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## **A Middle Ground: The Gendered Division of Housework in Heterosexual Mixed-Nativity Couples**

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[A MIDDLE GROUND: THE GENDERED DIVISION OF HOUSEWORK IN  
HETEROSEXUAL MIXED-NATIVITY COUPLES]

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## ABSTRACT

Little is known about how couples in mixed-nativity marriages divide household labor compared to their peers in mixed-nativity cohabitations. Using data from the Integrated Public Use Microdata (IPUMS) files of the American Time Use Survey, this paper asks: (1) how does the division of housework for heterosexual mixed-nativity couples, both married and cohabiting, compare to that of their same-nativity counterparts? and (2) how does the gendered division of housework for heterosexual cohabiting mixed-nativity couples differ from that of married mixed-nativity couples? Findings indicate that mixed-nativity unions operate as a “middle ground” between same-nativity unions. When stratifying by marital status, either married or cohabiting, women’s time on housework for mixed-nativity married couples lands between that of native-native married couples and immigrant-immigrant married couples, while it seems that the group with the notable disadvantage in mixed-nativity partnerships is women in cohabiting unions. Broadly, these findings shed light on the persistence of a “second shift” among women, including those in mixed-nativity unions.

**Keywords:** mixed-nativity unions, gendered division of housework, American Time-Use Survey, cohabitation, marriage, immigrants

## ***Introduction***

The United States has seen an unprecedented rise in intermarriages, including mixed-nativity unions (Choi, Tienda, Cobb-Clark and Sinning, 2012; Grossbard and Vernon, 2020; Wang, Taylor, Parker, Passel, Patten and Motel, 2012). Surprisingly little is known about how these couples divide labor compared to their same-nativity immigrant or U.S.-born counterparts. Even less is known about how the division of labor for couples in mixed-nativity marriages compares with that of their peers in mixed-nativity cohabitations. Such insights are important given (a) the rise in non-marital cohabitations and (b) the understanding that the division of labor may differ between cohabiting and married couples (Raley and Sweeney, 2020; Davis, Greenstein and Gerteisen Marks, 2007).

Prior research has compared the gendered division of household labor within mixed nativity marriage with those in same nativity marriages (Grossbard and Vernon, 2020; Basu, 2017, Blau, 2015). According to these studies, immigrant women in mixed-nativity marriages do more household chores than their peers in same-nativity marriages in contrast to their native-born husbands who work equal hours as their peers in same-nativity unions (Grossbard and Vernon, 2020). Immigrant partners' disadvantage in the labor market is frequently attributed to the power dynamics within mixed-nativity households emerging because the immigrant spouse depends on the native-born spouse for benefits associated with citizenship (e.g., health care access in the U.S.), immigrant partner's lack of knowledge regarding host country institutions, and influence of source country's gender norms (Choi, Tienda, Cobb-Clark and Sinning, 2012; Basu, 2017; Blau, 2015). Whether this pattern holds for couples in mixed-nativity cohabitations is largely unknown. Past studies have shown that cohabiting couples tend to be more egalitarian

than married couples in their division of housework (Bianchi, Lesnard, Nazio and Raley, 2014; Davis et al., 2007).

This study expands our understanding about the intrahousehold division of labor in mixed-nativity partnerships by comparing the work arrangements of married and cohabiting mixed-nativity couples. Using data from the Integrated Public Use Microdata (IPUMS) files of the American Time Use Survey, I will address the following questions:

- (1) How does the division of housework for heterosexual mixed-nativity couples, both married and cohabiting, compare to that of their same-nativity counterparts?
- (2) How does the gendered division of housework for heterosexual cohabiting mixed-nativity couples differ from that of married mixed-nativity couples?

## ***Background***

### *Mixed Nativity Unions and Household Division of Labor*

Increasingly, marriages in contemporary America involve foreign- and native-born individuals, contributing to cultural and ethnic assimilation throughout the country (Choi et al., 2012; Grossbard and Vernon, 2020; Wang et al., 2012). Native born individuals are those born within the United States, while foreign-born individuals are those born abroad. Mixed-nativity couples differ from interracial couples given that not all mixed-nativity unions involve partners of different racial backgrounds. For instance, a mixed-nativity partnership may be comprised of two Black individuals, with one being U.S.-born and the other foreign-born. Additionally, mixed-nativity partnerships may also form amongst co-ethnic individuals. Indeed, the uptick in Hispanic and Asian immigration to the United States has served to replenish the marriage market for native-born individuals seeking a same-ethnicity spouse, playing into a broader trend

whereby co-ethnic individuals form many of the mixed-nativity unions presently observed in the U.S. (Qian and Lichter, 2007; Qian and Lichter, 2011).

The extensive literature on the gendered division of household labor consistently shows that women do more housework than their male counterparts, despite women's ever-growing engagement in the paid labor force (Wight, Bianchi, and Hunt, 2013; Bianchi, 2000; Miller, 2020; Basu, 2017; Bolzendahl and Gubernskaya, 2016; Hochschild and Machung, 1989). The division of housework can be understood as the amount of time an individual spends on household tasks, relative to their partner (Miller, 2020). These tasks can be further conceptualized as the work required to maintain a home. In the literature, this work is often discussed as that which an individual seeks to avoid, meaning the partner doing more will be comparatively worse-off than the partner doing less (Miller, 2020; Grossbard and Vernon, 2020; Bianchi, Milkie, Sayer and Robinson, 2000). Though the gap between men and women has narrowed in terms of time spent on housework, there remains a marked division in the type of tasks performed by husbands and wives (Bianchi et al., 2000; Bianchi, 2000). Women continue to perform a greater proportion of core household and childcare tasks such as cooking, cleaning and feeding while men perform periphery tasks such as playing with children and irregular outdoor maintenance (Bianchi et al., 2000; Bianchi, 2000).

Inequality in the time spent on tasks such as cooking, cleaning, grocery shopping, and childcare gives impetus to what Hochschild and Machung (1989) famously called the "second shift". The second shift is understood as the daily household tasks which occur outside of and in addition to one's paid labor market activities (Hochschild and Machung, 1989). Women are more likely than men to experience a second shift, which has been linked to high levels of distress and mental health issues (Hochschild and Machung, 1989; Bird, 1999). Moreover,

inequality in the division of housework has been linked to a decrease in relationship quality and satisfaction (Barstad, 2014). The presence of a second shift is lessened in terms of childcare for couples with high educational attainment, especially when a woman has more education than her husband (Miller, 2020; Bonke and Esping-Andersen, 2011). However, despite this trend, it remains that wives contribute more to housework than their husbands (Miller, 2020; Bonke and Esping-Andersen, 2011).

There are four theoretical frameworks relevant to the household division of labor within mixed-nativity unions: the *status exchange perspective*, the *time availability perspective*, the *relative resources perspective*, and the *gender inequality perspective*.

Although subject to some variation across groups, immigrant individuals partnered with American citizens tend to have high levels of education, while their native-born partners have less (Kalmijn, 2012; Choi et al., 2012). High educational attainment is considered an attractive characteristic on the marriage market, and therefore a valuable asset for one to hold (Oppenheimer, 1988; Becker, 1985). In the United States, access to health care and public safety nets are increasingly tied with citizenship status (Van Natta, Burke, Yen, Fleming, Hanssmann, Rasidjan, and Shim, 2019). Immigrants may wish to marry a U.S.-born individual to gain access to the benefits originating from citizenship rights (Choi et al., 2012). While native-born individuals in mixed-nativity unions often have lower levels of education than their partner, they have stronger knowledge of United States institutions and norms by virtue of natural-born citizenship (Choi et al., 2012). This knowledge allows native-born individuals to better navigate the bureaucratic aspects of the U.S., such as government services and the paid workforce (Choi et al., 2012). This pattern reflects Davis' (1941) *status exchange theory*, which suggests that

prospective partners will ‘trade’ favorable characteristics on the marriage market in the formation of romantic relationships.

The *time availability perspective* asserts that the partner with more available time will spend more time on household tasks relative to their partner (Coverman, 1985). This greater availability of time can result from various factors such as little or no engagement in the paid labor force. *Status exchange* theory in conjunction with the *time availability perspective* suggests that since the native-born individual in mixed-nativity unions are more proficient at navigating United States institutions, they will do so, leaving less time to engage in housework. Accordingly, their foreign-born partner, with comparatively more time will do the outstanding household tasks, thus resulting in an inequalitarian division of chores.

The *relative resources perspective* suggests that the partner with more economic or human capital will hold advantages in bargaining power within the relationship, leading to the ability to avoid household tasks in favor of directing energy towards paid labor (Brines, 1994). Examples of economic or human capital include a high paying job and high levels education which lead to more earning potential. This perspective suggests that the more education and paid workforce prospects held by an individual, relative to their spouse, the less likely they are to engage in unpaid household tasks since their time is more effectively directed towards economic activities (Becker, 1985). This introduces competing hypotheses in the realm of mixed-nativity unions. It is possible that intermarried foreign-born individuals with higher levels of education than their partners will be more likely to engage in paid labor. On the other hand, lack of knowledge about host-country culture, language and norms could lead to discrimination and marginalization in the workplace, causing foreign-born partners in mixed-nativity unions to



dedicate more time to the domestic sphere. In this case, the native-born partner – with stronger proficiency in the host-country culture – would participate in paid labor.

Finally, the *gender inequality perspective* suggests that women do more housework and childcare than their male partners to conform with traditional gender norms and perform femininity (West and Zimmerman, 1987). Alternatively, men conform to traditional gender roles by engaging in paid work and operating as the financial breadwinner (West and Zimmerman, 1987). Simultaneously, men intentionally avoid household production tasks (which are viewed as “women’s work”) in an effort to perform masculinity (West and Zimmerman, 1987; Bianchi et al., 2000). Compared to the *status exchange* and *relative resources perspectives* this posits a competing hypothesis, particularly in the case of foreign-born, intermarried women. Indeed, this perspective suggests that, despite potentially higher levels of education than their native-born spouses, intermarried immigrant women will conform to a traditional household breakdown and remain primarily in the domestic sphere.

Prior empirical work provides varying support for these competing hypotheses. It has been found that, when compared with women in homogamous marriages and native women in heterogamous marriages, intermarried immigrant women pay an “assimilation price” in the form of more routine housework (Grossbard and Vernon, 2020). This supports the status exchange perspective, which suggests that immigrant partners will perform more housework due to their unfamiliarity, matched with their native partners’ familiarity with American institutions. Immigrant women intermarried to native men may be at a disadvantage given that they have less knowledge of host country culture, customs, and language, while also being subject to existing gendered perceptions of who ought to be doing housework. This reifies and exacerbates existing gendered inequalities in the household division of labor for intermarried immigrant women.

Blau (2015) suggests that one's cultural upbringing influences labor market behavior, finding that source country gender roles impact female immigrants' labor market engagement once living in the United States. Immigrant women arriving from countries with strong traditional gender norms often engage in a traditional household organization once living in the United States, characterized by high levels of specialization (Blau, 2015). Household specialization occurs when one individual engages heavily in the paid workforce, while the other devotes their time to unpaid work in the home. This typically reflects the arrangement where men participate in paid labor, while women participate in unpaid labor. Accordingly, high household specialization produces an inequalitarian division of labor. These women tend to perform the majority of household tasks, when compared to immigrant women from source countries with more gender equality, and native-born women from the US (Blau, 2015). Relatedly, Basu (2017) finds that within the context of mixed-nativity immigrant female homes, there is greater specialization, but this trend is negated for highly educated women. It has also been found that immigrant women often experience discrimination in the workplace due to lack of knowledge about host-country culture, language and norms (Nottmeyer, 2014; Basu, 2017). More specifically, this manifests as less fruitful labor market opportunities, leading to more time spent in the domestic sphere (Nottmeyer, 2014, Basu, 2017). These findings help to conceptualize the observed assimilation price paid by intermarried female immigrants.

Prior work has laid a strong foundation in the literature on the gendered division of housework in mixed-nativity couples. My study differs in its consideration of cohabiting mixed-nativity couples. Cohabiting relationships fundamentally operate differently than do married relationships, underscoring the relevance of studying mixed-nativity unions of this nature.

Additionally, my study specifically tests for an interaction between relationship nativity status and gender to assess the disadvantage amongst intermarried women.

### *Cohabitation and the Division of Housework*

Cohabitation is defined as living with a romantic partner outside the context of marriage and within the United States, it carries few legal rights when compared to marriage, resulting in less of a willingness to make relationship-specific investments including housework (Bumpass, Sweet and Cherlin, 1991; Bianchi et al., 2014). In marriage, property and assets are divided more or less equally if dissolution occurs, while the same protections are not afforded to cohabitators (Bianchi et al., 2014). Accordingly, individuals in cohabiting unions may view high in-home specialization as risky, thus remaining engaged in the paid labor force and safeguarding their financial independence (Bianchi et al., 2014). Indeed, cohabiting couples have greater intrarelationship income equality than married couples, making it unsurprising that they also tend to have a more equal division of housework than their married counterparts (Kalmijn, 2007; Bianchi et al., 2014; Davis et al., 2007). Cohabiting men perform more housework than married men and cohabiting women perform less housework than married women (Bianchi et al., 2014; Davis et al., 2007). Bolstering these claims, it has been shown that cohabiting women frequently engage in more paid labor than married women (Bianchi et al., 2014; Davis et al., 2007). This engagement in paid work, leads to the performance of fewer unpaid household tasks, thus explaining the more equal division of housework within cohabiting partnerships. This explanation fits well with the time availability theory of dividing housework wherein paid labor market activities of an individual detract from their time spent on domestic tasks. Moreover, cohabitators, when compared to married couples, tend to be more liberal, more egalitarian and less

religious (Smock, 2000). This egalitarianism not only distinguishes cohabitators from their married counterparts but helps to explain the greater equality in the division of housework.

Prior work suggests that cohabitators adopt a more equal division of chores than married couples, presenting the possibility that this trend also exists in the context of mixed nativity cohabitators. Indeed, preliminary work has found that cohabiting mixed-nativity couples tend to have lower levels of household specialization, implying a more egalitarian division of housework (Basu, 2017). My study varies from Basu's (2017) work in two important ways. Firstly, Basu (2017) uses the American Community Survey, whereas I use the American Time Use Survey. The ATUS affords access to respondents' time spent in specific activities, allowing a more precise view of household division of labor. Secondly, Basu (2017) focuses on household specialization, rather than the division of housework. Household specialization, in this case, is constructed as an index from the immigrant partner's point of view, accounting for weekly market hours of the foreign-born spouse, relative to the native-born spouse. Ultimately, Basu's (2017) study does not facilitate an in-depth look at precisely how chores are divided within the home.

Furthermore, applying the status exchange perspective to married and cohabiting mixed nativity relationships underscores a fundamental difference between these unions. Mixed nativity cohabitators, in particular, diverge from their married peers in terms of the citizenship rights associated with their relationship. In the United States, these rights are largely tied to marriage and less so to cohabitation. Per the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (2021), marital unions can be used for naturalization purposes after a minimum of three years, while cohabiting unions cannot. The status exchange perspective suggests that U.S.-born partners who marry immigrant individuals offer their citizenship as a favorable characteristic, while U.S.-born

cohabitators' nativity carries less weight. Cohabitators are those who have already attained citizenship status in their own right, independent of a partner. With citizenship status carrying less weight for native-born cohabitators in mixed nativity unions, they will have less intrarelationship bargaining power over their immigrant partner than their married peers in the same relationship nativity formation. This suggests that U.S. born individuals in mixed-nativity marriages may be more successful in using their citizenship as a 'bargaining chip' in the division of housework than their peers in cohabiting mixed-nativity partnerships. As a result, mixed nativity marriages may have a more unequal division of housework than their cohabiting counterparts.

### *Present Study*

Prior work has laid a solid foundation in studying the household division of labor within mixed-nativity unions (Grossbard and Vernon, 2020; Basu, 2017; Blau, 2015). It is, however, vital to address this topic in the context of cohabitating mixed-nativity couples, since cohabiting unions are steadily on the rise throughout the United States, giving impetus to what has been deemed a 'retreat from marriage' (Smock, 2000; Bianchi et al., 2014; Bumpass et al., 1991). Indeed, Bumpass and colleagues (1991) note that cohabitation ought to be regarded as a family status, similar to marriage, arguing this union formation is a characteristic of contemporary social life. Further to this, cohabiting and married couples differ in their gendered division of housework (Bianchi et al., 2014; Davis et al., 2007), thus demonstrating why it is particularly necessary to understand this subset of mixed-nativity couples. Indeed, it would be an oversight to conclude congruency between cohabiting and married mixed-nativity couples in the realm of household labor, absent proper investigation. Though cohabitation tends to be short-lived due to relationship dissolution or transition to marriage, couples are increasingly using cohabitation as a

steppingstone to marriage or a context for childbearing, underscoring its legitimacy as a family formation (Smock, 2000; Bianchi et al., 2014; Manning, Smock and Fetto, 2017). I address the existing gap in the literature, using time-diary data from the American Time-Use Survey. I examine the household division of labor for cohabiting mixed-nativity couples, offering a comparison to married mixed nativity couples. My hypotheses are as follows:

*Hypothesis 1:* Foreign-born partners in mixed-nativity unions will be less capable of navigating U.S. institutions and norms than their native-born partners; therefore, foreign-born partners will engage in more domestic labor. Alternatively, the status exchange perspective of mixed-nativity unions suggests that foreign-born individuals' high levels of educational attainment, when compared to their native-born partners will result in higher paid workforce engagement; therefore, native-born individuals will remain in the domestic sphere. Nonetheless, both of these possibilities will result in a less egalitarian division of housework amongst mixed nativity cohabitators when compared to their cohabiting peers in same-nativity cohabitations.

*Hypothesis 2:* Household division of labor amongst cohabiting mixed-nativity couples will be more egalitarian than that of married mixed-nativity couples due to fewer legal rights and obligations associated with cohabiting unions, when compared to marriage.

## **Method**

### *Data*

I use data from the American Time Use Survey (ATUS) of the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) accessed via the Minnesota Population Center. The American Time Use Survey measures how people divide their time among various activities. These data are collected through a random sampling of households from the Current Population Survey (CPS) and are regarded as a highly reliable source of time-use information (Miller, 2020). One

individual aged 15 or older is randomly selected from a household which partook in the CPS (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018). Those respondents selected to participate in ATUS are contacted via telephone and asked to participate in a survey to discuss their activities between 4 a.m. and 3.59 a.m. the following day as well as the amount of time dedicated to each activity (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018).

Like any research, my study has limitations. Respondents report only their own time-use in a given 24-hour period, not their partner's. This means there is no access to couple-level time-use data, however, since the sample is nationally representative the sampled individuals are assumed to be representative of the respondents' partners. Another drawback is that respondents report their time-use through a self-tracked time diary (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018). This means that respondents may intentionally or unintentionally misreport time use. Despite these limitations the ATUS is regarded as a highly reliable source of time-use data.

My study also has several notable strengths. The ATUS is one of the few datasets with detailed accounts of time-use. Additionally, it includes a suitable number of couples for my analysis, including those which are mixed nativity. It is also one of the few datasets which accounts for the respondents' spouse's nativity status, allowing me to determine which couples are of mixed-nativity status. Finally, the ATUS is a nationally representative sample of the noninstitutionalized American population aged fifteen or older, meaning its findings have strong generalizability.

### *Sample*

I limit my analytic sample to respondents aged 18 to 64 between 2008 and 2019 with a spouse or partner of the opposite sex present in the home. I use this age range because these respondents are most likely to be in the workforce but not retired. I use only respondents married

or cohabiting with a spouse or partner in the home. I further limit my sample to heterosexual couples as there is evidence that LGBTQIA2S+ partners negotiate the division of household tasks in a manner which diverges from that of heterosexual partners (Goldberg, 2013) and same-sex marriages were legalized in 2015, precluding homosexual partners from legalizing their union. These restrictions yield a sample size of 57,809 individuals.

### *Measures*

My dependent variable is total time spent on housework. In line with prior literature (for examples see Sayer and Fine, 2010; Bolzendahl and Gubernskaya, 2016), I further subdivide this variable into core household activities (also referred to as core household tasks or core housework) and other household activities (also referred to as other household tasks or other housework). Core housework includes cooking meals and cleanup, housecleaning, laundry and ironing. This variable is conceptualized as routine tasks which occur on a daily basis and comprise the majority of respondents' time on housework. Other housework includes exterior maintenance (such as lawncare), pet care and household management (such as household financial planning). Other housework is conceptualized as non-routine tasks which occur on a non-daily basis. Total housework, and therefore core and other housework, are continuous variables.

The key explanatory variables are respondents' sex, couple nativity status and marital status. Couple nativity status is a categorical variable into four categories: (a) both U.S.-born (b) US born woman-foreign born man (c) foreign born woman-US born man and (d) both foreign-born. I coded this variable from questions which ask respondents if they have a spouse or partner present and each partner's citizenship status (whether they were born in America or abroad).



Marital status is a categorical variable with the following two categories (a) married and (b) cohabiting. While marital status can encapsulate a wide variety of relationship formations, I limit my sample to those who are married or cohabiting since it is of most relevance to the present analysis.

I also include other factors associated with changes in one's time spent on housework in my analysis. Socioeconomic variables include educational attainment of respondent and spouse coded as less than high school, high school, some college, associate degree and BA or higher; employment status of respondent and spouse coded as employed or unemployed; and family income, a categorical variable coded as less than \$20 000, \$20 000 to \$49 999.99, \$50 000 to \$74 999.99, \$75 000 to \$149 999.99, \$150 000 & over, or missing. I include the missing category from family income in my multivariate regression models. It does not have a statistically significant influence on core or other housework and less than 3% of my analytic sample, for both men and women, fall within this missing category. Demographic variables included are race/ethnicity of respondent and spouse coded as non-Hispanic White, non-Hispanic Black, Hispanic, non-Hispanic Asian and other; respondent birthplace coded as U.S., other North America, Central America/Caribbean, South America, Europe, Asia, Africa, or Oceania; and respondent age, measured continuously. In addition, I control for the household factor, presence of household child(ren), a dummy variable coded as yes or no. My models also control for diary day, accounting for what day of the week data were collected, coded as weekday or weekend and whether the time diary day was a holiday, either yes or no.

### *Analytic Approach*

I examine women's and men's time dedicated to housework by couple nativity status and marital status. I first analyze differences in housework, comparing women across all categories

and men across all categories of relationship formation regardless of marital status. I chose this approach since it is well-established that women perform more housework than men regardless of relationship formation or marital status. Comparing women's time on housework to other women, however, allows me to assess the relative disadvantage of women across relationship nativity categories. The same holds for men. In the final phase of my analysis I assess women's disadvantage compared to their male partners.

Time spent on housework is not normally distributed. It is right skewed due to a large proportion of individuals performing zero minutes of housework per day. While prior research has examined the possibility of modelling time-use data with other strategies, the use of ordinary least squares (OLS) remains standard practice in this body of work (Sayer and Fine, 2011; Wight et al., 2013; Bolzendahl and Gubernskaya, 2016). With this in mind, I use OLS to conduct my analysis. Importantly, the mismatch between the data distribution and the assumption of normality required by OLS regression raises questions about the robustness of my analysis. In the *Appendix*, I show the results of carrying out my analysis with Poisson regression, using the same controls as my OLS regression. These results indicate that my findings using OLS are robust.

My modelling strategy is as follows. I begin by examining whether time spent on core and other housework varies for women and men by couple nativity status in **Figure 1**. I test for an interaction between sex and couple nativity status due to prior literature suggesting that women in mixed-nativity unions, particularly foreign-born women in mixed-nativity unions, will perform significantly more housework than their native-born female counterparts. Sex is the focal predictor and couple nativity status is the modifier. I then examine whether time spent on total housework varies for women and men by couple nativity status and marital status (either

cohabiting or married) in **Figure 2**. I follow the same pattern stated above, testing the interaction between sex and couple nativity status. Again, sex is the focal predictor and couple nativity status is the modifier. For the interaction included in my analysis I model the overall effects of sex and couple nativity status using clustered bar charts.

In all models, I control for respondent and spouse educational attainment, respondent and spouse employment status, family income, respondent and spouse race/ethnicity, respondent birthplace, respondent age, presence of household child(ren), whether the time diary day was a weekday or weekend, and whether the time diary day was a holiday.

Finally, using the values from my interaction model shown in **Figure 2**, I calculate the gender difference between men and women's time on core household activities across all relationship nativity formations and marital statuses. I calculate this gender difference by dividing women's time on total housework by men's time on total housework within a given relationship nativity formation and marital status. This allows me to assess the relative disadvantage of women compared to their male partners.

## Results

**Table 1** presents the characteristics of the analytic sample. Like prior work, our study suggests that women do much more household work than men. On average, women are performing 145 minutes of housework per day while men are performing 64 minutes per day ( $p < 0.001$ ). Women dedicate roughly 126 minutes to core housework per day and men dedicate roughly 42 minutes per day. This difference is statistically significant ( $p < 0.001$ ). Other/irregular housework does not vary substantially between men and women. Women perform an average of 22 minutes per day, while men perform an average of 21 minutes.

Consistent with the distributions of unions, a large portion of the sample is married, at nearly 93%, leaving approximately 7% in non-marital cohabiting unions. Same nativity, United States born couples are the most common couple nativity formation with 77% of men and women being in a relationship of this nature. 4% of respondents, both male and female, in the sample are in mixed-nativity unions with a native-born female partner and foreign-born male partner, while 4% of men and women are in mixed-nativity unions with a foreign-born female partner and a native-born male partner.

**Figure 1** presents women's and men's time in minutes spent on core and other household activities. I calculated these values based on the estimated coefficients from an interaction model which examines the relationship between female and couple nativity status on time spent performing core and other housework. This interaction explicitly tests whether women in mixed-nativity partnerships are particularly disadvantaged compared to female peers in same nativity relationships, as suggested by prior literature (Grossbard and Vernon, 2020).

Women in mixed-nativity unions spend more time on core household tasks than their peers in U.S. born same-nativity unions and less time than their peers in immigrant-immigrant unions. Women in mixed-nativity unions where they are the native-born spouse dedicate approximately 11 minutes more than women in U.S. born same-nativity unions (122.5-111.8,  $p < 0.01$ ). Women in mixed-nativity unions where they are the foreign-born spouse spend 20 minutes longer on core housework than their peers in U.S. born same-nativity unions (131.3-111.8,  $p < 0.001$ ). These findings demonstrate that mixed-nativity unions can be understood as a “middle ground” between native-native unions and immigrant-immigrant unions. Said differently, women in mixed-nativity partnerships can be conceptualized as “disadvantaged” compared to their female peers in native-native relationships, but not their peers in immigrant-immigrant

relationships. Native born men spend roughly similar amounts of time on core housework while foreign born men spend roughly similar amounts of time on housework. Indeed, foreign born men are seen to spend significantly less time on core housework than native born men, regardless of relationship nativity status.

The time spent on other housework per day, for both men and women, shows that little variation exists in this facet of household labor. Indeed, all individuals of relevance to this analysis, women and men, perform around 20 minutes of other household labor per day. Accordingly, I suggest that much of the variation in the gender gap between women's and men's time on housework is driven by core housework.

The bar charts displayed in **Figure 2** illustrate the time, in minutes, that men and women across all couple nativity statuses spend on total housework and is stratified by marital status, either married or cohabiting. Total housework is the culmination of core and other housework. I calculated the values in **Figure 2** based on interaction models examining the relationship between female and couple nativity status. I estimate these models separately for married and cohabiting couples to clearly illustrate the effect of the other independent variables on housework within their context.

Married men across all couple nativity statuses, except immigrant-immigrant couples, dedicate roughly similar amounts of time to housework. Women in mixed nativity marriages spend more time on housework than their same-sex peers in native-native marriages ( $p < 0.001$  in both cases). Among women in mixed-nativity marriages, those who are foreign born perform around 12 minutes more housework than those who are native born (158-145.7;  $p < 0.001$ ). However, women in mixed-nativity marriages spend less time on housework than their female peers in immigrant-immigrant marriages ( $p < 0.001$  in both cases). In this way, mixed-nativity

marriages operate as a middle ground between native and foreign-born same nativity marriages in terms of women's time on housework.

This pattern differs for cohabiting couples. Native born men spend roughly similar amounts of time on housework, while foreign born men spend roughly similar amounts of time on housework. Women in mixed-nativity unions dedicate approximately the same amount of time to core housework as their US born counterparts in same-nativity unions. This implies that in the context of cohabitation, mixed-nativity unions function similarly to US born same nativity unions, at least in terms of women's time on housework.

**Table 2** presents the gender gap between men and women in time spent on total housework and is stratified by couple nativity status and marital status. I achieve the values in this table by dividing women's time on core housework by men's time on core housework, based on values from the interaction shown in **Figure 2**.

Native-born women in mixed-nativity cohabitations are more disadvantaged compared to their married female counterparts in terms of relative time spent on housework to their male partners. Native born women in mixed-nativity marriages do around twice (2.2 times) as much housework as their male partners, while cohabiting women do just over five times (5.3 times) more housework than their male partners. Foreign born women in mixed-nativity marriages do roughly twice (2.2 times) as much housework than their male counterparts, while these women in mixed-nativity cohabitations are expected to perform around one and a half (1.6 times) times more than their male counterparts.

On the whole, my findings regarding nonmarital cohabitations can be summarized in the following manner. Gender differences in housework for mixed-nativity cohabitations with a foreign-born female seem to operate similarly to same-nativity US born cohabitations, while

gender differences in housework for mixed-nativity cohabitations with a native-born female seem to operate differently. Indeed, compared to women in all other relationship nativity formations, native-born women in mixed-nativity unions are doing the highest proportion of the housework.

## **Discussion**

My study examined the division of housework among heterosexual married and cohabiting mixed-nativity couples in the United States. Understanding this division is vital, given the negative outcomes caused by inequality in this realm, such as lowered relationship quality and mental health struggles (Barstad, 2014; Bird, 1999). In this article, I build on prior work which suggests that immigrant women in mixed-nativity marriages are disadvantaged when compared with their husbands (Grossbard and Vernon, 2020), as well as work which suggests that immigrant peers, both men and women, may perform less work outside the home due to an unfamiliarity with American social systems, such as healthcare (Choi et al, 2012). Ultimately, then, this lack of work outside the home results in more time spent on housework compared to native born individuals (Choi et al., 2012). My paper, however, provides new focus, opting to stratify my sample by those who are married versus those who are cohabiting. I do this in line with prior research suggesting that cohabitations adopt a more gender egalitarian approach to dividing labor in the home (Bianchi et al., 2014; Kalmijn, 2007; Davis et al., 2007). Thus, the goals of this paper were as follows. First, I wanted to compare the gendered division of housework of mixed-nativity couples to that of their same nativity counterparts. Second, I sought to compare this division of labor between mixed nativity married and cohabiting couples to examine the difference, if any.

My findings are interesting considering prior literature which suggests that immigrant spouses in mixed-nativity unions are likely to spend more time engaging in domestic activities, given their lower proficiency with American institutions than their native-born spouse (Choi et al., 2012). In mixed-nativity unions between native-born women and foreign-born men, the immigrant spouse, in this case, men, spend less time on core housework than their male peers in US-born same-nativity unions. This suggests that perhaps gender inequality in these unions holds more of an effect than the predicted effect of immigrant spouses' lack of proficiency in navigating American life. Alternatively, in mixed-nativity unions with a foreign-born woman and native-born man, the immigrant spouse, women, spend significantly more time on housework than their female peers in US-born same nativity unions. This finding falls in line with prior literature on gender inequality in housework and immigrant spouse lack of familiarity with host country culture.

Overall, women's time on housework for mixed-nativity married couples lands between that of native-native married couples and immigrant-immigrant married couples. More specifically, married women's time on housework from least to greatest is as follows: native woman-native man, immigrant woman-native man, native woman-immigrant man, immigrant woman-immigrant man. For cohabiting couples, the order remains the same.

I find little support indicating a higher degree of disadvantage among immigrant women in mixed-nativity unions when compared to their peers in other relationship nativity formations, as prior literature would suggest (Grossbard and Vernon, 2020). Instead, it seems that the group with notable disadvantage in mixed-nativity partnerships are women in mixed-nativity cohabitations. Even when compared with their married female counterparts in the same relationship nativity formation, these women are expected to do a greater proportion of



housework than their partners. This finding is unusual in light of prior literature which finds cohabiting unions tend to have greater gender egalitarianism than marriages (Bianchi et al., 2014; Kalmijn, 2007). Though native-born women in cohabiting mixed-nativity unions spend less time on housework than their married female peers in the same relationship nativity formation, their married peers benefit from relative time spent on housework by male partners.

My study has several notable strengths such as a representative sample of the noninstitutionalized United States population aged 15 and over, ensuring a high degree of generalizability. The American Time Use Survey is also regarded as a highly reliable account of time-use data, ensuring high validity. There are also some important limitations. The American Time Use Survey does not provide access to couple-level data. However, since the sample is nationally representative, the sampled individuals are assumed to be representative of the respondents' partners. Future research could use qualitative or mixed-methods approaches to gain clearer insight into this couple-level division of housework. A further limitation is that quantitative methods fundamentally lend to the examination of outcomes and mediating factors, rather than explanatory factors. This, again, points to the need for future research, perhaps using qualitative methods, which explores the nuanced decision-making process underpinning the gendered division of housework within respondents' relationships. Future research could also seek to examine the division of housework among LGBTQIA2S+ mixed nativity couples.

Despite limitations, my study finds that mixed-nativity unions, both married and cohabiting, operate as a "middle ground" between same-nativity native-native unions and same-nativity immigrant-immigrant unions. By examining married and cohabiting couples separately, it becomes clear that there are a variety of important differences between same-nativity relationships and mixed-nativity relationships. Broadly, I find evidence to support the persistence

of a “second shift” among women, including those in mixed-nativity unions, which ought to be taken seriously when considering the state of gender equality in contemporary America.

**Table 1.** Characteristics of the Analytic Sample by Gender, American Time Use Survey, 2008-2019.

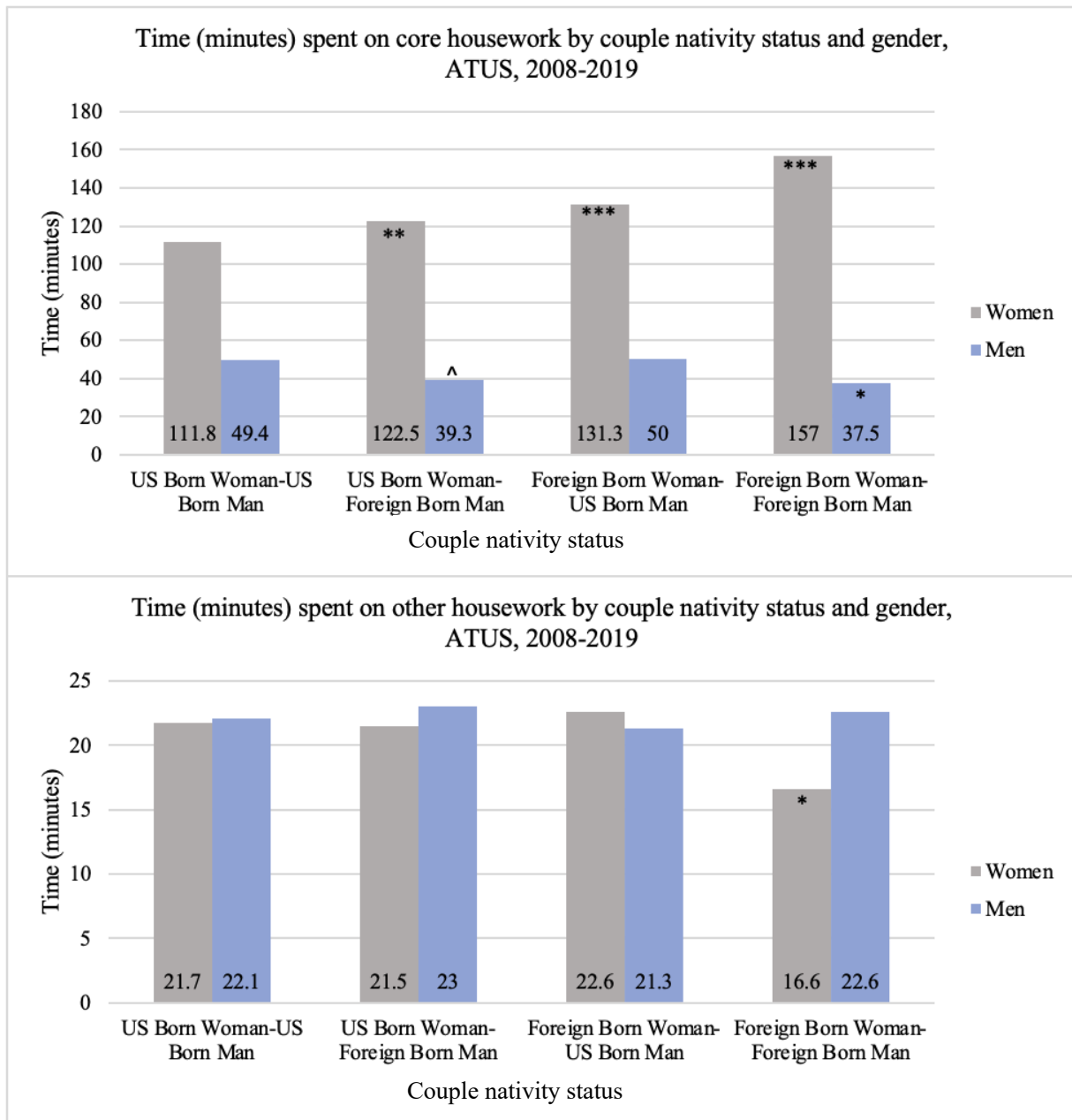
	Women <i>N</i> = 30,758	Men <i>N</i> = 27,051	Women vs. Men <sup>a</sup> <i>N</i> = 57,809
<b>Key Dependent Variables</b>			
Minutes on Total Housework on Diary Day	145.2	64.2	***
Minutes on Core Housework on Diary Day	(133.8)	(94.8)	
	125.5	41.5	***
	(124.3)	(70.4)	
Minutes on Other Housework on Diary Day	21.7	20.6	
	(53.4)	(56.2)	
<b>Key Independent Variables</b>			
Sex	46.9	53.1	
Marital Status			
Married	92.3	92.8	
Cohabiting	7.7	7.2	
Couple Nativity Formation <sup>b</sup>			
USB Woman-USB Man	77.4	77.4	
USB Woman-FB Man	3.6	3.6	
FB Woman-USB Man	4.2	4.2	
FB Woman-FB Man	14.8	14.8	
<b>Socioeconomic Variables (Controls)</b>			
Family Income			
Less than \$20,000	7.3	6.1	
\$20,000-\$49,999.99	22.6	22.9	
\$50,000-\$74,499.99	19.9	20.7	
\$75,000-\$149,999.99	33.3	32.8	
\$150,000 or more	14.1	15.1	
Missing	2.8	2.5	
Respondent Educational Attainment			***
Less than High School	7.4	9.2	
High School	21.3	24.4	
Some College	15.5	15.8	
Associate Degree	11.4	8.8	
BA or Higher	44.5	41.9	
Spouse Educational Attainment			***
Less than High School	8.9	7.9	
High School	24.7	21.4	
Some College	15.9	14.3	
Associate Degree	9.9	11.9	
BA or Higher	40.7	44.5	
Respondent Educational Attainment			***

Employed	68.2	86.8	
Unemployed	31.8	13.2	
Spouse Employment Status			***
Employed	66.1	84.2	
Unemployed	33.9	15.8	
<b>Demographic Variables (controls)</b>			
Respondent Race/Ethnicity (percent)			**
NH White	69.4	70.7	
NH Black	8.1	7.5	
Hispanic	15.5	15.0	
NS Asian	5.5	5.1	
Other	1.5	1.6	
Spouse Race/Ethnicity (percent)			*
NH White	70.2	69.6	
NH Black	6.9	8.6	
Hispanic	15.8	16.1	
NS Asian	5.9	4.9	
Other	1.2	0.8	
Respondent Birthplace (percent)			
U.S.	80.0	80.7	
Other North America	0.4	0.4	
Central America/Caribbean	8.9	9.1	
South America	1.5	1.5	
Europe	2.4	1.9	
Asia	5.8	5.1	
Africa	0.9	1.2	
Oceania	0.1	0.1	
Respondent Age in Years	42.8	44.1	***
	(11.0)	(10.7)	
<b>Diary Day (controls)</b>			
Percent Weekend Day	50.3	50.7	
Percent Holiday	1.5	1.4	
<b>Children Present (controls)</b>			
Presence of Household Child(ren)			
Yes	66.3	68.4	
No	33.8	31.7	

*Note:* Figures are weighted means (standard deviations) for continuous variables and weighted percentages for categorical variables.

<sup>a</sup>Results of *t* test that tests for differences between men and women. <sup>b</sup>For the sake of efficiency, the following acronyms are used: USB = United States born; FB = foreign born.

\**p* < 0.1 \*\**p* < 0.05 \*\*\**p* < 0.001



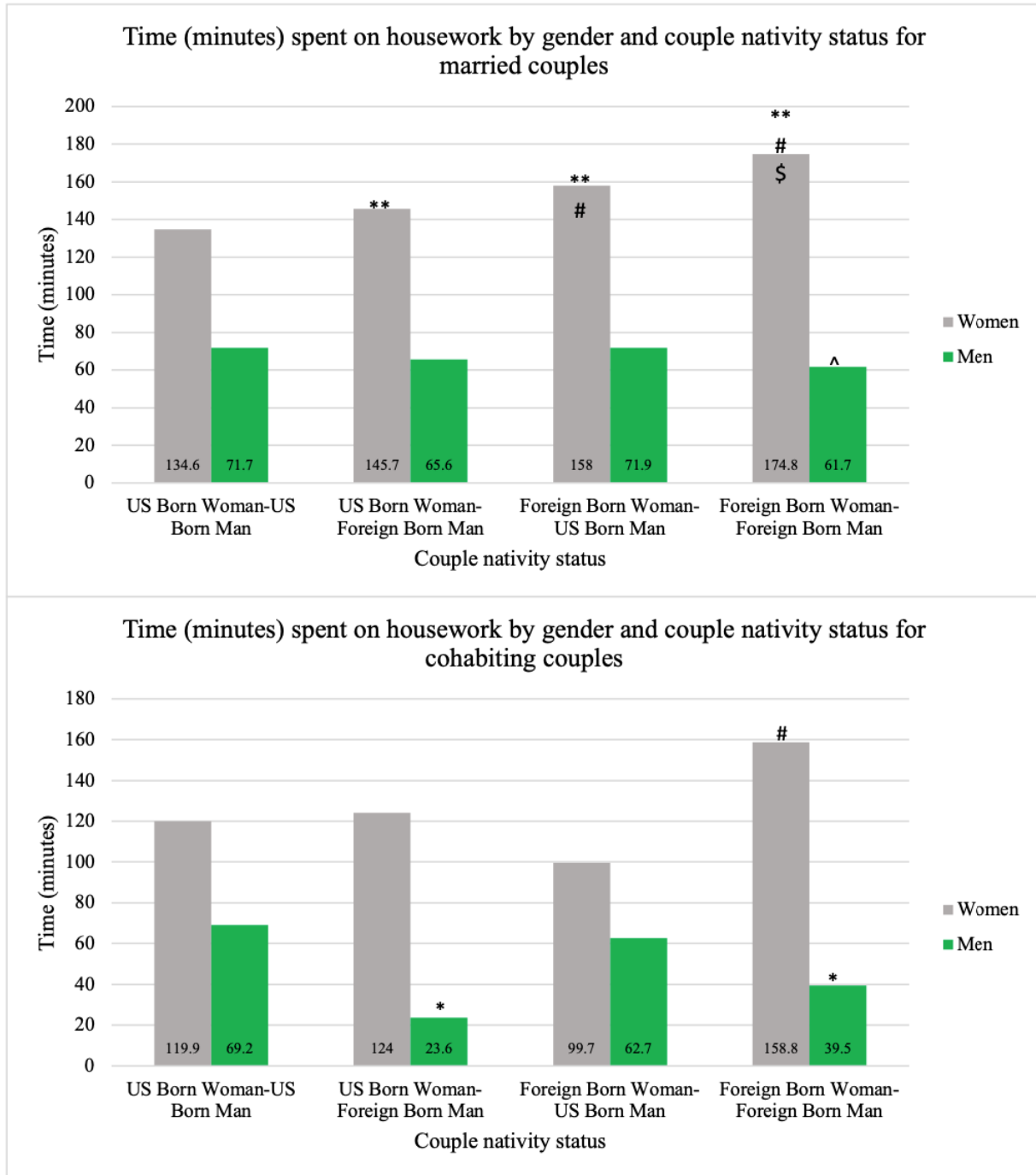
**Figure 1.** Charts portraying the overall effects of an interaction between relationship nativity status and gender with symbols to denote statistically significant difference from the reference. Models control for socioeconomic variables, demographic variables, diary day and children present.

\*\*\*Statistically significantly different at  $p < 0.001$  from same sex peers in US born woman-US born man relationships (reference)

\*\*Statistically significantly different at  $p < 0.01$  from individuals in the reference category

\*Statistically significantly different at  $p < 0.05$  from individuals in the reference category

^Statistically significantly different at  $p < 0.1$  from individuals in the reference category



**Figure 2.** Charts portraying the overall effects of an interaction between relationship nativity status and female, stratified by marital status with symbols to denote statistically significant difference from the reference. Models control for socioeconomic variables, demographic variables, diary day and children present.

\*\*Statistically significantly different at  $p < 0.001$  from same sex peers in US born woman-US born man relationships (reference)

\*Statistically significantly different at  $p < 0.05$  from individuals in the reference category

^Statistically significantly different at  $p < 0.1$  from individuals in the reference category

# Statistically significantly different at  $p < 0.001$  from same sex peers in US born woman-foreign born man relationships

\$ Statistically significantly different at  $p < 0.001$  from same sex peers in foreign born woman-US born man relationships

**Table 2.** Gender gap (women/men) for time spent on total housework by couple nativity status and marital status

	US Born Woman-US Born Man	US Born Woman-Foreign Born Man	Foreign Born Woman-US Born Man	Foreign Born Woman- Foreign Born Man
Married	2.3	3.0	2.6	4.1
Cohabiting	2.0	6.6	2.3	6.8

*Note:* Gender gap calculated by dividing women's time on total housework by men's time on total housework, using the values shown in Figure 2 from an interaction between sex and couple nativity status.

## Appendix

**Table A1.** Results of Poisson regression calculating time (minutes) spent on core and other housework by couple nativity status and gender, ATUS, 2008-2019

Relationship Nativity Status	Time Spent on Core Housework (in minutes)		Time Spent on Other Housework (in minutes)	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Native Born Woman-Native Born Man	108.3	44.9	21.5	22.4
Native Born Woman-Foreign Born Man	116.5	38.3	21.1	23.0
Foreign Born Woman-Native Born Man	122.8	46.6	22.4	21.7
Foreign Born Woman-Foreign Born Man	139.3	38.9	14.6	22.6

**Table A2.** Results of Poisson regression calculating time (minutes) spent on total housework by couple nativity status, gender and marital status, ATUS, 2008-2019

Relationship Nativity Status	Married		Cohabiting	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Native Born Woman-Native Born Man	134.0	69.4	120.0	67.5
Native Born Woman-Foreign Born Man	145.0	63.9	124.1	32.3
Foreign Born Woman-Native Born Man	156.5	69.7	100.4	58.9
Foreign Born Woman-Foreign Born Man	169.4	58.6	144.5	46.8

**Table A3.** Gender gap (women/men) for time spent on total housework by couple nativity status and marital status

	Native Born Woman-Native Born Man	Native Born Woman-Foreign Born Man	Foreign Born Woman-Native Born Man	Foreign Born Woman-Foreign Born Man
Married	1.9	2.3	2.2	3.0
Cohabiting	1.8	3.8	1.7	3.1

*Note:* Gender gap calculated by dividing women's time on total housework by men's time on total housework, using the values shown in Table A2 from an interaction between sex and couple nativity status using Poisson regression.



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