opinion aspect, the kind of stuff that's in there is absolutely not the kind of woman that she [is]. . . . There were so many magazines [laughing] and I was really surprised by how much she was reading these things and enthralled with these things, and it sounds like pretty harsh, but I kind of just abhor those kinds of magazines. . . I just have this sense of like, "This is exactly why certain things are perpetuated in our society." . . . . And there were a few times where I was really surprised. She started talking about wanting to get this for the wedding and that for the wedding and ultimately that never really did happen, but I'm like, "Oh my Lord, that's just not her."

Conflict and ambiguity over roles or beliefs appeared more often in transitional couples than in the other two groups. For example, some men wanted to be more involved or became more interested over time, but found there was not a role for them because their partner would not give up control of planning the wedding. Tamara (transitional) said:

> It just floored me the first time he really wanted to involved in flowers, and I was like "No! It's my thing, I don't even want to talk to you about it! Why do you even care?" And that really pissed him off.

Similarly, her husband described his frustrations when his wife took over on certain tasks such as making phone calls they had agreed he would do. Spouses' reactions suggested the presence of gender assessment (West & Zimmerman, 1987).

The process of gender assessment in transitional couples seemed to begin when brides became immersed in the wedding culture and in their role as wedding consumers. Husbands who were interested in being involved would struggle to find their place. One groom described how a wedding created a hierarchical system or "pseudo-government," with brides at the top, followed by the mother of the bride, and the groom somewhere further down the list. "And if you can't figure out the system, [you're in trouble]" (Dylan, transitional). When transitional men's attempts to be more involved were rebuffed, they stepped back into the traditional role of distant groom. It should be noted, however, that sometimes their attempts at involvement were not entirely serious, such as a groom who suggested wearing running shoes with tuxedos when he knew his partner wanted something more formal. Such suggestions could indicate opposition to participation in wedding planning. Not surprisingly, these suggestions were rejected by brides. In general, however, brides' gender assessment seemed to push grooms back into more traditional roles. In response, men did not protest vigorously, perhaps because doing so might have required them to do more wedding work. Tamara (transitional) acknowledged the fine line that men walked in wedding planning.

> I felt like I should be making decisions with him sometimes and should be able to do that rightfully, and yet there were situations that he really wanted to be involved in that maybe I wasn't as receptive to letting him be involved in, like one thing was flowers. . . . Men are, nowadays, a lot more invested in weddings than they ever were before and I think they are walking on a fine line where

> they feel expectations to be more involved in the process but not
> knowing where to insert themselves, and where to take the lead,
> and where to jump in, and where to just be there standing and be
> like, "Yeah honey, I like that too."

Transitional couples demonstrated a pattern of decision making

Scanzoni and Scanzoni (1976) called senior partner-junior partner. In the senior

partner-junior partner pattern, both the wife and husband are employed, but

their primary responsibilities do not change. Women are primarily responsible

for the home and their husbands are primarily responsible for financial support.

Moreover, husbands' attitudes about their wives' employment are important in

determining whether wives are employed. A similar, yet gender-reversed

pattern is seen here. Grooms were encouraged to become more involved in

wedding work as junior partners, but brides were in charge as senior partners.

Yet, uncertainty or ambivalence about each other's roles resulted in

tension or conflict in the planning process. Resistance to the larger social order

was difficult when individuals in transitional couples were confronted with

their intimate partner's gendered expectations for involvement or interest in

wedding planning. Ultimately dominant gendered norms were reproduced. As a

result, gender assessment usually stopped at the dyad level for transitional

couples.

Other People Assess Couples

Gender assessment moved beyond the dyad level for some couples,

especially for egalitarian couples. Egalitarian couples confirmed each others'

nonnormative expectations, but they were likely to experience assessment *from others* because they did not reproduce prevailing gendered patterns. Occasionally, transitional couples had similar stories, but this type of gender assessment was more common for egalitarian couples.

A key issue in wedding planning is that brides and grooms do not plan weddings on their own. Although my analysis focused on brides and grooms, couples had varying degrees of help from their families, and in particular from brides' mothers. Weddings are complex cultural events, characterized by unspoken beliefs and expectations and covert family and societal rules. Further, many stakeholders have gendered expectations. Thompson (1993) noted that relationships outside of marriage, such as with children, relatives, kin, and coworkers shape how gender is constructed. As a result, couples sometimes experience unsolicited advice and criticism in addition to assistance, and this affects gender construction.

One notable example involved a transitional bride and groom who both described how they tried to leave out a vow about wives submitting to their husbands. Following a meeting with their pastor, they were under the impression that the statement would be omitted from the ceremony. Their attempt at resistance to gendered church tradition was unsuccessful, however:

> We chose not to put [the particular vows] in because we knew it
> would offend a lot of people and give people misconceptions of
> how we think our marriage should be conducted. And what do
> you know, the pastor looks right at me and says, in this big smile,

"Now I know we didn't discuss this, but I thought it was important." Yes. And it surprised me. Cause he was a very open honest, really nice guy and it just really surprised me. And he went into the whole spiel and explained it, and even though, you know, he explained it in context and all that stuff, the *whole* reception, people were like, "So, are you going submit?" and all this stuff and I *still* hear about it. (Samantha, transitional)

When other stakeholders' strongly held beliefs or expectations were not met, egalitarian couples often heard about it. They came under pressure to do things such as wear traditional bridesmaid dresses or to spend the night before the wedding apart. Vanessa (egalitarian), whose husband's sisters put pressure on her to have traditional bridesmaid dresses, said:

[My husband's] sisters were like, [said in high pitched voice] "I don't know what to wear! What do you mean? Can't you just make a dress or get us-- what do we wear? What's everybody else wearing?" I'm like, "It doesn't *matter!*" Cause I'd modified my wedding dress that I'd got second hand, but I modified it down and it looked totally untraditional. I cut off the sleeves cause it had these big puffy portable sleeves. I cut them off so it was sleeveless but it obviously wasn't a dress that was designed to be sleeveless and I had like bows taken out of it and stuff. I'm just like, "Just wear whatever you want." They had a hard time with that concept.

Bridesmaids and brides' mothers may have pushed gendered behavior because of gender assessment they perceived from others. Weddings are public rituals usually involving more people than just the bride and groom, and as such, other people may be assessed. For example, brides' mothers may be criticized if they do not uphold their role as a consumer (Howard, 2000). Bernadette (egalitarian), who received some gender assessment from her

mother, said, "[My mother] wanted to be more involved. I think because people were always asking her."

Some groomsmen expected to throw a raucous drinking party for the groom and expected that the groom would want this type of party. Many grooms felt pressure to have bachelor parties with strippers and heavy drinking. Not every groom wanted this type of party, however. Yvonne (transitional), whose husband got alcohol poisoning as a result of his bachelor party, noted the pressure that grooms could feel.

> I didn't feel like it was appropriate, and I don't really know if [my husband] did either, because he's not really that kind of guy. Although the guy who planned it really was. And he wanted [my husband] to get all into it, which I don't think he ever really did. And so their remedy for that was like, "Oh give him more alcohol, he'll be more into it."

Yet, several grooms who did not want such parties still went to them. It was not possible for some grooms to decline involvement in such parties, demonstrating the difficulty individuals have in contesting gender norms when expectations come from family members or friends. Grooms in all couple categories experienced some gender assessment in relation to bachelor parties. Egalitarian grooms, however, were least likely to participate in bachelor parties:

> In my mind the bachelor party is a bunch of guys getting together, going out drinking, and somewhere in there has to be a stripper, and some kind of like last night of the end of freedom party, kind of thing. . . it's supposed to be significant in some [pause] but you know, for me I never felt that way, I never felt like I was giving up, cause [we] had been together for several years before that, she was pretty much living with me, it wasn't like I was losing

anything. It was just another day in my life, so I didn't feel like I really needed to have all the-- plus I'd been to bachelor's parties with the strippers and all that stuff and it's just, you know, seems boring and stupid, so that's why I think they're stupid. (Grant, egalitarian)

Gender assessment also occurred around women's surnames. The act of a woman taking her husband's name at marriage symbolically reinforces the expectation that "her identity as an individual is subsumed under her status as a wife" (Weitzman, 1981, cited in Scheuble & Johnson, 1993, p. 748). Brides in two egalitarian couples and two transitional couples did not take their partners' last names. Grooms' fathers struggled with these decisions. Of the two transitional couples who had chosen this route, one woman said she had never resolved the issue with her father-in-law, who had not spoken to her for three months after he learned of her decision. The other woman struggled with whether she still might take her husband's name in the future. Tamara (transitional) used her maiden name professionally and her husband's last name personally, but was not sure if she would continue to do so, particularly when she had children. Nevertheless, she felt it was important to take small steps toward larger societal change. She said:

> It's too bad that in 2002 that there are, that it's still such a rare thing, that there are not more people that that's more common, and that that's less weird. I mean that's what it's going to take, if it's going to take more people doing it to be less weird, but then there's part of me that's being like, "I want to be part of the change! I want to be part of the one that's weird! [laughing] So maybe my kid won't have to deal with it!"

An egalitarian couple described how they sat down with the groom's father to discuss how they felt about his response to his daughter-in-law's decision not to change her name. The egalitarian bride said:

> We really wanted him to articulate that of course it's about him feeling like Kevin would be rejecting the name and then we could talk through, "Would you feel the same way if Kevin was a female and I was the male?" and he said, "No, I'd feel differently," and well, "Why is that?" Well, "Because that's the way it is," and, "Well why is it the way it is?" And so we really then were able to kind of have a conversation about, "Well the reason why we're not choosing to just do, you know, [me] take Kevin's name is because we don't want to mindlessly do something and if the reason is because it's always been done before, that's not good enough for us."

That women changed their name in 17 of 21 couples was not surprising. Although individuals may be increasingly tolerant of women keeping their maiden names upon marriage, most individuals do not plan to do so themselves (Scheuble & Johnson, 1993). A 1994 American Demographics report indicated that less than 10% of American women used something other than their husband's last name (Brightman, 1994). In this study, not taking a husband's last name was an act of resistance to which others responded strongly, thus demonstrating the strength of unwritten patriarchal rules. Additionally, groom's fathers' gender assessments regarding the lack of a name change indicated the power of this patriarchal expectation and could be a measure of the magnitude of women's gender resistance.

The name change issue demonstrates that although both transitional and egalitarian couples experienced similar forms of gender assessment at times, transitional couples were less able than egalitarian couples to stand firm against other's expectations at times (i.e., with bachelor parties). What may have differentiated egalitarian couples from transitional couples was the effect of their *shared* beliefs. When both partners confirmed and reinforced each other's views, they were better able to resist other's expectations. This is not surprising, given the importance of interaction between men's and women's gender ideologies in predicting men's involvement in housework (e.g., Greenstein, 1996). As a result of their shared beliefs, egalitarian couples felt their nonnormative weddings were authentic to themselves and to others, and this pleased them. Justine (egalitarian) said with pride, "Our wedding was a creation of our own completely and absolutely. I mean, from the opening to the ending of it, it was totally created by [my husband] and I." Having shared worldviews helped egalitarian couples resist and cope with gender assessment and to be true to themselves and what they wanted.

In summary, resistance to dominant gendered norms was possible in wedding planning, but not without its critics or opponents. Because weddings are highly ritualized, traditional, public events, individuals are held socially accountable for how they do gender. Not replicating the larger social order resulted in gender assessment in two ways. Sometimes opposition came from

an individual's own partner, as in the case of transitional couples, but egalitarian couples were more likely to experience opposition from other people. Having similar gender ideologies, however, helped them resist much of this assessment.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Despite suggestions that men today are doing more household labor than in previous generations, gender still strongly influences unpaid family work. Although most people believe that women and men should share equally in family labor, very few couples actually do (Coltrane, 2000). Typically, family rituals are not studied when looking at division of household labor despite the fact that they may be central carriers for the meaning of gender (Coltrane, 1998). Weddings are a specific family ritual based on a gender dichotomy that reinforces separate roles for women and men, yet they are ignored by researchers (Ingraham, 1999).

The purpose of this study was to examine how first-time, newly married couples negotiated and constructed gender when planning their weddings. I interviewed 21 couples within a year of their weddings, exploring how they became engaged, what their weddings were like, who was responsible for certain tasks leading up to the wedding, and if there were any issues of contention related to planning. It extends previous work on wedding preparation by using a nonconvenience sampling procedure, interviewing wives and husbands from the same couples, and analyzing gender at multiple levels. In interviewing individuals about an event that took place *prior* to getting married, I also sought to contribute to the literature on gender construction in relationships outside of marriage.

Study Findings

Using the gender perspective (Thompson, 1993), my study revealed that weddings are sites for negotiation and confirmation of gender (Howard, 2000). Premarital couples' gender strategies in wedding preparation usually replicated dominant gendered norms, with brides doing the majority of work. Moreover, gender construction was not only an outcome, but also "a rationale for various social arrangements" and "a means of legitimating one of the most fundamental divisions of society" (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 126). In this section, I situate the findings within four levels of gender analysis (Thompson, 1993). Greater emphasis is placed on interactional processes, however, because data yielded more information about interaction than the other levels.

Interactional Processes

How much more work brides did than grooms was related to how individuals "did gender" in interaction with their partners (Deaux & Major, 1987; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Three distinct groups emerged: traditional, transitional, and egalitarian.

In traditional couples, brides identified strongly with the dominant wedding culture. Women did most of the work and brides and grooms generally were satisfied with this arrangement. In transitional couples, grooms helped their partners with various tasks or were responsible for one or two "big" items, but brides were responsible for overseeing and accomplishing much of the

work. Transitional couples were the most frequent couple found in my study, consistent with findings that this couple type is common in Western culture (Blaisure & Koivunen, 2000). In egalitarian couples, work was shared relatively equally.

All brides demonstrated organizational skills, but traditional and transitional brides were more likely to portray a need for control over wedding planning, and grooms' secondary involvement appeared to be both a precursor and an outcome of women's planning. Brides had to be organized because they were doing most of the work, yet grooms sometimes described how they stepped back from wedding involvement when brides took over grooms' responsibilities or tasks. These interactional patterns, which egalitarian couples did not demonstrate, replicated and confirmed societal expectations about gender.

Separation of women and men at home further reinforced the gendered division of labor. If individuals lived apart, men could not be drawn into more wedding work than they would have preferred and women's work was invisible. Yet, many transitional couples who lived together separated themselves from each other the night before the wedding. Brides who spent the final hours preceding their weddings separated from partners were likely to be doing less visible, last-minute preparations while socializing with friends or family whereas grooms engaged solely in leisure activities.

Gender assessment (West & Zimmerman, 1987) was obvious when

individuals did not follow, or attempted not to follow, scripted wedding roles or

rules. Egalitarian couples were more likely than the other two groups to

question gender and tradition, therefore they were most likely to contend with

other people's gender assessment. Transitional couples occasionally

experienced gender assessment from others at times, but gender assessment was

more likely to occur *between* transitional brides and grooms. This was not

surprising, as tension and confusion results from transitional couples' attempts

to blend companionship with hierarchy (Blaisure & Koivunen, 2000; Rabin,

1996).

An analysis of gender strategies revealed that power worked in complex

ways in wedding planning. Overt, hidden, and invisible power (Komter, 1989)

were present in traditional and transitional couples' gender negotiation and

construction in a number of ways. Arguments in which brides got their way

more often than grooms indicated the presence of *overt power*. Women also had

hidden power because their status as brides could be used to prevent issues

from even being raised. Yet, traditional and transitional grooms had *invisible*

power when brides and grooms did not question dominant gender norms that

resulted in women doing more unpaid family labor than men. Women may have

obtained a temporary sense of power in wedding planning- the bride as the

center of attention- but this did not translate into greater power to opt out of

unpaid wedding family labor. Examples of such hierarchy were not evident in egalitarian couples, who resisted the gender strategies that traditional and transitional couples followed.

Tension also may occur when individuals have different gender ideologies from their partner, as was the case in one third of Hochschild's (1989) sample. Although I have presented my data as couple types, spouses' gender ideologies may have differed from each other within transitional couples, which resulted in gender assessment. Egalitarian brides and grooms, who seemed to have similar gender ideologies, were able to resist most forms of gender assessment from others. Assessment usually stopped at the dyad level for transitional couples, however, as they eventually confirmed traditional notions of gender about division of labor through the use of various gender strategies. Ultimately, traditional *and* transitional couples' interactional patterns replicated dominant gender norms regarding weddings and the division of labor.

Structural Level

At the broader sociohistorical level of analysis (Thompson, 1993) the cultural, romantic script of weddings being for women influenced wedding work. Historically, women's social status, relative to men's, was changed more by marriage, and the legacy of this relationship can be seen in the attention still given to contemporary brides (Cheal, 1989). Traditional and transitional

couples used ideology as justification for women's greater involvement in wedding planning. Brides were expected to know how to plan a wedding, and the background work they may have needed to learn could be ignored. Expectations around the supposed "naturalness" of women's planning skills are similar to dominant expectations that women are more suited than men to nurture (Thompson, 1993), kinkeep (Di Leonardo, 1987) or mother (Seery, 1996). Men's lack of knowledge or interest was an acceptable excuse not to be involved in various aspects of wedding planning. Egalitarian couples paid little attention to the ideology of weddings being for women or to messages about the division of wedding labor and consumption patterns.

Gendered institutional environments for women and men assisted in creating an unequal division of labor in wedding planning. In traditional and transitional couples, brides and other women (i.e., mothers) were more likely than grooms to be in employment situations that facilitated greater involvement in wedding work. It made sense to many couples that women planned weddings. They did so because they had the time to do so. That women's and men's employment situations was related to involvement in wedding planning was not surprising, as Ferree (1990) has noted that structural conditions in women's wage work were necessary preconditions to changing domestic work arrangements. Moreover, family life and paid employment have reciprocal effects on each other (Kanter, 1977). Although recent quantitative research

(e.g., Eagle, Miles, & Icenogle, 1997; Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992) refutes Pleck's (1977) assertion of gender asymmetry in women's and men's spillover between family and work, my qualitative data suggested otherwise. Family (wedding)-to-work spillover occurred more often for women than for men, even before they married. Women's greater family-to-work spillover, relative to men's, is an indication of prevailing societal beliefs that women should retain primary responsibility for unpaid family labor (Crouter, 1984).

Immediate Situation

The larger social context sustains women's wedding involvement in a number of ways, yet social demands and constraints also affect how gender is constructed (Thompson, 1993). Individuals in the immediate situation may shape the display of gender. For example, wedding vendors' assumptions about women's and men's roles in wedding planning may lead to behaviors such as talking only to the bride, which results in brides being more involved in wedding planning than grooms.

People also may change their behavior if they are caught between the "'shoulds' of gender ideals and the 'musts' of their situation" (Thompson, 1993, p. 563). Similar to how men may be more involved in caring work if no one else is around to provide it (Thompson, 1993), grooms helped out more if a bride's mother was not able or willing to be involved. This occurred in both transitional and egalitarian couples, but transitional couples noted how grooms

would have participated less if mothers had been involved. Egalitarian couples did not make similar comments, and one egalitarian couple deliberately limited the mother's involvement. Consistent with dominant gendered norms, however, traditional grooms did not increase their work involvement even if their partner's mother did not assist in wedding planning.

Individual Outcomes

Individual outcomes (Thompson, 1993) are gendered outcomes that emerge out of the gender strategies and contexts previously described. Although this study focused on analysis at the dyad level, analysis at the aggregate level also revealed behavioral differences between traditional and transitional brides and grooms. Individual outcomes existed around task accomplishment, wedding management, and stress. Partners engaged in gender-differentiated work. Brides were more likely than grooms to work on clothing, flowers, food, decorations, and kinwork-related activities (Di Leonardo, 1987) such as invitations and thank you cards. If involved, grooms were responsible for tasks such as planning the honeymoon or organizing reception music. Although some couples did various tasks together, brides still accomplished more tasks than grooms. Wedding management was more gendered than task accomplishment (Mederer, 1993), however brides in all couple categories took on the role of wedding manager. As well, a number of traditional and transitional brides, but no grooms, reported being very stressed when they

planned their weddings because they were doing the majority of the wedding management and task accomplishment.

Limitations

Several sampling and methodological limitations existed. My sample consisted of a small number of respondents living in the same city, therefore results can not be generalized to other populations. Although I attempted to achieve a sample that varied in demographic factors, my final sample was White, non-Hispanic, and mostly middle class. Systematic random sampling was used to contact potential participants, but involvement depended on couples saying "yes." Interviewed couples may have had more male participation or less conflict in wedding planning than those who declined participation, and individuals in the northwestern United States might be less traditional than in other parts of the country. Still, my final sample evidenced a wide range of variation of gendered experiences, which was my main goal.

Studying weddings presented a unique methodological challenge. Because weddings symbolize the beginning of a couple's married relationship with each other, events may be described in ways that present the couple as a unified dyad despite evidence to the contrary. The following bride referred to this as *The Royal We*:

> During a lot of the planning, like I said, [my husband] wanted involvement in a lot of the stuff even though he said he didn't in the beginning, and then I'd make a decision and he'd say, "Well no, I want this," so a lot of the time I'd start using "we" to make it sound like he

was involved when we made decisions and I got in the habit of saying that so it wouldn't sound like, "I, I, I- I'm doing everything and blah, blah, blah." (Samantha, transitional)

Couples may have developed such communication patterns to create an image of men as more involved in wedding planning than they actually were. Yet, the tendency for wives and husbands to answer in the plural is a concern when doing research with couples (Hertz, 1995), so I interviewed brides and grooms separately, encouraged individuals to be as specific as possible when describing their experiences, and probed to find out what "we" really meant.

Finally, talk of problems could suggest marriage difficulties, which might be dissonant with being recently married. Overall, participants seemed comfortable telling me about their experiences, including conflict, but some people could not recall specific examples despite saying that there had been times when they disagreed with their partners. Issues of gender contention or assessment might be more common than were revealed in my interviews.

Future Research

Three lines of possible research emerged from this study. These areas relate to (a) conditions in which wedding labor is shared, (b) the permanency of gender construction or gender outcomes during wedding planning, and (c) gender construction in relationships other than first-time marriages.

When brides' mothers were not able to be involved, wedding work seemed to be shared more between brides and grooms. Other factors such as

religiosity, gender ideology, race, and ethnicity could be explored in a larger study of wedding preparation. Traditional and transitional couples were more likely to be religious than egalitarian couples, indicated by highly religious ceremonies, religious affiliations, and church attendance. Given that recent research has found a relationship between religion and division of household labor, and that certain religious traditions "are widely viewed as key sources of cultural and institutional support for gender inequality and patriarchy" (Ellison & Bartkowski, 2002, p. 952), future research could explore the relationship between individuals' levels of religiosity and wedding planning involvement. Moreover, gender ideology is an important link in determining how individuals divide household labor (Greenstein, 1996; Haas, 1999). Although my sample was too small for statistical analysis, individuals in egalitarian couples reported the least traditional gender beliefs about women's and men's roles in families (as measured by the NSFH gender items). This trend could be explored in a larger quantitative study that investigates how gender ideologies of brides and grooms, and interaction between the two, influence the division of wedding work and how individuals deal with gender assessment. Minority populations might be reached through purposive sampling (Neuman, 2003) and using interviewers of the same race or ethnicity.

Ingraham (1999) suggested that many women report becoming more feminine when they plan their weddings, despite not being feminine in other

aspects of their lives. Most women in this study seemed to enjoy being brides, but transitional wives and husbands were more likely than others to comment that being a bride changed wives somehow. Research could explore whether such transformations hold following weddings or if they are temporary. Currie (1993) suggested that because weddings were transient, they did not require individuals to compromise everyday, ordinary ideals. Yet, Cheal (1989) argued that weddings enhance the *gender careers* of women and men. Weddings might be initial practice for later displays of gender construction related to kinwork or family gatherings. Longitudinal research could explore whether patterns of gender construction in wedding planning are carried through to general family labor or are linked only to family rituals, and under what conditions women and men might resist such gendered expectations.

Findings also point to the need to study gender construction in more than just first-time, married couples. This study revealed that gender construction occurred long before couples married, thus premarital relationships need to be studied to see how gender affects relationship dynamics. Moreover, given that not all cohabiting couples shared work equally highlights the importance of not assuming homogeneity among cohabiting couples. Early research suggested that cohabiting relationships seemed more egalitarian in division of household labor (Shelton & John, 1993; South & Spitz, 1994), but recent research (Gupta, 1999) does not support this. It may be that as

cohabitation becomes more common, some relationship dynamics may become more similar to marital dynamics. More research is needed on how gender is reinforced, negotiated, or resisted in cohabiting relationships.

Finally, experience with planning a first wedding could affect the type of second wedding a person desires and how much work they are willing to put into it. Might some women marrying a second time prefer simpler weddings with less work and more involvement from their partners? How involved would remarried men be in wedding planning? Although older research suggested that remarried men do more mundane housework than once-married men (Ishii-Kuntz & Coltrane, 1992), recent research found that divorced men reduced the amount of time they engaged in routine housework when they entered marital or cohabiting relationships (Gupta, 1999). Future studies could explore how gender is constructed in remarried individuals' weddings.

Conclusion

This study demonstrated how premarital couples constructed gendered norms in wedding planning. Consistent with the larger body of research on unpaid family labor, most women in relationships prior to marriage were responsible for the majority of work in wedding planning. Gender construction in weddings is more than just about work, however. Most couples also replicated dominant gender norms in choices they made about things such as wedding rituals and name changing.

Structural inequality was usually, but not necessarily, reproduced at the interactional and individual level. Individuals' and couples' responses to the structural context existed on a continuum, ranging from conformity to negotiation to resistance. Traditional couples conformed, and transitional couples negotiated but usually conformed, as these two groups of couples used gender strategies that resulted in brides doing more wedding work than grooms. A small number of egalitarian couples were able to challenge and resist the dominant gender system. In particular, planning was shared if weddings were seen as for couples rather than for women.

The wedding industry and commodification of romance (Illouz, 1997), which egalitarian couples mostly resisted, must be understood and addressed if wedding planning is to shared. Because women are responsible for achieving industry standards in their roles as family consumers, it is their workload, rather than men's, that is increased by industry standards. Yet, weddings were not always as detailed or expensive as they are today (Howard, 2000). That many people believe a low cost wedding will not be as memorable as a high cost or lavish wedding indicates a successful wedding marketing industry.

If brides are happy to plan expensive or highly detailed weddings without much help from their partners, does a problem exist? The management role in unpaid family labor not only confers power to women, but also results in costs (Mederer, 1993) such as strain or loss of leisure time. Even though many

brides accepted their greater workload without question, a number of traditional and transitional brides experienced a great deal of stress in planning their weddings. Relationship dynamics developed during the engagement period may set the stage for later marital dynamics (Cheal, 1989), therefore brides may face a future of a heavy housework burden and any associated stress. Because the division of household labor and perceptions of fairness (Coltrane, 2000) are related to women's (not men's) personal well-being and marital satisfaction, it is essential to understand the origin of gendered work dynamics, and how they can be resisted.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Telephone Script

Hello, can I speak to: _____?

Hi, my name is Áine Humble. I'm a graduate student at Oregon State University in the Department of Human Development and Family Sciences. I teach about and study people's experiences in families, and I'm interested in talking with you regarding a study I'm doing of how couples planned their weddings.

As you probably remember, weddings don't just happen. There is often a lot of work involved in planning a wedding, sometimes more than you'd expect! I'm interested in finding out what that experience of planning a wedding is like for couples. For example, what aspects of the wedding planning are more work than originally planned, and how do couples get the work done?

I'm contacting people who applied for marriage licenses in [city name] in the past year to see if they would like to participate in this study. I obtained your name and phone number from your county's marriage license records, which are public records available to anyone.

I'd like to talk to you and your spouse about your wedding. I'm not affiliated with the wedding industry or any other industry, and so I want to assure you that I'm not trying to sell any products or services to you. The only thing I'd like to do is talk with you and your spouse at some point about both of your experiences in planning your wedding. Because each person is unique, both women's and men's feelings and experiences are important in understanding what is involved in putting together a wedding. As a result, each person may provide insight into the wedding planning process that their spouse may not be able to provide.

I'd also like to add that if you and your spouse choose to participate, your participation will be confidential- for example, your real names will not be used. Can I take another minute of your time to tell you more about what the study involves so that you can see if you might be interested in participating?

If no: Thank you for your time. Have a good day/evening.

If yes:

Thank you. Let me tell you briefly about the criteria for participation and how the interviews will be conducted.

First, I hope to interview approximately 60 spouses (30 married couples) in [city name]. Couples are eligible to participate if they live in the [city name] area, both spouses are in their first marriage, and if each spouse is willing to be interviewed separately and to have their interviews audiotaped. They also must be 18 years or older to participate.

I will interview each spouse in a place and at a time that is most convenient for them. I will seek your permission to audiotape the interview so that I can concentrate on our conversation instead of having to take notes. To prevent the possibility of spouses influencing each other's responses, I would request that each person not talk to their spouse about their answers or about the interview until after both spouses have been interviewed. You will be free to answer questions in whatever way you like, there are no right or wrong answers. Of course, you also may refuse to answer any question. An interview could last anywhere from 20 minutes to 2 hours, depending on the amount of detail you provide. Most interviews will take about 45 minutes for men to 1 hour for women.

Because this is only a brief description of what the study involves, it's possible you may have some questions or concerns that I haven't addressed. So, given what I've just described, do you have any questions about the study?

Do you think you and your spouse might be interested in participating?

If no:

Ok. Thank you for your time. Have a good day/evening. Good bye.

If yes:

Great. Let me ask you a couple of questions now to make sure you are eligible

to participate.

a) Are you and your spouse currently living in [city name];

b) is this the first marriage for both of you;

c) are both of you willing to be interviewed separately;

d) are both of you 18 years or older; and

e) are you both willing to have your interviews audiotaped?

If no to any of the above:

That's too bad, you are not eligible to participate because _____.

Thank you very much for your interest, however. Have a good

day/evening. Good bye.

If yes to all of the above:

Great! I'd like to set up a time and place to interview you and your husband/wife. When is a good time for you? (If necessary, give them a few minutes to discuss this with spouse.)*

I'd like to end with sharing some contact information with each other. Is there an alternative phone number or E-mail address where it's better for me to get ahold of you, and what is the best time for me to get ahold of you? Alternatively, you can call me at (541) 908-1997 (cell phone) and I will call you right back so you don't have to pay for the phone call. You can also E-mail me at humblea@ucs.orst.edu.

Do you have any final questions or comments?

I'm very interesting in interviewing both of you about your experiences. I look forward to seeing you on _____ (date). Thank you and good bye.

NOTE: If the other spouse is not home, end with "I'll call back in a couple of days to arrange a time for the interview after you've had a chance to talk with your husband/wife. Thank you and good bye."

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Wedding Preparation in First Marriages Study

Department of Human Development and Family Sciences

Oregon State University

Milam Hall 322

Corvallis, Oregon, 97331-5102

<u>Investigators</u>

Áine M. Humble, MSc, PhD candidate

Anisa Zvonkovic, PhD

<u>Purpose of the Research Project</u>

This project's goal is to learn how couples in first marriages planned their weddings. We would like to learn about the work involved in putting a wedding together, such as specific tasks that needed to be done and various experiences you had when planning your wedding.

<u>Procedures</u>

I. I understand that to participate in this study:

    a) my spouse and I must currently live in the [city name] area; and

    b) both of us must be in our first marriage;

    c) we both must be willing to be interviewed separately;

    d) both of us must be 18 years or older; and

    e) we both must be willing to have our interviews audiotaped.

II. I understand that as a participant in this study the following things will happen:

    a) I will be asked to describe the experiences I had in planning my wedding; and

    b) questions will ask about topics such who did what tasks and what type of activities I may have been involved with along the way.

III. I understand that this study contains the following potential benefits and risk:

    a) I will have an opportunity to recall important memories and reflect on an important life event; and

b) I will help contribute to an understanding of how engaged couples, and perhaps their family members, negotiate the work of planning a wedding; and

c) I might be saddened by a memory of a particular event or problem that occurred when planning my wedding.

Confidentiality

I understand that as a participant in this study:

a) Any information obtained from me will be kept confidential. The audiotape(s) of my interview will be kept in a confidential location to which only Dr. Anisa Zvonkovic and Áine Humble will have access. Only Áine Humble, Anisa Zvonkovic, and a professional transcriber will listen to the audiotapes, which will be destroyed no later than one year after the study is completed.

b) A pseudonym, rather than my name, will be used to identify anything I have said or shown. A code number, rather than my name, will be used to identify my transcript. No real names will be used in data summaries or publications, nor will any information that I give be described in a way that clearly identifies me. Any information that might identify me (e.g., location and date of my wedding) will be changed.

c) Informed consent forms will be kept in a confidential locked location to which only the researchers will have access. They will be destroyed no later than one year after the study is completed.

Voluntary Participation

I understand that my participation in this study is completely voluntary and that I may either refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty to me. If I withdraw, audiotaping will cease and my responses will not be transcribed. I also understand that I may refuse to answer any question I do not want to answer, and that I may request to turn off the audiotape at any time if I am uncomfortable.

I understand that if I have any questions about the research study or specific procedures, or if I would like a summary of the project's findings, I should contact:

Áine Humble at (541) 908-1997 or humblea@ucs.orst.edu

or   Anisa Zvonkovic at (541) 737-1087

Additionally, if I have any questions about my rights as a research subject, I should contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Coordinator at the Oregon State University Research Office, (541) 737-3437 or IRB@orst.edu.

My signature below indicates that I have read and that I understand the procedures described above and give my informed and voluntary consent to participate in this study. I understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form.

_____   _____
signature of participant   name of participant

_____
date signed

_____   _____
signature of investigator   date signed

Appendix C: Interview Guide

1. Tell me, how did you decide to get married?

2. (a) I'd love to see a favorite photo or memento from that day. Do you have one you can show me? [react to photo or memento] Why is this photo/memento important to you? (b) Please tell me about your wedding day.

3. How did you plan your wedding? How did you carry out all the different tasks?

4. In planning any event, there are always situations that involve give and take- some things may go the way you prefer and some things may go the way others prefer. Can you tell me about any situations (probes: planning the reception or ceremony, creating the guest list, deciding what to wear, etc.) where you and your partner had to do some negotiating with each other (or with others involved in the wedding)?

5. Now that your wedding is over, is there anything in the planning or about the day itself that you would have done differently? Tell me about that.

6. Is there anything else you would like to add or ask?

General probe questions to be used at any time:

1. How did you plan for that?

2. What happened then?

3. Who did that? Why?

4. How did that go?

5. Can you tell me why you chose that particular way of doing it?

6. Can you give me an example?

7. Tell me more about that.

8. Can you describe that more for me?

9. What happened then?

10. How did you feel about that?

11. How did your partner feel about that?

12. Where did the wedding take place? Who officiated?

Appendix D: Participant Information Sheet

Participant # _____   Couple # _____ (to be completed by interviewer)

Date of interview: _____ (to be completed by interviewer)

<u>PART A</u>

1. What was the date (month, day, and year) of your wedding?

2. How long were you and your spouse a couple before you got married (e.g., from the time you began dating to the time of your wedding)?
   _____ years _____ months _____ weeks

3. a) Many couples today live together before getting married. Did you and your spouse happen to live together before you were married?

   _____ yes _____ no

   b) If yes, for how long?

   _____ years _____ months _____ weeks

4. a) Were you formally engaged?

   _____ yes _____ no

   b) If yes, how long was your engagement?

   _____ years _____ months _____ weeks

5. What is the highest grade of schooling you have completed?

6. a) Are you employed?

              _____ yes _____ no _____ student

   b) If yes, what is your job title and the type of business you work in?

   c) If yes, please describe what you do in your job.

7. What letter most closely represents your personal annual income at the time you got married (NOT including your spouse's income)? (circle the most appropriate letter)
     A. less than $20,000
     B. $20,000 to $29,999
     C. $30,000 to $39,999
     D. $40,000 to $49,999
     E. $50,000 to $74,999
     F. $75,000 to $100,000
     G. over $100,000

8. When were you born (month, day, and year)?

9. a) How many children do you have?

    b) If you have children, what are their ages?

10. Which of the following letters best describes your racial/ethnic identity?
    (circle all letters that apply)
    A. White, European American, non-Hispanic
    B. Asian or Asian American
    C. Black, African American, non-Hispanic
    D. Middle Eastern or Middle Eastern American
    E. North African or North African American
    F. Pacific Islander
    G. Hispanic or Latino American
    H. American Indian or Alaskan Native
    I. Other (please specify)
        _____

11. What was your religious preference at the time you got married? (circle
    one letter)
    A. no religion
    B. Roman Catholic
    C. Jewish
    D. Baptist
    E. Episcopalian
    F. Lutheran
    G. Methodist
    H. Latter Day Saints (Mormon)
    I. Presbyterian
    J. United Church of Christ (Congregational)
    K. Other (please specify)
        _____

12. How often do you attend religious services? (fill in the appropriate line with a number or check "never")

          _____ / per day
          _____ / per week
          _____ / per month
          _____ / per year
          _____ never

13. a) The cost of weddings can range from spending $60 on a marriage license to spending a fortune to get married on a private island. Taking into account your wedding ceremony and all other wedding-related events (e.g., including rehearsal dinners, honeymoon, etc.), approximately how much did your wedding cost?

    b) Who financed (paid) for your wedding?

<u>PART B</u>

These final questions ask about your views on some family-related topics. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements by circling the appropriate number (on a scale of 1 - 5, where 1 = strongly agree and 5 = strongly disagree)

	strongly agree				strongly disagree
	1	2	3	4	5
1. It is much better for everyone if the man earns the main living and the woman takes care of the home and family.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Preschool children are likely to suffer if their mother is employed.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I often consult other people to help choose the best alternative available from a product class (e.g., the best type of wine glasses to use).	1	2	3	4	5
4. Parents should encourage just as much independence from their daughters as in their sons.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I try to keep my life simple, as far as possessions are concerned.	1	2	3	4	5
6. It is all right for children under 3 years old to be cared for all day in a day care center.	1	2	3	4	5

	strongly agree				strongly disagree
	1	2	3	4	5
7. It sometimes bothers me quite a bit that I can't afford to buy all the things I'd like.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I admire people who own expensive homes, cars, and clothes.	1	2	3	4	5
9. It is all right for mothers to work full-time when their youngest child is under age 5.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Both the husband and wife should contribute to family income.	1	2	3	4	5
11. When buying products, I generally purchase those brands that I think others will approve of.	1	2	3	4	5
12. If a husband and a wife both work full-time, they should share housework tasks equally.	1	2	3	4	5