

Joint and Separated Lifestyles in Couple Relationships

A survey among 1,523 married and cohabiting couples in the Netherlands is used to describe the extent to which couples have lifestyles characterized by separate leisure pursuits. Four types of leisure are examined: visiting friends and family, entertainment, outdoor recreation, and indoor leisure. For these activities, we find that contemporary couples cannot be characterized as highly individualized. Next, we analyze why some couples have a more separated lifestyle than others. Hypotheses are developed about the life cycle of the couple, the couple's work life, social and cultural homogamy, and value orientations. Multivariate analyses show that life cycle factors are an important determinant of separate lifestyles, whereas evidence for the role of values and homogamy is modest. We also present evidence revealing the time constraints that children and work schedules pose for realizing a joint lifestyle, but we do not find that spouses in dual-earner couples generally operate more separately than do other couples.

Dependencies in marriage assume different forms. If there is a rigid division of labor in the household—with husbands working for pay and wives fully responsible for domestic labor—spouses are dependent on each other in an economic sense. If

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men and women are living together as a married couple, they are dependent in a legal sense as well. And if husbands and wives have children together, they are dependent socially, that is, dependent on each other through a shared connection to a third person. Another way in which husbands and wives can be tied to each other lies in the way they arrange their day-to-day lives. If husbands and wives engage in shared leisure activities and often go out together, and if they have many friends in common and spend most of their income on collective rather than private consumption, the couple has what we may call a joint lifestyle. Joint lifestyles create dependencies because the more jointly the spouses operate in their free time, the more their well-being is dependent on the partner. Joint lifestyles also tie couples together because they raise the costs of a possible breakup. Spouses who are used to spending most of their leisure time together may miss these shared experiences in the event their marriage dissolves and couples with common friends may lose a greater part of their network after a divorce than other couples (Milardo, 1987). In other words, by developing a joint lifestyle, couples produce a set of goods that are directly connected to their marriage and that primarily yield benefits to that specific relationship. Like children, shared activities, mutual friends and collective consumption in marriage function as a form of "marital capital" (Becker, Landes, & Michael, 1977; Hill, 1988).

Using the notion of joint versus separated lifestyles, this study examines the leisure activities of 1,523 married and unmarried cohabiting couples in The Netherlands. In this study, both partners were asked to report on a series of leisure activi-

ties, ranging from visiting friends and parents, to attending a theater and going on vacation. For each of these activities, persons were asked to indicate how often they participate, as well as how often they participate together with their spouses. The first goal of our analysis is descriptive. We assess whether the lifestyles of couples in a modern society can be characterized as joint or separated. Our second goal is explanatory. We try to understand why some couples develop a joint lifestyle, whereas others maintain more separated lifestyles. To understand such differences, we consider the role of the life cycle of the couple, the type of work spouses do, the degree to which they resemble each other in a cultural sense (homogamy), and the values to which they are oriented. We develop hypotheses about the possible effects of these characteristics and test the hypotheses using multivariate regression analyses in which indicators of separated lifestyles are the dependent variables.

Our analysis is motivated by two more general considerations. First, several authors in the past have argued that family life is characterized by an increasing emphasis on individual autonomy, privacy and self-realization (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985; Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983; Bumpass, 1990; Lesthaeghe & Meekers, 1986). Although individualism is seldom clearly defined, evidence for the rise of modern individualism is typically sought in patterns of demographic change, such as declines in fertility and increases in divorce or in value shifts, such as changing attitudes about marriage and the family. We believe the lifestyles of couples are an additional indicator of individualism in marriage. Leisure constitutes a large part of the lives that couples are leading, and the way husbands and wives spend their free time should thus provide important clues about the importance that people attach to privacy and autonomy in their relationship. Although we do not present trend data, the indicators we use do allow us to say something about the degree of individualism among contemporary couples.

A second motivation for our study is that not much is yet known about the causes of joint or separated lifestyles. Concepts related to our notion of separated lifestyles have been studied before, particularly in the literature on marital companionship, but most earlier studies have been concerned with the question of whether joint lifestyles affect the quality of a relationship. Several studies have shown that spending more time together in

marriage leads to an increase in marital satisfaction and stability (Hill, 1988; Reissman, Aron, & Bergen, 1993). Related studies have examined whether joint activities serve as a variable that mediates the effect of other marital characteristics on stability. Some have been concerned with the question of whether having children decreases marital satisfaction through a reduction in jointness (McHale & Huston, 1985). Others have examined whether wife's employment decreases stability by reducing the amount of time spouses spend together (Booth, Johnson, White, & Edwards, 1984; Locksley, 1980; Simpson & England, 1981). Authors generally do not regard joint lifestyles as interesting in their own right, and hence few studies have treated joint lifestyles as a dependent variable. Given the fact that the lifestyles of couples have significant effects on marital satisfaction and stability, it is also important to examine in a more systematic fashion which couples develop a more separated lifestyle than others.

BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES

We treat lifestyles as a continuum, based on the degree to which husband and wife engage in leisure activities together. Following previous definitions of the lifestyle concept (Sobel, 1983), the items we consider should be concerned with behavior, they need to be subject to a certain degree of choice, and should not have an instrumental connotation. We therefore focus on leisure activities and social contacts and exclude the division of labor and casual or routine behavior. The activities can be indoor or outdoor, they can be frequent or infrequent, and they can involve the couple only or other persons, such as friends or children. Our concept of joint lifestyles resembles the concept of marital companionship that is often used in family sociology (e.g., Locksley, 1980) but does not include affective aspects of the relationship that are often included in the concept of companionship (e.g., showing affection, doing appreciated acts for the other). Our concept is also related to the notion of network overlap in close relationships, but we focus more on visiting patterns and interaction than on the actual composition of couples' social networks (Kim & Stiff, 1991; Milardo & Helms-Erikson, 1999).

Marital companionship, network overlap, and joint lifestyles have mostly been examined in relation to the quality or stability of a relationship (e.g., Booth et al., 1984; Hill, 1988; Kim & Stiff,

1991; Locksley, 1980; McHale & Huston, 1985; Reissman et al., 1993; Rogers & Amato, 1997; Simpson & England, 1981). Studies examining aspects of jointness as a dependent variable are scarcer and have not yet presented consistent evidence on the determinants of jointness. Having children appears to reduce the degree of companionship in marriage (White, 1983), but there are also studies showing no effect (Kingston & Nock, 1987). Employment of the wife reduces time spent together when time budget data are analyzed (Horrell, 1994; Kingston & Nock, 1987) but has no negative effects when measures of marital companionship are used (White, 1983). Evidence on how shared activities change over the course of marriage is inconclusive as well. Kingston and Nock (1987) found a positive effect of relationship duration, whereas Miller (1976) found a U-shaped relationship—much companionship in the early and later stages of marriage and little companionship in the middle stages. Socioeconomic status, finally, appears to have a positive effect on joint lifestyles (Kingston & Nock; Miller), as was already suggested by the early impressionistic work of Bott (1957).

Hypotheses

To develop hypotheses, we start by assuming that the way couples organize their leisure depends in part on the costs and benefits involved in developing a joint lifestyle. The main reason why couples have a joint lifestyle lies in the pleasure partners derive from doing things together. How much they enjoy doing things together varies across couples, and such differences depend on factors such as the length of the relationship, the degree to which partners resemble each other, and the value orientations of a couple. Even if couples want to engage in shared activities, they may not always do so because of the costs involved in having a joint lifestyle. These costs depend on the time constraints couples face and perhaps also on the risks of becoming too dependent on one's spouse. In the following, we use the concepts of costs and benefits in a heuristic fashion to formulate hypotheses about the influence of four characteristics on lifestyles: (a) life cycle factors, (b) work characteristics, (c) homogamy, and (d) value orientations.

Life cycle effects on lifestyles. There are several reasons why the degree to which husbands and wives share activities may change over the course

of the relationship. One reason is that the benefits of engaging in activities together change over time. In the early years of marriage, joint activities are a way to get to know the other person, which increases the benefits of joint leisure. Of course, a period of dating preceding the actual start of cohabitation or marriage serves a similar purpose. In fact, it seems reasonable to assume that most couples start to develop their marital lifestyles when they are still dating and anticipating a union. Because the information function of shared leisure activities will diminish as partners learn more about each other, we expect that the number of shared activities will decline over time, especially in the earlier stages of the relationship.

In the early stages of the relationship, we also expect to find differences between married and cohabiting couples. For most couples, at least in The Netherlands, cohabitation serves as a trial stage before marriage. Research shows that a large fraction of cohabiting couples is either separated or married after living together for a few years (Manting, 1994; Smock & Manning, 1997). As discussed before, developing a joint lifestyle can in part be seen as an investment in the relationship that people lose when the relationship dissolves. People may therefore shy away from building a common network of friends and may find it important to retain their own leisure pursuits when they are not yet certain about their partner and their relationship. Becoming highly dependent on a partner is risky and increases the costs of developing a joint lifestyle. We therefore expect people who cohabit to have a more separated lifestyle than people who are married. This hypothesis only applies when holding constant the length of the relationship because cohabiting relationships are younger on average than married relationships.

Another reason why lifestyles may change over the course of the marriage lies in the birth and presence of children. Many of the leisure activities in our concept of lifestyles occur outdoors. Children serve as a time constraint, and they particularly limit the opportunities for spouses to be away from home at the same time. When partners have children to take care of, they therefore will find it difficult to go out together or to visit mutual friends (McHale & Huston, 1985). We would expect this effect to be weaker for teenage children than for younger children because teenagers generally operate more independently from their parents. The presence of children probably constrains outdoor activities more than indoor activities, and we therefore expect the effect of children on the

relative amount of separate leisure to be stronger for outdoor than for indoor activities.

Work life effects on lifestyles. An important reason why work and leisure are related lies in the role of time constraints. Although couples in which the wife works do not necessarily have less overlapping spare time, they generally rely more on evenings and weekends to do household chores. This will make it more difficult for them to participate in common leisure time activities, and this is especially true if such activities are outdoors (Kingston & Nock, 1987). Next to employment per se, the employment schedules of spouses make a difference. When the occupation of a person requires working outside regular hours—at nights, in evenings, and in weekends—it will be more difficult for the couple to spend time together (White, 1983). After all, joint leisure activities such as visiting friends or eating out together, typically rely on the time couples have available in weekends and on evenings.

Effects of employment may not be the same for the two partners. Suppose one partner—say, the wife—takes up a job, which reduces the amount of free time she has available. There are several ways in which she subsequently can change her leisure behavior. First, she may spend her reduced leisure hours in the same way as before: the same fraction of her new spare time together with her husband, and the same fraction of this time alone. For the husband, this implies an increase in the degree to which he spends time alone. This scenario is neutral for ego (i.e., the wife), but not for the partner. A second, alternative response to entering the labor market is that the wife spends a larger share of her reduced leisure hours with her husband. In this case, her new job comes at the expense of her separate leisure time, whereas for the husband, it does not change the fraction of time he spends alone. This scenario is neutral for the partner, but not for ego. It is likely, of course, that the reallocation of free time lies somewhere in between these scenarios. We therefore expect that employment has either a zero or a negative effect on ego's separate leisure time and either a positive or zero effect on the partner's separate leisure time.

Homogamy effects on lifestyles. The third factor we consider is the degree to which partners resemble one another, what is usually called homogamy. Many kinds of similarities may be considered, but we limit ourselves to social and cultural similar-

ties. The most obvious reason why homogamy affects a couple's lifestyle lies in the benefits that common activities may bring. After all, whether couples enjoy a joint lifestyle highly depends on the degree to which they share tastes and values. Visiting the friends of one's partner, for example, will be less satisfying if a person likes his or her own friends better than the partner's friends, and going on outings together may not be a pleasure for both partners if they have dissimilar tastes. More generally, one would expect partners to have a more joint lifestyle if they are married homogamously. We have to keep in mind, however, that the reverse mechanism plays a role as well. Partners may not agree on many things at first, but by spending time together, they may become more similar to each other. People can learn to like the friends of their partner and they can learn to like each other's hobbies as well. In other words, a joint lifestyle may also lead to cultural similarity later on in the relationship. We will not examine this reverse effect and focus on the hypothesis that homogamy in the beginning of the relationship increases the level of jointness later on in the marriage.

Value orientations and lifestyles. Although a joint lifestyle may yield benefits, not all couples have the same preferences in this respect, and such preferences depend in part on a couple's value orientation. In research on marriage and the family, a distinction is often made between traditional and modern attitudes toward family life. In the present context, we consider two dimensions of modernity: an emphasis on individual autonomy and an emphasis on gender equality. These dimensions are correlated but may have opposing effects on the degree to which husbands and wives engage in shared activities. Couples who emphasize values such as independence and autonomy will develop a more separate lifestyle in marriage (Lesthaeghe & Meekers, 1986). They generally find it important to establish their own social lives and will therefore keep some of their friends away from their spouses, and will enjoy spending part of their leisure time alone. Couples with traditional views on gender roles, on the other hand, may find joint activities less appealing as well. Such couples will regard the separation of male and female spheres as natural and will have more gender-specific tastes and preferences than other couples. Traditional views on gender roles may therefore result in husbands engaging in "male" activities without their wives, and wives engaging

in “female” activities without their husband, (White, 1983). In sum, separate lifestyles will be more common among couples with modern attitudes toward individual autonomy, but they will also be more common among couples with traditional views on gender roles.

DATA, MEASURES, AND MODELS

Data

We analyze data from the survey *Households in The Netherlands*, which is based on a probability sample from the noninstitutionalized population in The Netherlands in 1995 (Weesie, Kalmijn, Bernasco, & Giesen, 1995). Information was obtained through a combination of personal interviews and self-administered questionnaires. Self-administered questionnaires were used for questions on more sensitive aspects of family life, including the topics we are concerned with here. In married and cohabiting couples, both partners were interviewed, and both were required to fill out a questionnaire. The median length of the couple interview was approximately 2 hours. The cooperation rate was 39% (the number of households interviewed out of the households reached). The main reason why this rate is low is that both partners were interviewed. If only one of the partners was willing to be interviewed, we did not interview the household at all, leading to a lower cooperation rate at the household level than is normal in face-to-face interview surveys. For our analysis, we selected all married and cohabiting (heterosexual) couples in which at least one partner is between 18 and 64 years old ($N = 1523$). We caution that there are two ways in which our data may lead to an overestimation of jointness. First, because we required the cooperation of both partners, one could argue that couples with a separated lifestyle are less likely to participate in a survey. Second, separated lifestyles tend to be associated with the likelihood of divorce (Hill, 1988), so that in the older marriage cohorts, the most separated lifestyles are perhaps underrepresented.

Measures

To describe the lifestyles of couples, we used 12 items that represent four types of leisure activities: (a) social contacts (visiting friends, acquaintances, and neighbors; visiting parents, siblings, and other family members; talking to best friend; talking to

second best friend); (b) entertainment (visiting a bar or restaurant; visiting a theater, a play, a concert, or the movies); (c) outdoor leisure (practicing organized sports; other outdoor recreation such as jogging, walking, hiking, fishing, or sailing; participating in community organizations; going on vacation), (d) indoor leisure (doing hobbies at home; watching television, reading, or listening to music).

In measuring companionship, earlier studies often use absolute rather than relative measures. Researchers typically ask respondents how often they go out together, without relating this to how often respondents go out without their spouses. This means that couples who jointly participate in leisure activities are contrasted to couples who participate separately and couples who do not participate at all. Such an approach may bias effects on joint lifestyles if a variable also affects differences in leisure activities per se. The better educated, for example, are generally more active in their spare time (Dardis, Soberon-Ferrer, & Patro, 1994). A positive effect of education on joint lifestyles may thus reflect a preference for an active or outgoing lifestyle rather than a preference for a joint lifestyle.

We use a relative perspective on joint and separated lifestyles. We first asked respondents to assess how often they engaged in a given activity and then asked them to assess what portion of this time they participated together with their spouses. Respondents could choose among four answering categories, which we treat as scores on an interval variable (in parentheses): *always with partner* (1), *mostly with partner* (2), *seldom with partner* (3), and *never with partner* (4). For each of the four dimensions of leisure, we subsequently constructed scales by taking the average score of the items on separate participation pertaining to that dimension. In the same way, we constructed an overall scale, which is the average of all the items. Averages were taken for those activities in which a person participated at least once a year, so that the number of items on which the scale is based varies across respondents. Because husbands and wives differ in the types of activities they engage in alone, we constructed separate measures to characterize the lifestyles of husbands and wives. Our scales do not take into account that some activities are done more frequently than others (e.g., attending a theater versus practicing sports), nor do they reflect that some activities are more time intensive than others (e.g., visiting friends versus going on

vacation). This can only be done properly with time budget data.

To assess the role of the life cycle, we rely on cross-sectional comparisons between couples. We use three life cycle variables in our analysis. We first include the length of the relationship (and the length squared), which is measured by the number of years since the couple first began living together (married or unmarried). We also include a dummy variable for whether the couple is currently cohabiting (instead of being married) and three dummy variables indicating the age and presence of children: whether the youngest child is 0–4, 5–12, or 13 years or over. Couples without children living at home serve as the reference group. Note that the cross-sectional comparisons we use are a less conclusive design than following couples over time (a panel design).

The work life of the couple is measured by including two dummy variables indicating whether the wife works part time or full time and a single dummy variable for whether the husband works for pay. To measure employment schedules, we rely on information about the type of occupations of husband and wife. Using a large nationally representative labor market survey, the *Labor Force Survey 1992* (collected by Statistics Netherlands), we first computed occupation-specific percentages of men or women who work irregular hours (on weekday nights and weekends). This occupational scale ranges from low scores of about 10–20 for teachers and secretaries, to high scores of 90–100 for restaurant keepers and mail distribution clerks. Subsequently, we assigned these occupational scale values to the husbands and wives in our sample, based on the occupation at which they work. If a respondent does not work for pay, we assigned the average score of the scale. Because we also include a dummy variable for whether the respondent works for pay, the effects of the occupational scales are not affected by the imputation one chooses for nonworking respondents. The imputation only affects the effect of the dummy variable for work. In our case, this effect should be interpreted as the difference between nonworking respondents on the one hand and respondents who work in an average occupation on the other.

To measure homogamy, we use three variables that are generally considered important in the assortative mating process: similarity with respect to age, education, and political and religious values. The first two indicators are based on husband and wife reports about their age and completed edu-

cation. The third indicator is based on reports by husband and wife about their similarity in political attitudes and in religious values at the beginning of the relationship. To combine the last two items, we computed the mean (for men and women separately).

Orientation toward gender roles is measured in two ways. We first asked husbands and wives for their opinion on gender roles in society using four items (whether women are better suited for childrearing, whether men should be the prime breadwinner in the home, whether it is acceptable for women to be supervisors in the workplace, and whether the responsibilities of men and women should be based on custom and tradition). For each item, respondents were asked to give their opinion using a standard 5-point scale (ranging from “totally disagree,” to “totally agree”). We constructed two scales, one for men and one for women. Scales were constructed by standardizing items and taking the weighted average. The weights were derived from a factor analysis, using principal components and a forced single factor solution. The factor loadings range from .63 to .78 for husbands and from .64 to .70 for wives.

Our second indicator of gender roles is the degree to which husbands and wives were exposed to same-sex settings when they were adolescents. We expect people who have been socialized in same-sex settings to have a more separated lifestyle in marriage. To measure this, we use questions about the approximate sex composition of three settings in which persons were involved when they were young: voluntary associations, high school, and the first job. Respondents had to indicate on a 5-point scale what the relative number of men (or women) was in each of the three settings (school, work, associations). To construct a scale, we standardized the items and took the average (using factor loadings as weights). The factor loadings here are not high (ranging from .15 to .78), showing that the three settings are not very similar with respect to their sex composition.

Orientation toward individualism is measured indirectly by assessing whether people had been exposed to lifestyles that reflect individualistic norms and values in the past. To measure this, we include a variable indicating how many years the husband and wife had lived on their own before they married and a variable indicating whether people had ever been divorced. We expect that people who have been living alone for some time, either before marriage or after their first marriage, will be more able to do things on their own, will

TABLE 1. MEANS OF INDEPENDENT VARIABLES FOR COUPLES, HUSBANDS, AND WIVES

Description of Variables	Couple	Husbands	Wives
Years since beginning of marriage or cohabitation (in decades)	1.37		
Years squared	2.99		
Cohabiting	.15		
Youngest child at home 0-4	.20		
Youngest child at home 5-12	.21		
Youngest child at home 13 or over	.17		
Employed 1-32 hours per week		—	.38
Employed 33 hours per week or more		—	.18
Employed		.79	—
Scale for irregular hours in occupation ^a		48.58	48.10
Absolute age difference husband and wife ($x - 1$)	-3.07		
Absolute educational difference husband and wife ($x - 1$)	-0.73		
Similarity of religious and political attitudes in dating period (scale) ^b	0		
Exposure to same-sex settings when young (scale) ^b		.00	.00
Traditional gender-role attitudes (scale) ^b		.00	.00
Number of years lived alone before marriage or cohabitation		4.42	4.06
Ever divorced		.05	.05
Year of birth		53.44	57.82
Level of education completed (1 = elementary, 5 = university)		2.88	2.71
N	1,523	1,523	1,523

^a For persons who are not employed, the average is used.

^b Transformed into z scores.

have learned to appreciate their autonomy, and will therefore be less willing to share all their spare time with their spouses (Goldscheider & Waite, 1991).

In all models, we control for husbands' and wives' year of birth and level of completed education. The means of our independent variables are presented in Table 1.

Models

We first estimate regression models for our overall scale of separateness. These models are estimated separately for husbands and wives, allowing us to assess whether the predictor variables differentially affect men's and women's (relative) amounts of separate leisure. Second, we estimate our model for the four dimensions of leisure separately. These models allow us to assess whether marital and individual characteristics have differential effects on separated lifestyles, depending on the type of leisure we consider. In all models, we standardized both dependent and independent variables (except for binary variables and duration). As a result, the coefficients are identical to standardized coefficients.

The regression models were estimated with a technique known as seemingly unrelated regression analysis (SUR; see, for example, Pindyck & Rubinfeld, 1991). Rather than solving a set of separate regression equations one by one, this tech-

nique solves the set of equations simultaneously to take into account covariances between the error terms of the equations. SUR analysis is an appropriate technique for research problems that include several regression equations with partially overlapping predictor variables. The main reason to use SUR here, rather than ordinary least squares regression, is that the simultaneous estimation (by maximum likelihood) yields covariance structures that allow us to test cross-equations differences between coefficients. More specifically, SUR analysis allows us to test whether effects of a given variable are greater for wives' than for husbands' separate leisure and different for different dimensions of leisure.

RESULTS

In this section, we first answer our descriptive question by discussing the degree to which husbands and wives operate separately in their relationship (Table 2). Next, we test our hypotheses by discussing the results of our regression analyses for the overall scale of separate leisure activities (Table 3) and for the four dimensions of leisure separately (Tables 4 and 5).

The Degree of Separateness

Table 2 shows that couples generally spend a great deal of time together, although it makes a differ-

TABLE 2. PARTICIPATION IN LEISURE ACTIVITIES WITH SPOUSE: WEIGHTED PERCENTAGES AND MEANS FOR MARRIED AND COHABITING HUSBANDS (H) AND WIVES (W)^a

		Always With Spouse (1)	Mostly With Spouse (2)	Seldom With Spouse (3)	Never With Spouse (4)	M	N	t test ^b
Visiting friends	H	27	66	7	0	1.82	1,447	-10.3*
	W	19	65	16	1	2.01	1,455	
Visiting own parents	H	37	60	3	0	1.7	1,431	-7.7*
	W	27	65	8	1	1.87	1,449	
Talking with best friend	H	10	69	20	2	2.16	1,332	-10.4*
	W	4	56	38	2	2.38	1,416	
Talking with second best friend	H	9	66	24	2	2.18	1,109	-7.2*
	W	5	54	37	3	2.38	1,207	
Visiting theater, going to movies	H	58	36	6	1	1.47	1,029	-5.7*
	W	47	42	10	2	1.64	1,031	
Going to a bar or restaurant	H	44	44	10	1	1.7	1,309	4.5*
	W	47	47	5	0	1.59	1,301	
Organized sports	H	13	19	37	31	2.92	894	-2.0*
	W	14	19	22	45	3.04	849	
Walking, hiking, individual sports	H	13	27	28	32	2.85	979	6.6*
	W	22	36	20	21	2.5	829	
Community organizations	H	14	24	35	28	2.79	518	-1.3
	W	15	26	17	42	2.88	469	
Hobbies at home	H	8	24	44	25	2.88	1,197	-7.0*
	W	7	15	37	42	3.18	1,152	
Going on vacation	H	86	13	1	0	1.15	1,337	-3.5*
	W	82	16	1	1	1.18	1,343	
Watching TV, reading, listening to music	H	23	70	7	0	1.85	1,474	-4.7*
	W	19	71	10	0	1.94	1,477	

^aPercentages and means refer to persons who participate at least once a year.

^bt test for difference between husband and wife (paired observations). Based on couples in which both spouses participate at least once a year. Items treated as interval variables and coded from least separated (*always with spouse* = 1) to most separated (*never with spouse* = 4).

* $p < .05$ (two-tailed).

TABLE 3. SEEMINGLY UNRELATED REGRESSION ESTIMATES OF SEPARATE LEISURE ACTIVITIES OF WIVES AND HUSBANDS: UNSTANDARDIZED REGRESSION COEFFICIENTS AND TESTS OF CROSS-EQUATION DIFFERENCES

	Wife	Husband	<i>t</i> test ^c
Duration relationship	.402**	.492**	.543
Duration squared	-.103**	-.110**	.841
Cohabiting	.102	.208*	.350
Children 0-4	.178*	.307**	.196
Children 5-12	.218*	.242**	.811
Children 13+	.059	.021	.713
Wife employed part time	-.062	.111	.014
Wife employed full time	-.202*	.102	.002
Wife irregular hours ^a	-.050*	.009	.051
Husband employed	.065	-.168*	.007
Husband irregular hours ^a	.086**	.009	.011
Age homogamy ^a	.018	.071*	.126
Educational homogamy ^a	-.020	-.033	.674
Political and religious homogamy ^a	-.097**	-.099**	.954
Same-gender settings ^{ab}	.041	.008	.356
Traditional gender roles ^{ab}	-.042	.027	.055
Years lived alone ^{ab}	-.026	.075*	.015
Divorced ^b	.006	.246	.166
Year of birth ^{ab}	.060	.160*	.332
Education ^{ab}	.155**	.103**	.151
Constant	-.342*	-.437**	.571
R ²	.112	.086	
N	1,499	1,499	

^aVariable is standardized.

^bLabels refer to individual-level variables (e.g., *Education* is wife's education in equation *Wife*).

^c*p* value of *t* test for equality of coefficients in equations *Wife* and *Husband*.

p* < .05. *p* < .01 (two-tailed).

ence which type of activity is considered. Of the four dimensions of leisure, entertainment is clearly the least separated. About half of the husbands and wives “always” go to a theater or the movies together and another 40% do so “mostly” with their spouse. Visiting patterns are also not very separated. About 20 to 30% of wives and husbands “always” visit friends together, and another 65% do so “mostly.” Visiting one’s own family shows the same level of jointness, although talking to one’s best friend seems to be more separated. Outdoor leisure activities are more separated, with the exception of going on vacation. For example, about 70% of the husbands and wives who practice organized sports do so “seldom” or “never” with their spouse. Indoor leisure activities reveal a mixed pattern: Hobbies at home are not often shared with the partner, whereas watching television or reading are activities spouses often report doing together. A possible reason why hobbies and sports are among the more separated activities is that men and women in general have different tastes in these domains.

Do men and women differ in how often they engage in individual activities? Even though the

absolute time husbands and wives spend in a certain activity together must be the same for male and female partners, individual reports on the relative degree of separateness need not be similar. We tested gender differences using a *t* test for paired observations (husband-wife reports). Although the distributions of these variables are skewed, the usual normality assumptions for *t* tests can be relaxed with our relatively large sample size. Table 2 shows that men more often visit a bar or restaurant without their wife and more often have their own (individual) sports. Most other items, however, reveal higher means for women. For example, women are more likely to visit friends and family alone, go to a theater without their husband, and have their own hobbies. Husbands’ lifestyles thus appear to more connected to the marriage than the lifestyles of wives, a finding which is most likely due to the constraints posed by work.

Determinants of Separateness of Husbands and Wives

Results of the regression analyses are presented in Table 3. A positive coefficient in Table 3 means

that higher values on the independent variable are associated with a more separated lifestyle. Our first hypothesis concerns a couple's life cycle. We test this hypothesis by comparing couples with and without children, couples in different stages of their relationship, and couples who are married or cohabiting. The regression results in Table 3 indicate that couples who have young children at home are generally less likely to share leisure activities. Both husbands and wives are more likely to engage in separate rather than joint activities when they have children under 12 at home. This finding supports the notion that children serve as a time constraint for couples to engage in joint activities. Older children do not have an effect, which is consistent with our hypothesis because the older the children are, the more independently they operate from their parents.

Our second indicator of a couple's life cycle is the length of the relationship. The relationship between separateness and duration follows an inverted U-shape. There is a positive main effect and a negative quadratic effect, showing that, for husbands as well as wives, the share of separate leisure activities increases in the first period of the relationship and decreases later. The turning point can be located at about 19 years for wives and about 23 years for husbands, which is late in the marriage (the average duration in the sample is 14 years). The duration effect is therefore dominated by an increase in separated activities, and this supports the argument that the benefits of engaging in shared activities are greater when couples are getting to know one another in the early stage of their relationship. Because the duration variables are highly correlated with year of birth, which is also included in the model, we also estimated a model without birth cohort to check whether the duration effect is robust. This specification shows the same pattern: a positive main effect and a negative quadratic effect.

A decrease in the amount of time couples spend separately later in the relationship was not expected, although such a "second honeymoon" effect has been mentioned in the literature before (Blood & Wolfe, 1960). Because we control for having children at home, we do not believe this effect can be linked to couples moving into the empty nest stage. A husband's early retirement from paid labor is unlikely to be an explanation either, because we control for whether he participates in the labor market. One interpretation lies in the aging process. As couples grow older, their networks generally become smaller (Marsden,

1987). Because separated lifestyles often rely on alternative leisure partners, the decline of network size with age may throw spouses back on each other. This may explain why later in the marriage, husbands and wives are less likely to go their separate ways. A second interpretation lies in selective attrition. Couples with separated lifestyles may be more likely to divorce, which can lead to lower levels of separateness among older couples as well.

A third aspect of a couple's life cycle is the cohabitation stage. In the model for the overall scale, we find a positive effect of cohabitation on the degree of separateness. The effect is statistically significant for husbands but not for wives, although the difference between the effects is not significant. Because these effects are controlled for relationship duration and several indicators of a couple's value orientation, they support our interpretation of cohabitation in terms of uncertainty, at least for men. Cohabiting couples are generally not yet certain about their relationship and hence may shy away from becoming too dependent on a partner by developing a common network and a joint lifestyle.

How does work affect a couple's lifestyle? We expected to find that employment has either a zero or a negative effect on ego's separate leisure time and either a positive or zero effect on the partner's separate leisure time. In Table 3, we first focus on the effects of a wife's employment. We see that a wife's full-time employment has a negative and significant effect on her own separate leisure, whereas it has a positive but nonsignificant effect on the separate leisure of her husband. Part-time work has similar but weaker effects. These results suggest that when a wife participates in the labor market, she spends a reduced portion of her own free time alone, whereas the relative amount of free time that her husband spends alone does not change. Hence, this outcome is neutral for the husband, but not for the wife. Effects of a husband's employment reveal the same pattern: a negative effect on his separate leisure and a positive but nonsignificant effect on his wife's separate leisure. Effects of the irregular working hours of the husband reveal a different pattern. When the husband works irregular hours, the wife spends a greater amount of time on her own, whereas it does not affect the way he spends his leisure. In other words, the husband's irregular working hours are neutral for ego (the husband), but consequential for the spouse (the wife). This is in direct contrast to the effects of a wife's labor

force participation, which were consequential for ego and neutral for the spouse.

Our third hypothesis was that couples will have a more separated lifestyle if they are less homogenous with respect to social and cultural characteristics. Because the development of a common lifestyle may by itself lead to similarity in taste, we focus on similarities that existed in the past. The regression results in Table 3 provide weak support for our hypothesis. As expected, political and religious similarities in the beginning of the relationship are negatively associated with a separated lifestyle later on in marriage. This effect is significant for both husbands and wives. Educational similarities have a negative effect on separateness as well, but the effect is not significant. Finally, age homogeneity appears to have a positive effect on husbands' separate leisure, which is in contrast to our hypothesis.

The fourth hypothesis concerns the role of value orientations. The first dimension of values applies to gender-role differentiation. We do not find that people who have been exposed to same-sex settings when they were adolescents are more likely to develop a separated lifestyle in marriage. The other indicator of gender segregation—how husbands and wives think about the way men and women's roles should be divided—has no statistically significant effect either. The second dimension of values is the degree to which people have an individualistic orientation toward family life. The results here are somewhat more supportive. We find a positive effect of living alone before marriage for husbands, showing that men who have been living on their own before marriage are more likely to develop a separated lifestyle in marriage. Effects of having been divorced are not statistically significant, however.

The two control variables, education and birth cohort, appear to have significant effects on lifestyles. We find that more highly educated husbands and wives are more likely to do things separately, a finding that is in contrast to earlier findings. Previous studies often found higher levels of companionship among high-status couples (Miller, 1976). Because these findings were based on absolute measures of joint participation, they may reflect that the higher educated participate more frequently in all sorts of leisure activities, be it alone or with their spouse. When using a relative measure, as we do here, the educational effect turns out to be the opposite: less companionship among the better educated. We also find a small cohort effect. Recent birth cohorts are

more likely to have a separated lifestyle in marriage than older birth cohorts, but the effect is only significant for husbands. Because birth cohort is highly correlated with the duration of the relationship, we also examined whether the effect is present in a model without the two duration terms. The effect appeared to be smaller in this model, but it was still positive and statistically significant.

Determinants of Separateness in Different Dimensions

Do the effects discussed above differ in magnitude, depending on the type of leisure we consider? To answer this question, we estimated our model for the four dimensions of leisure separately (social contacts, entertainment, outdoor leisure, and indoor leisure). To examine differences systematically, we compare the coefficient for a particular dimension, to the coefficient in a supplementary equation, which is based on a scale containing all the remaining items (this supplementary equation is not reported). We present p values showing whether this difference is statistically significant. Results for wives are presented in Table 4, results for husbands in Table 5.

We note that looking at specific activities may also introduce problems because the decision to participate in a certain type of activity may be endogenous to the process at hand. When couples want to develop a separated lifestyle, they may change their leisure repertoire by choosing activities that can be done alone more easily. Husbands who want to spend more time on their own, for example, may become more active in sports, possibly at the expense of visiting their parents-in-law. This may lead to weaker effects when looking at specific leisure dimensions.

The inverted U-shaped pattern is found for all dimensions of separate leisure, except for social contacts. For the social contacts of wives, the pattern is declining in the entire range. For husbands, the turning point is earlier (8 years) in the marriage. In other words, these findings suggest that for joint social contacts, a decline rather than an increase in separateness dominates. One interpretation of this exception is that it takes time to develop a common circle of friends. Over the course of the marriage, the number of common social contacts may therefore increase. A related interpretation is that a person may not like the friends of his or her partner very well. Because it may be difficult to maintain contacts with such a person,

TABLE 4. SEEMINGLY UNRELATED REGRESSION ESTIMATES OF FOUR TYPES OF SEPARATE LEISURE ACTIVITIES OF WIVES: UNSTANDARDIZED REGRESSION COEFFICIENTS AND TESTS OF CROSS-EQUATION DIFFERENCES

	Social Contacts			Entertainment			Outdoor Leisure			Indoor Leisure		
	<i>b</i>	<i>t</i> test ^b		<i>b</i>	<i>t</i> test ^b		<i>b</i>	<i>t</i> test ^b		<i>b</i>	<i>t</i> test ^b	
Duration relationship	-.021	.001		.195	.181		.398**	.463		.213	.770	
Duration squared	-.019	.013		-.049	.125		-.108**	.434		-.038	.463	
Cohabiting	.081	.893		.176	.256		.046	.467		-.096	.090	
Children 0-4	.071	.233		.071	.556		.212*	.761		.228**	.285	
Children 5-12	.147	.489		.045	.246		.199*	.872		.209*	.923	
Children 12+	.130	.337		.033	.697		-.023	.148		.101	.879	
Wife employed part time	-.217**	.000		.110	.008		.082	.007		-.017	.696	
Wife employed full time	-.383**	.000		.007	.026		.061	.000		-.033	.082	
Wife irregular hours ^a	-.018	.305		-.016	.220		-.047	.881		-.013	.228	
Husband employed	.109	.225		-.051	.429		-.011	.567		.114	.250	
Husband irregular hours ^a	.023	.009		.063*	.911		.064*	.832		.059*	.807	
Age homogamy ^a	-.035	.015		-.006	.351		.059*	.298		.052*	.062	
Educational homogamy ^a	.011	.234		-.033	.989		.014	.151		-.034	.521	
Political and religious ^a	-.101**	.187		-.055*	.353		-.047	.443		-.009	.002	
Same-sex settings of wife ^a	.007	.147		-.005	.109		.063*	.372		.008	.192	
Traditional gender roles wife ^a	-.074*	.164		-.025	.100		-.004	.369		-.064*	.670	
Years lived alone by wife ^a	-.043	.131		.028	.182		-.024	.967		-.035	.600	
Wife divorced	.030	.848		.083	.639		-.126	.485		.048	.736	
Wife's year of birth ^a	-.020	.330		-.101	.055		.024	.962		.112	.497	
Wife's education ^a	.157**	.403		.092**	.010		.036	.000		.161**	.734	
Constant	.075	.002		-.186	.719		-.349*	.406		-.359**	.399	
R ²	.083			.031			.061			.084		
N	1,490			1,355			1,199			1,483		

^aVariable is standardized.
^b*p* value of *t* test for equality of coefficients over equations. Each dimension of leisure is tested against the means of the items in the other three dimensions.
 p* < .05. *p* < .01 (two-tailed).

TABLE 5. SEEMINGLY UNRELATED REGRESSION ESTIMATES OF FOUR TYPES OF SEPARATE LEISURE ACTIVITIES OF HUSBANDS: UNSTANDARDIZED REGRESSION COEFFICIENTS AND TESTS OF CROSS-EQUATION DIFFERENCES

	Social Contacts		Entertainment		Outdoor Leisure		Indoor Leisure	
	<i>b</i>	<i>t</i> test ^b	<i>b</i>	<i>t</i> test ^b	<i>b</i>	<i>t</i> test ^b	<i>b</i>	<i>t</i> test ^b
Duration relationship	.114	.008	.472**	.873	.330*	.751	.409**	1.000
Duration squared	-.070*	.342	-.079**	.589	-.057	.248	.066*	.207
Cohabiting	.370**	.027	.188	.955	-.025	.012	.084	.389
Children 0-4	.180*	.202	.264**	.874	.303**	.814	.060	.060
Children 5-12	.247**	.747	.222**	.539	.291**	.473	.089	.001
Children 13+	-.042	.534	-.085	.202	.128	.065	-.062	.516
Wife employed part time	.093	.785	.105	.691	.029	.362	.156**	.197
Wife employed full time	.048	.638	.040	.763	.032	.837	.138	.343
Wife irregular hours ^a	.014	.896	-.017	.160	.043	.062	-.012	.372
Husband employed	-.045	.323	-.032	.330	-.047	.671	-.112	.859
Husband irregular hours ^a	.014	.971	.008	.823	-.002	.939	-.008	.334
Age homogeneity ^a	.041	.202	.035	.728	.027	.710	.017	.151
Educational homogeneity ^a	-.033	.586	-.068*	.103	-.003	.227	-.018	.779
Political and religious homogeneity ^a	-.085**	.349	-.051	.083	-.045	.259	-.027	.038
Same-sex settings of husband ^a	-.032	.080	-.008	.946	.004	.723	.025	.499
Traditional gender husband ^a	.011	.871	.031	.140	.015	.538	-.008	.466
Years lived alone by husband ^a	-.029	.001	.154**	.009	.011	.555	.035	.460
Husband divorced	.139	.599	.134	.322	.381*	.077	.024	.273
Husband's year of birth ^a	-.057	.046	.148	.817	.200*	.238	.187*	.267
Husband's education ^a	.096**	.560	-.046	.000	.054	.315	.188**	.000
Constant	-.104	.025	-.548**	.337	-.427**	.449	-.358**	.874
R ²	.087		.049		.055		.060	
N	1,491		1,361		1,296		1,488	

^aVariable is standardized.
^b*p* value of *t* test for equality of coefficients over equations. Each dimension of leisure is tested against the means of the items in the other three dimensions.
 p* < .05. *p* < .01 (two-tailed).

these friends may slowly disappear from the network, which reduces the number of separate contacts.

In the model in Table 3, we found positive effects of having young children on separated lifestyles in marriage. When looking at specific activities, we find similar results. We would expect to find differential effects because indoor activities are less sensitive to the time constraints that children pose. In the equation for husbands, we do find that the effect of children is significantly weaker for indoor leisure. For wives, this difference is statistically not significant. The effects of children are therefore only in part consistent with our interpretation of time constraints. We should acknowledge, however, that the presence of children may also change the mix of leisure activities, something that is not apparent in Table 4 and 5.

When looking at the effects of cohabitation, we find that for husbands, cohabitation has a significantly stronger effect on joint social contacts. That the effect is strongest for social contacts may be due to the fact that the development of a common network is a greater investment in the relationship than other joint leisure activities. Uncertainty would therefore play a greater role, leading to a stronger positive effect on separateness.

When considering effects of couples' work lives, we previously found that working wives spend a smaller fraction of their leisure time alone than do nonworking wives. Table 4 shows that this reduction of separate time does not apply to entertainment and outdoor leisure. The effects of employment on ego's level of separateness here are positive rather than negative. A possible interpretation is that employment may lead to a larger pool of network members who are not connected to the partner and who are appropriate partners for entertainment and outdoor leisure activities (i.e., colleagues). This may explain why only the dimensions of entertainment and outdoor leisure reveal a different pattern.

As far as the effects of homogamy are concerned, we find that political and religious similarities primarily affect joint social contacts and entertainment. In addition, we find that educational homogamy now has a negative effect on separate entertainment of husbands, in line with our hypothesis.

The effects of value orientations reveal some differences across equations. In Table 3, we did not find effects of traditional gender-role attitudes and exposure to same-sex settings. In Tables 4 and 5, we find that there is one equation in which ex-

posure to same-sex settings has the expected effect. When women were more exposed to same-sex settings when they were young, they are more likely to engage in outdoor leisure without their husband. In addition, traditional gender-role attitudes have significant effects on wife's social contacts and indoor leisure. These effects are not in the expected direction, however; wives with more traditional views on gender roles have a less separated lifestyle.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Several authors in the recent past have argued that married and cohabiting partners increasingly operate independently of one another. In this view, individualistic values not only affect the formation and dissolution of unions and the economic and legal dependencies between intimate partners, they have implications for the way couples organize their daily life as well. In contrast to such assertions, we find a considerable degree of joint leisure activities among contemporary couples. A large majority of the couples we studied always go on vacation together, visit friends and family members together, and spend much of their leisure time with one another. Because our empirical work is based on a cross-section and because no comparable data from previous decades are available, we cannot make reliable inferences on long-term trends. Still, our findings are not consistent with the view that marriage partners nowadays have a strong desire for autonomy, privacy, and independence. Economic and legal dependencies within marriage have weakened, as witnessed by rising female labor force participation and rising rates of cohabitation, but social dependencies in contemporary unions are strong.

To explain why some couples operate more jointly than others, we adopted a heuristic framework in which the separateness of couples' lifestyles is linked to systematic differences in preferences and constraints. We do not claim to have tested an economic theory of leisure allocation; our framework mainly serves to organize our argumentation concerning the effects that sets of independent variables have on couple lifestyles. Factors such as homogamy and value orientations can largely be interpreted in terms of preferences, whereas work and life cycle factors can in part be interpreted in terms of constraints. Assuming this specification is valid, our research generally reveals clear evidence for the role of constraints and less systematic evidence for the role of preferenc-

es. In this conclusion, we summarize our findings for each of the four sets of variables.

Of these four, life cycle factors have the clearest effects on a couple's lifestyle. Over the course of the relationship, the degree of separateness first increases and then decreases. The decrease in separateness comes late in the relationship, so that an increase in separate activities is dominant. We interpret this pattern in terms of the declining information function of joint activities. In addition, we find that couples with children living at home have a more separated style of leisure than other couples, which clearly points to the role of time constraints. Finally, we find that couples who are not (yet) married operate more separated than married couples. We interpret this in terms of uncertainty: Couples who are cohabiting are less secure of their relationship and may therefore be more reluctant to develop a joint lifestyle.

Life styles also depend on the work life of a couple, although the effects are more complex than has been suggested before. It has often been argued that work, and in particular women's work, would negatively affect marital solidarity by reducing the time couples spend together. Our analyses show that one should consider effects on men and women separately. In general, we find that the working hours of a married woman come at the expense of her own separate leisure time and do not result in more separate leisure time for the husband. Irregular working hours of the husband, however, affect wives and not husbands. When husbands work irregular hours, their wives spend more leisure time on their own, whereas the husbands' joint leisure time is unaffected. In a more general sense, these findings do not support the general argument that married women's labor force participation has negative implications for marital solidarity. Paid work of both husbands and wives affects the ties that bind in marriage, but it does so in asymmetric ways.

Effects of homogamy and value orientations are mixed. We find that political, religious, and, to some extent, educational homogamy are associated with a more joint lifestyle in marriage, but the effects are not strong and systematic. We also examined effects of value orientations and found little evidence for the influence of gender segregation. It is often argued that traditional gender-role attitudes go hand in hand with a separation of male and female spheres. Gender segregation would not only lead to a division of paid and household labor in marriage but would also create a social distance between husband and wife, mak-

ing it more difficult for them to engage in joint activities. Our evidence does not support this. Husbands and wives who are traditional in this respect are equally likely to engage in joint activities as modern couples. The hypothesis about individualistic value orientations receives somewhat more support. Men who lived on their own before marriage appeared to be more likely to develop a separate lifestyle in marriage than other men. In addition, we find that separate lifestyles are more common among the better educated, but it is difficult to interpret this exclusively in terms of individualistic values.

Although we hope our study made clear that the leisure activities of married (or cohabiting) couples are an important object of study, we also need to make some caveats about our analyses. First, the regression models were not able to explain much variance in the measured separateness of couples' lifestyles. Relatively low R^2 have been observed in previous analyses as well (Rogers & Amato, 1997) and raise the question of whether there are other types of preferences and constraints that may be relevant. With regard to preferences, we note that we do not have items that measure leisure preferences, such as preferences for reading, arts, sports, or travel. As a result, our indicators for shared preferences (social and cultural homogamy) may not reflect the types of shared tastes that drive the choice of separate or common leisure. In addition, we think more indicators of constraints could be included in future research, such as the availability of recreation facilities in the local community, constraints due to physical impairments, and perhaps more specific indicators of work schedules and time constraints (overtime work, distance between home and work). A second caveat is that our items do not cover all relevant aspects of togetherness. Couples also spend time with each other without participating in the leisure activities listed in our survey. They talk, they eat together at home, they make love, and they may be together without doing any specific activity. Although such forms of behavior do not belong to our concept of lifestyle, they are important for marital solidarity as well. Whether the omission of such forms of togetherness leads to bias in the effects of our regression models is a question we leave for future research.

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