

# The second time 'round: Remarried couples' gender construction in wedding planning.

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### **ABSTRACT**

Humble, Zvonkovic, and Walker (2008) studied division of labor in first-time marriages, finding a range of gender construction. This study applied their conceptualization to remarried couples, for whom little is known about division of labor or wedding experiences. Fourteen couples in which at least 1 spouse had recently remarried were interviewed about their wedding planning. Data analysis consisted of direct content analysis, rank order comparison, and matrix analysis.

Contrasting Humble et al.'s findings, traditional and egalitarian couples were more common than transitional couples. Although remarriages tended to involve smaller and less complicated weddings, the majority of the couples replicated gendered patterns from their first weddings in subsequent weddings.

**Key Words:** content analysis, division of labor, divorce, gender, qualitative research, matrix analysis, remarriage, ritual, typologies, weddings

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### **The Second Time 'Round: Gender Construction in Remarried Couples' Wedding Planning**

The gendered nature of housework has been demonstrated by many researchers (Haas, 1999; Walker 1999), but little attention has been given to how gender plays out in family rituals, which can require high levels of labor and different kinds of work compared to those carried out in everyday life. Rituals may be considered inappropriate to change because of their rootedness in symbolic and ideological traditions (Oswald, 2000). As such, they may be significant venues for the social construction of gender (Coltrane, 1998) and therefore need to be examined.

Weddings are a salient ritual in which to examine division of household labor because they can result in high amounts of work for individuals who internalize the commoditized culture of romance propagated by a \$32 billion wedding industry (Ingraham, 1999). Moreover, weddings are *strong situations* (Deaux & Major, 1987) in which *gender displays*—normative demonstrations of masculinity and femininity (Goffman, 1976)—are expected to occur. In light of its relevance, some researchers have begun to focus on this particular ritual (e.g., Humble, Zvonkovic, & Walker, 2008; Snizek, 2005), noting that even though women continued to have primary responsibility for wedding work, couples often interpreted their wedding work involvement as equal and shared. However, a range of gender construction still existed (Humble et al., 2008).

Research on gender construction in wedding work has focused only on first-time married couples despite the prevalence of remarriage in North America. Although the probability of remarriage differs based on many factors such as gender, age, income, ethnicity or race, and parental status (Bramlett & Mosher, 2002) and cohabitation is becoming more common, in the United States women under age 25 have an 81% chance of remarrying within 10 years of divorce and women over age 25 have 68% chance (Department of Health and Human Services, 2002). Among Canadians, 11% over the age of 25 marry two to four times (Clark & Crompton, 2006).

However, little is known about how gender construction might play out for couples in which someone is marrying a second time or more and if they do construct gender differently compared to their first weddings, what accounts for this. To address these two gaps, Humble et al.'s (2008) conceptualization was applied to a sample of 14 remarried couples using a directed content analysis methodology (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

### Review of the Literature

Not much research has looked specifically division of labor in remarriages. When research has looked at the effects of marital status on household labour, it has quantitatively examined differences between groups of married individuals and cohabiting individuals, combining all first-time marriages with remarriages into a “married” group (e.g., Davis, Greenstein, & Marks, 2007). But are remarried individuals necessarily the same as individuals marrying for the first time?

It was once suggested that gender dynamics may be different in remarriage because it was an incomplete institution that “leads to weaker gender norms” (Gupta, 1999, p. 702). However, researchers have questioned the notion of remarriage as an incomplete institution (e.g., Grizzle, 1996), and as remarriage has become more common, researchers have suggested that remarried relationship interactions appear to resemble first-marriage dynamics. For example, similar to once-married couples, remarried women still do more housework than remarried men (Pyke & Coltrane, 1996; Sullivan, 2004), and longitudinal research has provided evidence for divorced and widowed men's withdrawal from mundane house tasks when they reenter marriage (Gupta, 1999). Nevertheless, even though these gender differences remain, remarried men do more mundane housework than once-married men (Ishii-Kuntz & Coltrane, 1992) and remarried women appear to do proportionally less housework than women in first marriages (Sullivan, 1997). How this plays out within specific contexts such as weddings is not clear.

Previous research on wedding planning has looked at individual outcomes such as gender consciousness (Cheal, 1989; Ingraham, 1999) and division of labor or interests (Currie, 1993; Humble et al., 2008; Lowry & Otnes, 1994; Sniezek, 2005). Humble et al.'s (2008) dyadic research, studying brides and grooms from the same couples, found that gender was constructed in stereotypical ways, with women doing most of the unpaid labor. However, the dyadic analysis also showed that variation in gender construction did occur; some couples did share responsibilities.

Three types of couples were identified. Of 21 couples interviewed, just under one-third were categorized as *traditional*, almost half as *transitional*, and about one-quarter as *egalitarian*. Although transitional brides and grooms presented themselves as though they were equally involved, they were similar to traditional couples in being influenced by the dominant cultural script that weddings were “for women” and in using a number of *gender strategies* (Hochschild, 1989) that reproduced hegemonic gendered norms. Humble et al. (2008) described an interactional pattern in which traditional and transitional women seemed to “do gender” more successfully than men in wedding preparation, often throwing themselves into wedding preparation and limiting (consciously or unconsciously) their fiancés’ involvement. In response, grooms pulled back from wedding work—to fight against the tide of bridal power was too much work. Additionally, pulling back resulted in them doing less work, not an undesired goal for many individuals. Egalitarian couples’ rejections of such gender strategies resulted in shared wedding planning. Whether this kind of pattern occurs in remarrying couples is unknown.

Similar to other wedding research, Humble et al.'s (2008) study only looked at once-married couples, and nothing is known about how remarried individuals approach wedding preparation. On one hand, remarried couples might construct gender in different ways based on past marital experiences (Burgoyne & Morison, 1997) or past wedding planning experiences. In

Humble et al.'s (2008) research, one traditional bride who had experienced a great deal of stress when planning her wedding said, jokingly, "I hope nothing ever comes between (my husband) and I, but if I'm ever in a situation where I have to, or where I'm going to get married again, I'm eloping." On the other hand, if men reduce the amount of time they engage in routine housework when they reenter conjugal relationships (Gupta, 1999), patterns of wedding work might not be so different. Moreover, the marital status of one's new partner might make a difference (Sullivan, 2004).

In summary, research on remarried couples' household labor is uncommon, and nothing is known about how remarried couples approach wedding work because wedding research has focused exclusively on first-time marriages. Thus, this qualitative study fills that gap by analyzing wedding preparation in 14 remarried couples. Working from the gender perspective, the following questions were asked: First, how is gender constructed in remarried couples' wedding preparation? Analysis focused on how the couple categories identified by Humble et al. (2008) were represented in the sample. A second research question explored if weddings were carried out differently in subsequent marriages, what accounted for such differences.

### Theoretical Approach

Data were analyzed using the gender perspective (Ferree, 1990; Thompson, 1993), which explains how gender differences result from factors such as social norms existing at the structural level, a person's position (e.g., their race or marital status) within that context, their interactions with others, how they were socialized, and their personal beliefs (Ferree). Gender is typically constructed in hegemonic ways (Thompson; Wood, 1995). However, because it is not a static individual attribute of a person, it can be constructed in a number of ways and thus be changed through interaction (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Consequently, rather than generalizing about one

pattern of gender construction, a full range can be recognized and conditions connected to certain gendered patterns potentially identified.

Gender can be examined at multiple levels: the sociohistorical level, interactional level, immediate situation, and individual outcomes (Thompson, 1993). Given an increasing focus in gender theory on the level of interaction as a principal site in which gender construction occurs (Risman, 2004), this study focused on interactional processes. “Doing gender” (West & Zimmerman, 1987) demonstrates ways in which interactional processes may generate and maintain unequal positions (Wood).

### Methodology

A qualitative approach was used because it is effective for delving into the complexity of gender construction and negotiation, which is more difficult to tap with large quantitative studies (Sullivan, 1997). Given that the study was using previously developed conceptual categories, a *directed content analysis* method (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) was used. “The goal of a directed approach to content analysis is to validate or extend conceptually a theoretical framework or theory” (Hsieh & Shannon, p. 1281), and evidence can be shown through descriptive examples as well as rank order comparisons of coding frequencies (Hsieh & Shannon).

Participants were found through newspaper ads and word of mouth. I conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews separately with 14 married wives and husbands, alternating between who was interviewed first. Each spouse was interviewed separately to facilitate greater candor or involvement in the interview and so that individuals’ responses were less likely to be affected by their partners’ responses or presence.

Interviews consisted of a small number of questions exploring how individuals “see, interpret, understand, and experience their world” (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 194). I asked

respondents to describe their wedding and how they planned for all related events. For those who had remarried, one question asked about their previous wedding and how they planned for it. Individuals were encouraged to be as specific as possible when discussing who carried out what tasks, as sometimes spouses may present their experiences or their partners' experiences in a couple version (Hertz, 1995; Humble et al., 2008; Sniezek, 2005). At the end of the interview, participants completed a sheet requesting demographical information.

### *Data Analysis*

Interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim, with pseudonyms used. Coding was conducted with the assistance of MAXQDA 2007 (Kuckartz, 2007), a qualitative software program that uses a code and retrieve process and includes data management features (e.g., coding in multiple colors, memo creation, and coded segments retrieval) as well as various visual tools for data analysis. Several data analysis techniques validated the trustworthiness of the interpretations, and a comparison of past and present wedding experiences was aided with a matrix analysis.

First, I used open coding to examine the division of labour. Three general categories were examined: what individuals said (a) the bride did on her own, (b) the groom did on his own, and (c) they did together. Coding also explored how other individuals might have assisted with planning, how they felt during planning, and any differences between first and second weddings. Analysis was iterative, with all coded segments being continually checked against similarly coded segments and different codes using the *constant comparative* technique (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Adjustments were made as necessary, such as developing new codes, changing code names, and deleting codes or merging them with others. In a second stage of analysis, I examined the codes more closely rather than the transcripts. During this stage, additional coding changes occurred, and increasing levels of abstraction were developed, particularly around the second research question.

A number of memos were also used to keep track of my developing interpretations of the data.

As each bride and groom's transcript was coded, I created a composite picture of them with regard to each spouse's level of involvement and their gender construction with their partner and others (a *core variable*; see Strauss & Corbin, 1990). As these couple descriptions emerged, *ordinal comparison* (Mahoney, 1999) was used to differentiate the couples into the three couple types: traditional, transitional, and egalitarian.

Couple categorizations were confirmed in two ways. First, MAXQDA 2007 has an option called *TextPortrait* that visually represents coding results. "Broken down into a 100 X 100-piece rectangle, the document is 'portrayed' as a painting of its codes, maintaining the location and length of their occurrence in the text" (Kuckartz, 2007, p. 12). Multiple colored coding is represented in a portrait and examined for patterns. Analysis of the TextPortraits (not included here due to space limitations) focused on who did what kind of work ("wife did on her own", "husband did on his own", "couple did together", and also "others helped") and visually validated the assignment of couples into each category.

A counting and rank ordering strategy further validated the open coding and couple assignments. Counting is not common in qualitative research and its inclusion has been questioned by Morse (2007). However, it may be used when it is "meaningful" and when it adds to the descriptive work that has already been developed (Morse, 2007). Moreover, a rank order comparison procedure is acceptable to use in content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). This procedure, which is described in the results section, enriched the descriptive analyses already completed and was instrumental in elucidating differences between the three couple typologies.

Finally, to compare the experiences of individuals' first and most recent marriages, I conducted a matrix analysis. A matrix consists of "the crossing of two or more main dimensions. .

. to see how they interact” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 239, as cited in Averill, 2002). It is an expedient way to summarize large amounts of data and an effective complementary strategy in qualitative analysis when used judiciously (Averill, 2002).

### *Sample Description*

The sample consisted of 14 couples (28 individuals). Couples had been married, on average, 9.5 months (ranging from 1 week to almost 3 years). Eleven couples lived together prior to marrying. Most individuals said they paid for their wedding themselves. The average wedding cost was \$6,940, with individual estimates ranging from \$200 to \$15,000.

Most couples ( $n = 9$ ) involved a bride and groom who were marrying for the second time and whose first marriages had ended in divorce. Two couples involved two widows each, and one of the widowed brides had also been previously divorced. One other woman was in her third marriage; she had divorced twice. Only two respondents (one man and one woman) were marrying for the first time; the never-married woman married a man whose previous marriage ended in divorce and the never-married man married a woman who was widowed.

The average age at the time of interviews was 49 years old, ranging from 30 to 68. Almost all of the participants were 40 years or older; only 3 were under age 40. Most were White and of European descent. The sample was an educated one; almost half had completed a 4- or 5-year degree or graduate school or professional degree. Five individuals had a high school diploma or lower level of education. Three quarters of the sample were employed, 5 were unemployed, and 2 were students. Of those employed, types of jobs ranged. Almost 80% of the respondents had personal incomes of \$40,000 or higher, suggesting a sample with higher than average incomes for the region in which the interviews took place. Approximately 20% had no children; the remaining couples had between 1 and 4 children. Finally, although the majority of individuals identified with

a religion (most were Christian), only one-quarter attended church on a regular basis.

### Results

“Traditional” weddings such as a church wedding followed by a formal reception with typical rituals like speeches and a first dance were uncommon for participants. Several couples did have church weddings or large receptions, but most couples’ ceremonies and receptions took place in hotels, restaurants, their homes, or other countries and involved small numbers of guests with few formalities.

Many respondents indicated that it was important to them that their wedding be unique and reflect who they were, and this played out in many ways, such as an ad being placed in a local newspaper to invite guests rather than send individual invitations or having guests sign a novel object instead of a guest book. In general, respondents tended to discard many societal or wedding industry expectations around how wedding ceremonies or receptions should be played out and they focused on what they would feel comfortable with. Many respondents also talked about a desire to keep things more simple and economical: Scott said he and his wife used a philosophy of “Keep it simple stupid (K.I.S.S.)” [laughing]. We didn’t want this to be a big ordeal because like I had said it was a second marriage for both of us and we just wanted to have the ceremony, have something nice and simple, and get on with it.”

The categories previously identified by Humble et al. (2008) were represented differently in this study. Whereas almost half of Humble et al.’s sample consisted of transitional couples, only 3 of the 14 couples (21%) in this sample were categorized as transitional. In this sample, more couples were characterized as traditional (6, or 43%) or egalitarian (5, or 36%), compared to transitional. Neither of the two couples in which one spouse was marrying for the first time were categorized as egalitarian: the man marrying for the first time was in a traditional couple and the

woman marrying for the first time was in a transitional couple. Additionally, no couples in which any spouse was previously widowed were classified as egalitarian; two were traditional couples and one was a transitional couple.

The next three subsections briefly portray each of these couple typologies. This is then followed by an account of the counting/rank order comparison strategy that confirmed the trustworthiness of the descriptive analyses. In the last two subsections, I compare first and second weddings and describe how remarrying couples felt more “free” to have the weddings they wanted, noting a number of factors that played into this.

### *Couples Types*

*Traditional couples.* In traditional couples, brides planned the wedding, with little input from their fiancés. Brides and their fiancés described brides as planners, having great organizational skills, which made it all the more appropriate that these women planned their weddings. Alexis said, “I was probably sort of responsible for a big chunk of the planning and the organizing and part of that is because I’m a control freak and part (of it) is because I’m just a good multi-tasker.” Other women were sometimes involved in planning. In one unique situation, a bride’s social group essentially took over the planning because the women were so excited their friend was remarrying. The groom described the women’s involvement in the following way:

All of a sudden uh, the (social group) wanted to take over. (And I said) “Do whatever you want, ladies. Go for it.” It’s like you having 50 sisters and they want to be part of it, what are you gonna do? Say “No, you can’t be part of it?” [laughing]. . . . That doesn’t work good, I mean, ’cause they classify themselves as sisters, so if it’s like if you had a house full of 50 sisters, and all of a sudden you wanted to get married, well the other 49 want to participate. (Fred)

Grooms were comfortable with leaving the planning to their partners. Al said, “(my wife) was *very* good at organizing trips away; she’s a master at it. So I sorta sat back and she would show me what something, ‘What do you think of this, what do you think of that?’” If grooms participated, it was through carrying out tasks they had been asked to do, such as picking up someone or driving or accompanying the bride while she carried out a task. Luke said, “I was more of the chauffeur and bank for it” and Scott indicated “I just do what I’m told.” Grooms were also involved in final decision making. In this gender strategy, a groom would decide on a final product together with his partner, but his fiancée would have done the background work to identify alternatives from which to choose. However, despite having primary responsible for planning the wedding, none of these brides reported being particularly stressed at any time during wedding planning.

*Transitional couples.* In transitional couples, grooms were happy to help out when asked, and similar to traditional couples, they were often involved in final decision making. Brides still had responsibility for planning the wedding and for carrying out many of the tasks. Like traditional couples, two of the three grooms noted their fiancée’s organizational skills. Jack, who was travelling a fair amount for his job at the time of the planning said,

We worked together on it but Leila was more keeping track of things and, and we were both there to make the decisions. . . . I think we did a lot together and I’d do the odd phone call or something like that. Yeah, Leila was very much the point person and I was only too happy to [laughing], you know, be there to make the decisions or be assigned, you know, if she said, “Oh can you call this, and take care of that?” . . . She couldn’t do it all.

What distinguished these couples from traditional couples was that these grooms appeared to be more involved, particularly through doing things together with the bride. Grooms also

showed initiative with an occasional suggestion. A final difference was that conflict intermittently emerged in transitional couples' descriptions. This conflict was not between the bride and groom but between the bride and other people who had different expectations about the wedding. These expectations were rarely gendered, rather they were more about distinctions between formality and informality. Leila noted how she went to bridal stores to try on "silly, horrid dresses" because of pressure from a friend to wear a more formal wedding dress. One couple described a great deal of conflict they had with the bride's mother. Nancy said,

What (my husband) and I wanted was not necessarily what my mother wanted. My mother's very process-oriented, etiquette-oriented, tradition-oriented. And she *loves* (my husband) to death, like she will do anything for (him). And (my husband) and I were both trying to tell my mother, "Look we want a very casual wedding, *no stress*," but my mother really got into the planning process, which caused a lot of stress and friction.

In the face of the mother-in-law's demanding and difficult personality, the groom stepped back from front-stage wedding planning. When asked if he "gave up", he said, "Yeah, essentially, yeah." However, this groom did maintain a backstage presence in being a sounding board for his wife and in encouraging her to stand up to her mother, and on the odd occasion he did assert himself, noting "you pick your battles, you know."

*Egalitarian couples.* Egalitarian couples were equally involved in planning, and in two couples the grooms seemed to take on primary responsibility for planning. However, the amount of work required varied quite dramatically among egalitarian couples. At one extreme was a couple that had a church ceremony followed by a traditional reception for 200 guests. At the other extreme was a couple who got married in a simple ceremony in a restaurant with two witnesses, an event requiring very little planning. However, what planning they did seemed to be equitably

shared. In this couple, the woman was very uncomfortable with having a formal ceremony and being on display in the way that brides often are. Pauline said, “I don’t think that the day is about the bride. I think the day is about the couple. . . . It is a union of two people, it’s not, it’s not all about the princess walking through the door.”

In egalitarian couples, grooms’ organizational skills were acknowledged. Liam said, “I guess I’m very detail oriented,” whereas Mario’s wife said,

He was on the computer for hours and hours and hours and hours and hours, you know, he had sent out (to) people, you know, “This is the exchange rate, and this is, you know, what you need money for, and these are the kind of tips you can give, and this is what you can expect the temperatures to be.” I mean everything was to a “T.” He made the final decisions on all of that and he will probably go on at great length about what he did, and as he should because he was extremely meticulous and detail oriented and I think everybody who went really appreciated it.

Grooms took responsibility for tasks without having to be asked, and came up with unique contributions, such as ways to have guests acknowledge their attendance or to have the married couple kiss. Liam noted how he “kind of picked up the ball on certain stuff and (my wife) kind of picked up the ball on certain stuff”, demonstrating how he and his fiancée carried out tasks separately. These grooms had opinions and wanted to be involved. They participated throughout decision making rather than at the final point of choosing from alternatives and they were more than just physically present when with the bride. They were actively involved at all stages (and their wives welcomed their involvement, often not desiring to be centre stage themselves), a factor that clearly distinguished these couples from the other two couple categories.

*Support for the Categorizations*

A counting and ranking procedure provided support for the trustworthiness of the ordinal comparison just described. All coded segments for the general work categories of “wife did on her own”, “husband did on his own”, and “couple did together” were examined in the software program’s *retrieved segments* window and the couple categorization (traditional, transitional, or egalitarian) of each coded segment counted. Husbands and wives were counted separately, and if one person had several comments for the same code, that person was only coded once. For example, if a wife in a traditional couple was coded once for identifying that she “chose music” and her husband was coded three times for also indicating that his wife had chosen the music, this worked out to a count of two. The end product was a summary of how many different tasks husbands and wives in each couple typology reported being done in each of the three general work categories. Each number was then divided by the number of couples in the couple category, resulting in an average number of work tasks per couple for each of the three ways in which wedding work could be carried out. Finally, the averages were rank ordered across categories. The averages and rankings are presented in Table 1.

[Insert Table 1 about here]

An examination of these averages and rankings confirmed the earlier couple categorizations and assisted in elucidating the ways in which work was carried out by traditional, transitional, and egalitarian couples. Not surprisingly, brides in traditional couples did the most on their own compared to brides in the other two couple categories. Also not unexpected was that the average number of tasks couples reported doing together was lowest for traditional couples whereas both transitional and egalitarian couples carried out many tasks together. The interesting result that emerged from this analysis had to do with grooms’ lone work, particularly that which was done in transitional couples. Grooms in transitional couples did the lowest number of tasks on

their own, even less than grooms in traditional couples. Thus, focusing on the transitional couples, grooms and brides carried out many tasks together, similar to egalitarian couples, yet these brides also did much more work on their own compared to their partners (9 more tasks, on average), a gendered interactional pattern more similar to traditional couples, and a number, in fact, exceeding traditional couples (8 eight more tasks).

#### *Comparison of First Weddings with Subsequent Weddings*

The previous sections describe gendered patterns for the remarried couples but do not address whether they did anything different in planning their most recent weddings compared to previous weddings. Those who had been previously married (all but two of the respondents) were asked to briefly describe their previous wedding(s). For some individuals details were difficult to remember because their previous weddings occurred many years earlier. However, all respondents were able to provide general comments about their weddings.

For the most part, respondents' first weddings were more formal, traditional affairs, compared to their most recent weddings. Only four individuals had a bigger wedding the second time, which occurred for one transitional couple, one egalitarian bride, and another egalitarian groom. Of the 26 individuals who had been previously married, 18 first weddings were large, formal celebrations and 8 were small celebrations with few guests and little planning. For those who had smaller second weddings, the amount of work needed to prepare for it was less than in their first wedding, regardless of whether or not they had done more wedding work than their current partner for their most recent wedding. Moreover, even though most participants appeared to do less work for their second or third weddings compared to their first weddings, many tended to have a similar level of involvement (i.e., involved or not involved) in their weddings.

Table 2 presents a matrix comparing individuals' involvement in their first and subsequent

weddings. Two weddings are compared for each person; thus, for the two women who married a third time, their second weddings were not included in this matrix, however their second weddings were also small and they were involved in planning them. The matrix also takes into account the size of each wedding, which is related to how much work may have needed to be done. Finally, the couple categorization of each bride or groom is identified.

[Insert Table 2 about here]

A distinct pattern existed for traditional couples, who were mostly represented in two upper right-hand cells. Grooms in traditional couples had little to no involvement in their first weddings, which were large, formal events, and although their most recent weddings were smaller affairs, they still had little to no involvement in planning. Four of the five brides in traditional couples also had large, formal weddings the first time and small weddings the second time, but contrary to their current spouses, these women were involved in planning both weddings. These women also described their first husbands' involvement in wedding planning as uninvolved. For example, Jennifer described her first husband's participation as, "Not a whole lot. I mean, other than he would ask who was gonna stand up with him, but other than that, not a whole lot."

Transitional couples were represented in four cells, and similar to traditional couples, these grooms tended not to have done much work for their first weddings. Even Derek, who was characterized as being involved in his first wedding said of his ship-based wedding, "(The planning) was actually fairly easy, it was basically you tell them that you're gonna be there, pick option A, B, or C." More variation between first and subsequent weddings was found in egalitarian couples, who were represented across eight matrix cells. Nevertheless, six of the grooms and brides in egalitarian couples indicated that they were similarly involved in making decisions and carrying out tasks in their first weddings as they were in their most recent weddings.

One bride and three of the grooms in this category increased their involvement from first to second wedding. One groom noted, “Back then, it seemed more like the girl—the bride and her side of the family were the ones who do most of the planning. It seemed to be the way it was back then” (Rory), whereas Liam indicated, “I think at that point I would’ve probably left the wedding planning to my first wife and her family and kind of just ‘Show me, tell me when, and tell me where’ type of thing. But this, I wanted to get more involved this time ’cause I wanted it to be our special day.”

### *Greater Freedom in Planning Weddings*

A general pattern emerged around flexibility in wedding planning when remarrying. As Larry indicated, “You’re a little freer to make the decisions.” However, this flexibility usually focused more on the details of a wedding ceremony or reception (i.e., not wearing a formal wedding gown, the bride not walking down an aisle, or not having a wedding cake) rather than how brides and grooms carried out the *work* of planning the wedding. Reasons for the greater sense of freedom varied and consisted of the following: (a) individual circumstances, (b) reactions to the first wedding, (c) already having had the formal rituals and traditions, and (d) age. These reasons did not appear to be specific to certain types of couples (traditional, transitional, and egalitarian), and some respondents invoked multiple reasons.

Individual circumstances made a difference for several couples. Only having 5 weeks influenced the amount of work that Susan was able to put into planning a wedding whereas Anne noted how the interaction between she and her fiancé resulted in a different approach to planning: “A part of it too is just because of the type of people we are. And the type of person that (my husband) is.” Mario’s wife being immersed in university and the involvement of his young children in the wedding contributed to an increased sense of responsibility in planning the

wedding. Living the same city made it more possible for a person to be involved. Teddy, a transitional groom who was more involved in his second wedding than his first, noted how in his first marriage, he was living in a different city in which the wedding was being planned. Yet he also surmised whether his involvement in his first wedding really would have changed if circumstances had been different, saying, “I am not sure if the circumstances had been different whether I would have, you know, had more involvement or not.”

Some individuals did things differently for their second weddings as a result of what occurred in their first weddings. One bride incorporated many features that had not been available the first time she married, whereas a groom said, “My first wedding was just a very (small and quick one), I think that’s why I wanted such a big grandiose wedding this time” (Liam). Thus, for several of the individuals, having a second wedding was an opportunity to do things they did not have the chance to incorporate the first time around.

Already having experienced a wedding also contributed to feeling differently about what needed to be part of a wedding. Tara noted, “A lot of it is so extraneous, you know, and ‘been there, done that.’” Once people had experienced the formal rituals and traditions, they saw little need or reason to invoke them again. Larry said, “I think just because you’ve been through it once already and you’ve kind of had that experience and maybe going through it the one time makes those things a little less necessary.”

The most common reason, however, why respondents approached weddings differently related to age and its corresponding life experiences that gave them a different perspective on what was meaningful. Thoughts about age bringing on a different perspective were articulated in a number of different ways. Leila said, “I find some of (the typical rituals) very offensive. Our age, I think, played a role in that. There might have been a day that I might have bought into that. Part of

it I just find horrid. The garter idea, those sorts of things.” Larry thoughtfully described how when, “you’ve been through a relationship already that you’ve seen the reality of it, I guess, and you see more the reality of life and the insignificance of, you know, the material things and the ceremonies.” Susan noted how with age, people are “maybe less concerned about other people’s expectations,” which then frees them up to plan weddings differently. Other similar comments were: “It’s thirty years of experience, of maturity and of you know, being really comfortable in your own skin and knowing what works for you” (Sara); and “We’re at the age where we don’t care what people think” (Fred).

On a related note, a gender consciousness about wedding work seldom played into participants’ reasoning for doing things differently. When it did emerge, however, it intersected with age rather than as a response to possible previous inequities or stressful situations that occurred in the person’s first wedding planning experiences. These comments were seen more so with egalitarian couples, but did occur with the other couples as well. Emma, who was previously widowed, talked about knowing herself better before she remarried. She said,

I know when my husband died the hardest thing for me was like, “Who am I? I don’t know who I am as a person on my own” and that took me a while to figure out. When I was going into this second wedding, you know, I recognized as wonderful as our marriage was that I was very much who I was, was very much who he was, if you know what I mean. And I knew that I was going into this one thinking I will still maintain my identity as an individual and yet be a unit as well.

Anne said, “I think when you’re 10 you think of it as just sort of the bride’s day and (the groom’s) kind of the window dressing that’s down there, has to do what he has to do. But when we’re both older, um, I think that makes a difference.” When asked if she was saying that women’s and men’s

perspectives changed as they got older, she said, “Yeah, I think so, yeah. I see that with my parents. I mean, Dad does dishes now and cleans and does different things, right? Like, I see a change there too.” Finally, a groom said,

Back then, we had (a shower). Of course a 20-year-old male doesn't see the logic in all these things. They had a cup and saucer shower for her, and to me, all the fancy stuff that was coming in didn't make much sense back then. Later on, as I matured, it meant something, but back then it didn't. (Rory)

### Discussion

To examine how Humble et al.'s (2008) previous conceptualization (traditional, transitional, and egalitarian gender construction) regarding wedding planning in first-time weddings transferred to remarriages, 14 couples in which at least one person had remarried were interviewed about their weddings. Using a triangulation of analytical methods and strategies—direct content analysis, TextPortrait analysis, and rank order comparison—I found that gender construction exists in different proportions for remarried couples compared to individuals marrying a first time, with a smaller proportion of couples in this study transitional couples. A matrix analysis also suggested that individuals tended to replicate their involvement in wedding planning when remarrying a second or third time.

A counting and ranking strategy was instrumental in moving toward a full articulation of the couple typology and in clarifying differences among three types of couples. Code counting and summary ranking confirmed that in traditional and transitional couples, brides do more work on their own than grooms, whereas in egalitarian couples, couples carry out a higher amount of tasks together and grooms are more similar to brides in terms of the amount of work they do on their own, unlike traditional and transitional grooms. Additionally, the ranking strategy revealed that

although transitional couples carry out many tasks together, grooms in these couples appear to do the least amount of work on their own compared to grooms in the other categories.

The amount of wedding work that individuals report doing either on their own or with their partner does not alone account for couple categorization, however. An additional factor identified in the ordinal and analytic comparisons provides closure to the categorical analysis of these remarried couples' gender construction. To fully understand the gendered dynamics of wedding preparation, the type of work that brides and grooms do must also be taken into account. Type of work does not refer to specific tasks such as who is responsible for invitations, flowers, and so on (although gendered patterns do emerge around some specific tasks), but rather who is responsible for *wedding management*—that is who makes decisions around what needs to be done, sets acceptable standards for work, does more background work (making phone calls, exploring options on the Internet), and so on. Grooms who have no involvement in wedding management are represented in the traditional couples. Grooms in transitional couples also have little involvement in wedding management.

[Insert Table 3 about here]

Table 3 illustrates a final typology. Transitional couples are similar to traditional couples in that brides do higher levels of work than their fiancés; however they are different from traditional couples and similar to egalitarian couples in that they also carry out many tasks together. What distinguishes traditional and transitional couples from egalitarian couples is not only the patterns around amount of work done but also the absence or near absence of men's involvement in wedding management. For example, grooms might be present with their partners for the culmination of various tasks, such as being with the bride while she is purchasing an item; however, being there as a driver or there for companionship is not the same as being responsible

for ensuring the task has been checked off the list. Similarly, picking up items the day before or day of the wedding, as instructed or requested is often termed as involvement, but a traditional or transitional groom might have done little to none of the background work to make the final decision or purchase possible, and this differentiates him from an egalitarian groom.

Weddings for remarrying individuals tend to involve less work for brides compared to their first-time weddings not because brides and grooms intentionally interact with each other in ways to make wedding planning more equitable but primarily because remarrying couples have smaller scale wedding rituals requiring less preparation. In traditional and transitional couples, involvement in wedding planning is quite low for many grooms and most brides continue to have primary responsibility for making sure tasks are accomplished regardless of whether their first or second weddings are being examined. Consistent with other research (e.g., Currie, 1993; Humble et al., 2008; Sniezek, 2005), women are responsible for much of the background work with men participating in final decision making. Management of work is more gendered than actual task accomplishment (Mederer, 1993), demonstrating the pervasiveness of gender in remarried couples' dynamics. Research needs to attend more closely to differences in responsibility versus the carrying of tasks (Mederer, 1993; Sullivan, 2004).

What factors contribute to more equal participation from both spouses? Men's ideologies and the motivation to put that ideology into practice may be one of the strongest predictors of whether work is shared (Pyke & Coltrane, 1996), and several grooms in the egalitarian couples who increased their wedding involvement from their first wedding to second weddings demonstrated this possibility. The immediate context (Thompson, 1993) may be relevant. Two reasons why one groom was so involved were the presence of his young children and his fiancée being very busy with school. Greater attention to previous marital status could also enhance our

understanding of gender construction within this particular context. It was notable that no couples in which one or both individuals who were widowed or never married were categorized as egalitarian. Sullivan (2004) has noted that the marital status of a person's partner might influence division of labor dynamics. The sample size of this study was slightly smaller than desired, but it was actually difficult to find participants because many people (particularly those who are divorced) now choose to cohabit with their partners rather than remarry. A larger sample including more couples in which only one person is remarrying would provide an opportunity to more fully explore how marital status and gender interact in wedding planning.

Given that no traditional or transitional women reported feeling that the division of labor was unfair, more research is also needed to understand how feelings of obligation and gratitude contribute to gendered wedding work in remarried couples' weddings. For many women it might be enough that their husband has listened to them and shown interest in the wedding even if he has not contributed much to actual wedding management or task accomplishment, and comparisons are made with past husbands rather than between one's current partner and oneself. Thompson (1991) has identified these factors as outcome values and comparison referents.

Many individuals reproduce gendered work patterns from their first weddings, consistent with other research demonstrating that gender dynamics in division of labour do not appear to be so different in remarriages compared to first-time marriages (Gupta, 1999; Pyke & Coltrane, 1996; Sullivan, 2004) even when remarried women do proportionally lower levels of housework than first-time married women (Sullivan, 1997). Thus, one might question whether the traditional bride mentioned in the literature review *would* elope if she ever marries again. Given that gender is constructed in interaction with others, she will need to take into account the wishes, desires, and gendered expectations of a new partner as well as new friends, future in-laws, and so on. Although

remarried women might want more involvement from their husbands, the desire for more help does not necessarily result in a more equitable division of labor (Pyke & Coltrane, 1996).

Moreover, the passage of time adds a new perspective on wedding memories: Within 3 years of being married, couples describe their weddings as social events rather than focus on tension that might have existed during wedding planning (Holmberg & Veroff, 1996). The bride's stress of planning her first wedding might be forgotten in the immediate excitement and promise of a new relationship.

Remarrying couples feel freer to plan the weddings they want rather than the way the wedding industry prescribes couples do so and much of society also expects couples to do so, which support Cherlin's (1978, as cited in Grizzle, 1996) conceptualization of remarriage as an incomplete institution. This increased sense of freedom in customs and rituals, however, does not necessarily change how brides and grooms proportionally manage and carry out wedding work. Reasons for approaching weddings center on wanting to be more informal in ceremonies and receptions rather than approaching wedding planning in a less normatively gendered manner. Gender consciousness is evident in small amounts with regard to wedding details (e.g., not following the tradition of the groom not seeing the bride in her gown prior to the wedding), but not in regard to division of labor. In this respect, remarriage wedding dynamics regarding work are similarly institutionalized in remarriages as they are in first marriages.

However, as previously indicated, transitional couples were less represented in the study compared to Humble et al.'s (2008) study of first-time marriages. Perhaps transitional couples are, indeed, less common in remarriages. However, I did use a different sampling procedure (purposive) in this study compared to Humble et al.'s research (systematic random sampling from marriage license records). It may be that transitional couples are more difficult to come by in

purposive sampling procedures (i.e., in this study, I could not advertise for couples who “think they planned their wedding together but really did not”). A cohort effect could also be contributing to the different findings. Alternatively, perhaps gendered work dynamics are increasingly polarized (traditional or egalitarian) in remarriages or become more polarized as individuals age and become more sure of themselves (not only knowing what they want but also very clearly knowing what they do *not* want or like), which then plays out differently in gendered interactions with their new partners. For example, an enhanced sense of maturity might result in women choosing more compatible partners when remarrying (Clarke, 2005), thus resulting in couples who are more alike (traditional or egalitarian). Future research could explore both methodological concerns and theoretical possibilities related to wedding planning.

Respondents’ comments about how age results in them caring less about what other people think are both insightful and fascinating. Aging (at minimum, middle age) can produce developmental experiences that result in a reevaluation of factors contributing to one’s life satisfaction (Sakraida, 2005), and may also branch out to weddings for those remarrying. Furthermore, it may not only result in greater self-awareness and reassessment of one’s priorities but also contribute to a greater sense of assertiveness. Not surprisingly, the one couple that struggled with the bride’s mother’s involvement was the one couple where both spouses were under age 40. The role of life experience, age, or maturity—however a person might wish to conceptualize it—in influencing how remarried couples interact with their partners and with others is a final future area for research.

### Conclusion

Little research has explored remarried couples’ division of labor, and no research to date has examined remarried individuals’ experiences in rituals such as wedding planning, which are

*strong situations* (Deaux & Major, 1987) for the social construction and display of gender. Although a small sample consisting primarily of highly educated and White, European individuals, this study contributes to the literature by applying Humble et al.'s (2008) conceptualization of wedding planning in first-time married couples to remarried couples. A number of methodological strategies including direct content analysis and matrix analysis revealed that although remarriages tend to involve smaller and less complicated weddings, most couples replicate gendered patterns from their first weddings in subsequent weddings. Thus, I would suggest that the bride most likely to elope for a second marriage would be one who did little work for her first wedding rather than one whose wedding planning experience was stressful and for which she took full responsibility.

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Table 1

*Rank Ordering of Average Number of Tasks Done by Brides, by Grooms, or Together*

	Who Did Wedding Work		
	number of tasks bride did on own	number of tasks groom did on own	number of tasks carried out together
Traditional couples	14.0 (1)	5.8 (2)	10.3 (3)
Transitional couples	12.3 (2)	3.3 (3)	17.0 (2)
Egalitarian couples	10.2 (3)	8.0 (1)	17.6 (1)

*Table 1 Note:* Numbers are the *average* number of tasks per couple category who reported different kinds of work in each column; for example, choosing vows, visiting venues, or picking music. Numbers in parentheses are the ranking. Rankings are structured so that a “1” is given to the highest frequency in each column and “3” for the lowest frequency in each column.

Table 2

*Comparison of First Wedding with Most Recent Wedding*

		<u>Most Recent Wedding</u>			
		<u>Big wedding</u>		<u>Small Wedding</u>	
		little to no involvement	involvement	little to no involvement	involvement
First wedding					
Big wedding					
little to no involvement	--	1 egalitarian groom (12)	5 traditional grooms (6, 9, 10, 11, 13) 2 transitional grooms (1, 8)	1 transitional bride (8) 1 egalitarian groom (5 <sup>b</sup> )	
involved	--	1 egalitarian bride (14)	--	5 traditional brides (6, 9, 10, 11, 13) 1 egalitarian bride (2) 1 egalitarian groom (7)	
Small wedding					
little to no involvement	--	1 egalitarian bride (12)	--	1 egalitarian groom (2)	
involved	1 transitional groom (3 <sup>a</sup> )	1 transitional bride (3) 1 egalitarian groom (14 <sup>a</sup> )	--	1 traditional bride (4) 2 egalitarian brides (5 <sup>b</sup> , 7)	

*Note:* Numbers in parentheses refer to couple number of bride or groom. The bride from couple #1 (transitional) and groom from couple #4 (traditional) are not included because neither of them had been previously married.

<sup>a</sup>There was very little preparation needed for the first wedding. <sup>b</sup>There was very little preparation needed for the second wedding.

Table 3

*Typology of Gender Construction in Wedding Planning*

	Couple Typology		
	egalitarian	traditional	transitional
• The bride carried out more tasks on her own compared to the groom		√	√
• The groom had little to no involvement in wedding management		√	√
• A high amount of task accomplishment was done together	√		√