ARTICLE

Journal of Marriage and Family

Marriage, cohabitation, and institutional context: Household specialization among same-sex and different-sex couples

Chih-lan Winnie Yang

McGill University, Montreal, Quebec, Canada

Correspondence
Chih-lan Winnie Yang, Department of Sociology, McGill University, Peterson Hall Building, room 318, 3460 McTavish Street, Montreal, QC H3A 0E6, Canada.
Email: chih-lan.yang@mail.mcgill.ca

Abstract

Objective: This study examines how marriage-cohabitation gaps in household specialization (labor supply and earnings) vary across institutional contexts for same-sex couples (SSCs) and different-sex couples (DSCs) in Canada.

Background: Prior research suggests that marriage-cohabitation gaps are smaller in contexts where cohabitation is more prevalent, but it has overlooked how legal protections (at the contextual level) and gender composition (at the couple level) moderate this association. As a result, little is known about whether differences in household specialization stem from heightened gendered expectations attached to marriage or stronger legal protections for married couples. This study posits that marriage-cohabitation gaps will be larger in contexts where legal protections for cohabitors are less marriage-like.

Methods: Using the 2006 and 2016 Canadian Census and the 2011 National Household Survey, I estimate ordinal and fractional logit models to examine marriage-cohabitation gaps in specialization among all couples ($N = 2,788,055$) and couples with young children ($N = 826,305$).

Results: Among DSCs, marriage-cohabitation gaps were larger in Québec than in English Canada vis-à-vis earnings but not labor supply. Patterns among SSCs were more heterogeneous: gaps in labor supply were larger in English Canada for female couples but larger in Québec for male couples. Gaps in earnings were generally larger in Québec, with few exceptions. However, DSCs consistently specialized more than SSCs.

Conclusion: While existing research suggests marriage-cohabitation gaps in household specialization are largely explained by the prevalence of cohabitation, my results indicate that legal protections (at the contextual level) and gender composition (at the couple level) play a more decisive role.

INTRODUCTION

A substantial body of scholarship has documented that married and cohabiting couples behave differently when it comes to intrahousehold specialization: married couples show higher degrees of inequalities in terms of labor supply, earnings, and housework between spouses relative to cohabiting partners, resulting in marriage-cohabitation gaps in these outcomes (Barg & Beblo, 2012; South & Spitze, 1994). The higher level of specialization among married couples is often explained by two theoretical perspectives. The legal protection perspective suggests that the higher level of legal protections afforded to married spouses provides more security against a total loss of joint investments upon marital dissolution or death (Becker, 1991; Brines & Joyner, 1999). The "marriage as a gendered institution" perspective holds that expectations of adhering to conventional gender norms related to economic and caregiving roles are heightened in marriage (Killewald, 2016; Risman, 1998; Sayer et al., 2011).

However, the changing cohabitation and marital landscape in the past decades, characterized by the deinstitutionalization of marriage (Cherlin, 2004), has raised new questions about the legal incentive provided by marriage for intrahousehold specialization and the gendered expectations attached to marriage. First, cohabitation has become more institutionalized, reflected socially through the increasing prevalence and acceptance of cohabitation, and legally via increasing protections such as legal rights and benefits for cohabiting partners (Heuveline & Timberlake, 2004; Perelli-Harris & Gassen, 2012). The changing meanings and functions of cohabitation vis-à-vis marriage might entail changes in economic dynamics between partners. Second, the global trend of legalization of same-sex marriage since the millennium, including Canada as the fourth country to do so on the federal level in 2005—a decade before *Obergefell* vs. *Hodges* in the United States—has led to growing numbers of married same-sex couples (SSCs) and SSCs raising children. This institutional shift invites the question of whether the association between marriage and specialization still holds within same-sex marriage, where gender is constant within the household. With these recent developments, there are reasons to believe that the direction and the size of marriage-cohabitation gaps in household specialization might differ depending on the institutional context and the gender composition of couples.

The extant literature on these issues remains limited for at least two reasons. First, research on contextual variation in marriage-cohabitation gaps generally suggests that in contexts where cohabitation is more prevalent and accepted, cohabiting couples are more similar to married couples in characteristics and behaviors (Heuveline & Timberlake, 2004; Kiernan, 2001). However, this line of research focuses on only the social dimension (i.e., prevalence and acceptance) of institutionalization (e.g., Liefbroer & Dourleijn, 2006; Soons et al., 2009) without examining differences in the legal rights and obligations of cohabiting couples relative to the married. Such a single-dimensional emphasis assumes that the social dimension of institutionalization always aligns with the legal dimension. However, this is not always a given, as I will show using the

case of Québec in Canada. Second, given the recency of same-sex marriage and the lack of representative data for sexual minorities, prior research has largely been premised on different-sex couples (DSCs). As a result, the extent to which, if any, married and cohabiting SSCs differ in intrahousehold specialization remains unclear.

Using the 2006 and 2016 Canadian censuses and the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS), this study fills these gaps by comparing marriage-cohabitation gaps in intrahousehold specialization in labor supply (full-time, part-time, and nonemployment) and earnings along the lines of gender composition and institutional context among all couples and couples with young children. Canada provides a unique opportunity to study this issue given its early nationwide legalization of same-sex marriage since 2005, and the contrasting institutional contexts between Québec and the rest of Canada (ROC), with the former having a higher prevalence of cohabitation but fewer marriage-like legal protections.

This study makes three contributions to the literature. First, drawing on the case of Québec, the current study sheds light on the heretofore overlooked dimension of the institutionalization of cohabitation—its legality. Second, by holding gender constant within unions, the analysis of SSCs provides analytical leverage to parse out whether intrahousehold specialization stems from heightened gender expectations in marriage, or from the legal protections afforded to married couples. Finally, this study is among the first to examine marriage-cohabitation gaps among SSCs across institutional contexts, adding to the small but growing literature on same-sex household dynamics in recent years.

BACKGROUND

Theoretical perspectives of intrahousehold specialization in marriage and cohabitation

The overall higher levels of intrahousehold specialization—such as inequalities in labor supply, earnings, and time spent on housework—among married vis-à-vis cohabiting couples have been explained by two theoretical perspectives that emphasize different aspects of marriage. The legal perspective emphasizes the impact of laws on partners' behavior. It argues that with higher levels of legal protection afforded to married couples, such as the right to inheritance and assets, spousal support (etc.), marriage operates as an enforceable contract that provides security against the total loss of joint investments upon dissolution (Becker, 1991; Brines & Joyner, 1999; Cherlin, 2004). The legal commitment signaled by the marital contract implies a long-term horizon and stability, and reduces risks associated with specialization (Poortman & Mills, 2012). This is especially important for the spouse who invests more in home production such as childrearing (Becker, 1991), usually the woman, who tends to experience employment disruptions and declining wages due to care responsibilities (Kahn et al., 2014).

The second perspective emphasizes that marriage as a social institution provides well-established social guidelines rewarding conforming behaviors and penalizing deviant ones (Cherlin, 2004; Nock, 1995). In particular, this theory conceptualizes "marriage as a gendered institution", where cultural norms and expectations around gender-differentiated roles are more salient (Killewald, 2016; Risman, 1998; Sayer et al., 2011). Moreover, the transition into parenthood can heighten these gendered expectations emphasizing men's economic role of providing for the family and women's caregiving role as a "good mother" (Risman, 1998).

Taken together, the two theoretical perspectives suggest that married couples tend to be economically more unequal due to either the greater legal protections afforded to married couples or the centrality of gender norms in marriage. Conversely, cohabitation is considered a "looser bond" (Schoen & Weinick, 1993) or "incomplete institution" that lacks a "formal legal or normative structure" (Nock, 1995, p. 73). As such, cohabitors are likely to be more cautious in joint

ownership, income-pooling, and intracouple specialization on the one hand, and less subjected to gendered expectations on the other (Brines & Joyner, 1999).

The institutionalization of cohabitation and same-sex marriage

Whereas both theoretical perspectives are predicated on the idea that marriage is a more established institution than cohabitation—in legal protections and in reinforcing gender norms—the two union types have been in flux over the past few decades. Cherlin (2004) argues that North American marriage has become deinstitutionalized, with the rise of cohabitation and the emergence of same-sex marriage, among other trends, being important signs. Accordingly, patterns of intrahousehold specialization among married and cohabiting couples can diverge from what the two aforementioned theoretical perspectives predict in contexts where cohabitation is more institutionalized, and where same-sex marriage is legalized.

Marriage-cohabitation gaps: The roles of social prevalence and legal protections

A large body of research has documented the institutionalization of cohabitation worldwide in the past few decades, reflected socially through the increasing prevalence and acceptance of cohabitation, and legally via more robust protections such as legal rights and benefits for cohabiting partners (Heuveline & Timberlake, 2004; Perelli-Harris & Gassen, 2012).

Differential levels of institutionalization have inspired considerable research on the variation in marriage-cohabitation gaps in various outcomes, such as well-being, income pooling, and intracouple specialization (Domínguez-Folgueras, 2013; Hamplová et al., 2014; Liefbroer & Dourleijn, 2006; Soons et al., 2009). This literature mostly focuses on the social dimension—positing that as the share of cohabiting unions increases in a society, cohabitation becomes more prevalent and, thus, less selective in terms of individuals' behaviors and sociodemographic profiles (Liefbroer & Dourleijn, 2006). It also holds that as stigma and disapproval around cohabitation decrease, cohabiting unions might be strengthened and, thus, more stable (Soons et al., 2009; Stratton, 2005), eventually becoming an acceptable context for childbearing and childrearing (Kiernan, 2001). From the "marriage-as-a-gendered-institution" perspective, as cohabitation becomes more established and normalized, gendered expectations may no longer be especially salient for married couples. Together, decreasing selectivity and increasing longevity of cohabitation might reduce marriage-cohabitation gaps in various outcomes.

While generative, this literature has not offered a clear answer regarding the implications of the institutionalization of cohabitation on intrahousehold specialization for at least two reasons. First, empirical findings on intrahousehold dynamics (e.g., joint investment, division of labor, and income-pooling) remain unclear. For example, comparing five European countries, Domínguez-Folgueras (2013) found that whereas married couples were more unequal in terms of housework, marriage-cohabitation gaps were not consistently smaller in countries where cohabitation was more prevalent. Similarly, Hamplová et al. (2014) did not find a smaller marriage-cohabitation gap in income-pooling in Québec, where cohabitation was more prevalent.

Second, this literature focuses on the normalization of cohabitation but does not adequately consider the role of legal protections of cohabitors in shaping marriage-cohabitation gaps in household specialization. Whereas legal protections used to be granted exclusively to married spouses, this is no longer the case in the new century. Legal studies have found that cohabitation laws akin to divorce laws (i.e., more redistributive) reduce women's labor supply (Chiappori et al., 2017; Rangel, 2006). More recently, Goussé and Leturcq (2022) showed that

becoming eligible to petition for alimony after the dissolution of cohabiting unions generally reduced women's labor supply and earnings. However, these studies do not examine intrahousehold specialization at the couple level or compare across married and cohabiting unions. To date, few studies have incorporated the legal perspective alongside the perspective foregrounding social prevalence. Those that do show inconsistent findings. For example, Bianchi et al. (2014) found larger gender gaps in paid and unpaid work hours among married vis-à-vis cohabiting couples in Italy than in the United States and France. In terms of income-pooling, one cross-national study found no clear association between welfare regime type and marriage-cohabitation gaps (Hamplová & Le Bourdais, 2009), whereas another found larger gaps in countries with combined income tax systems than those with individualized tax systems (Evans & Gray, 2021). Overall, studies exploring marriage-cohabitation gaps in intrahousehold specialization across contexts have yielded mixed results, with insufficient attention paid to the legal dimension of cohabitation's institutionalization.

Intrahousehold specialization among same-sex couples

Exploring whether married SSCs specialize more than their cohabiting counterparts is crucial for both normative (i.e., increasing numbers of SSCs are entering marriage) and analytical reasons—i.e., because it provides an opportunity to reexamine the legal perspective and the "marriage-as-a-gendered-institution" perspective by holding gender constant within couples (Widiss, 2016). On the one hand, the absence of within-union gender differences might mean that there are little or no heteronormative expectations to perform masculinities and femininities (Goldberg et al., 2012), resulting in more egalitarian practices between same-sex partners regardless of union type. Relatedly, as Cherlin suggested, SSCs might not "have the option of falling back on the gender-differentiated roles of heterosexual marriage" (2004, p. 851) given the lack of established norms around how to behave in marriage. In other words, there might not be clear marriage-cohabitation gaps in intrahousehold specialization among SSCs. On the other hand, qualitative studies show that many married SSCs see legal protections and security as one of the most significant reasons for entering marriage (Hull, 2019; Richman, 2015). This means that marriage might also yield a similar risk-reducing effect for married SSCs, as predicted by the legal protection perspective.

Whereas substantial research has shown that SSCs divide their labor (including paid work, housework, and childcare) more equally than DSCs, this literature has been largely unable to offer clear answers to the aforementioned propositions due to the recency of same-sex marriage and the lack of available data to compare married and cohabiting SSCs (Giddings et al., 2014; Jepsen & Jepsen, 2015). The few recent exceptions have yielded mixed results. There is some evidence that legal protections are associated with more specialization among SSCs in the United States, but the impact of protections differ for male and female couples, with parenthood playing an important role. For example, Dillender (2015) found that gaining access to spouses' health insurance increased female, but not male, couples' level of specialization in labor supply due to their higher likelihood of having children. Similarly, Hansen et al. (2020) found that the secondary earner in female couples reduced hours in paid work and increased hours in care work in states that recognized same-sex marriage, but not male couples. However, outside the United States, Aldén et al. (2015) showed that intracouple earnings differences decreased for female couples but increased for male couples after entry into registered partnership or marriage in Sweden, even after adjusting for children. Similarly, a recent Canadian study found an overall lower degree of earnings inequality among female couples, although it did not compare married to cohabiting couples (Dilmaghani & Dean, 2023). Moreover, to my knowledge, no research has examined specialization among SSCs along the lines of both marital status and institutional context.

The current study

The current study fills these lacunae by examining marriage-cohabitation gaps in intrahousehold distribution of labor and earnings by the gender composition of couples across Québec and the ROC—representing contrasting contexts regarding both the legal protections for, and the prevalence of, cohabiting unions. For married spouses, legal rights and obligations are similar across Canada. Spouses are entitled to inheritance and alimony in the case of death or divorce. Property acquired during the marriage is equally divided upon divorce unless a pre-nuptial contract is in place (Laplante & Fostik, 2016). Protections for cohabitors differ across English and French Canada. In the ROC, ex-cohabiting partners have the right to petition for spousal support and, in some cases, division of assets after a certain duration of cohabitation. The required relationship duration varies by jurisdiction, ranging from 1 to 5 years. Importantly, it is reduced to 0–2 years if the couple shares a dependent child together (Goussé & Leturcq, 2022). The courts can intervene if couples' cohabitation agreements are deemed unjust. By contrast, ex-cohabiting partners in Québec are treated as legal strangers, governed by private law instead of family law, regardless of the duration of the relationship and parental status. The courts in Québec do not intervene to reassess cohabitation agreements (Goussé & Leturcq, 2022).

Legal protections for cohabitors do not always align with how prevalent cohabitation is in a society. Compared to the ROC, Québec has shown a steeper decline in marriage rates and a faster growth in cohabitation since the 1980s (Laplante & Fostik, 2016; Le Bourdais & Lapierre-Adamcyk, 2004). Cohabiting couples in Québec are also less likely to transition into marriage and more likely to stay cohabiting than their ROC peers (Le Bourdais et al., 2014). In Québec, cohabitation has become the modal form of family formation since 2000, whereas it remains a precursor to marriage and childbearing in the ROC (Le Bourdais & Lapierre-Adamcyk, 2004). For example, in 2016, about 43% of couples with children were cohabiting, compared with only 12% in the ROC (author's calculation). The high prevalence of cohabitation is not limited to DSCs only: Québec also has the highest share of SSCs relative to its population, but the lowest share of married SSCs in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2017a). Among SSCs with young children, 72% are cohabiting in Québec (vs. 42% in the ROC) (author's calculation).

Building on prior literature, the current study addresses the often-neglected theoretical perspective concerning legal protections afforded to cohabiting relative to married couples. At the same time, it pays attention to how the gender composition of couples plays a role in intrahousehold specialization. I hypothesize that despite the high prevalence of cohabitation, marriage-cohabitation gaps in intrahousehold specialization will on average be larger in Québec than in the ROC (H1). The inclusion of SSCs allows me to net out the effect of within-union gender differences while enabling comparisons by the gender composition of couples. Because the existing literature consistently points to a stronger egalitarian orientation among SSCs, and notes that marriage as an institution is less established among SSCs, I hypothesize that whereas SSCs will be subjected to the same risk-reducing effect of legal protections—showing a larger marriage-cohabitation gap in Québec than in the ROC (H2)—DSCs will on average have a higher level of intrahousehold specialization compared to SSCs (H3). I examine these hypotheses first by pooling all couples (Analysis 1) and then by analyzing a subset of couples with young children (Analysis 2). Studies show that among DSCs, intrahousehold specialization intensifies upon the arrival of a child (Bergsvik et al., 2020; Kahn et al., 2014). Given that childbearing and childrearing within cohabitation is much more common in Québec than in the ROC, one would expect the marriage-cohabitation gap to be smaller in Québec. However, whereas sharing a dependent child shortens the duration requirement for cohabiting partners to become eligible for alimony in the ROC, cohabitors in Québec are not entitled to such protection regardless of relationship duration and parenthood status. I, thus, predict that these

hypotheses will hold for the overall population as well as for the subset of couples who have young children.

METHODS

Data and samples

The current study pools two waves of Canadian Census from 2006 and 2016, and the 2011 NHS in order to make comparable analyses for SSCs during the first postmarriage equality decade in Canada. Despite a slightly higher overall nonresponse rate in the NHS—a voluntary survey that replaced the long-form census in 2011—the census data and the NHS are highly comparable (Waite & Denier, 2019). Census data are advantageous for the purpose of this study. First, they offer nationally representative samples of same-sex and different-sex cohabiting and married couples, with the three waves of data consisting of random samples of 20%, 33%, and 25% of Canadian households (Statistics Canada, 2015, 2017b). Second, they offer rich sociodemographic data on both partners in couples, allowing for various couple-level controls related to specialization.

The analytical samples consist of individuals who were either in cohabiting or marital unions and those in unions where both partners were of primary working age (25–54) on the reference date. I excluded couples in which both partners reported retirement income (0.06%), and residents of Canadian territories (0.87%). SSCs are identified through the variable indicating whether the respondent is in a female-married SSC, female-cohabiting SSC, male-married SSC, or male-cohabiting SSC. The final sample size for the three census years combined is 2,788,055, including 262,920 DSCs, 13,075 male SSCs, and 12,060 female SSCs. These numbers are rounded to the nearest 5 as required by Statistics Canada's confidentiality rules.

Measures of dependent variables

Intrahousehold specialization is measured with two outcome variables. Following the Beckerian (Becker, 1991) definition of full specialization, the first measure, *level of specialization in labor supply*, is a 3-category variable that suggests low, medium, and high levels of specialization. This is derived from the question in the Census that asks if one was mostly working full-time, part-time, or nonemployed during the reference year. Couples where one partner works full-time and the other nonemployed are coded as "high level" ($=3$). Couples where both have the same labor supply are coded as "low level" ($=1$), with the rest being "medium level" ($=2$).

The second outcome variable is the *share of the couples' annual combined earnings provided by the higher earner* (*share of earnings* hereafter). Whereas it is correlated with each partner's labor supply, it further taps into the degree of intracouple earnings disparity, which can have crucial implications for the relative bargaining power and economic dependency of individuals within couples. This variable is defined as the annual positive earnings of the higher earner divided by positive combined earnings of the couple, with 0.5 being complete equality (including those where both have no earnings) and 1 being complete inequality. Incomes are adjusted by the Canadian Consumer Price Index expressed in 2016 Canadian dollars (Statistics Canada, 2021).

Measures of independent variables

There are four key independent variables. *Marital status* is a binary variable indicating whether a couple is legally married ($=1$) or cohabiting ($=0$). *Region* is a binary variable, with Québec

(QC) coded as 1 and the ROC as 0. *Gender composition of couple* differentiates between DSCs (ref.), female couples and male couples. Finally, *presence of a young child* is a binary variable indicating whether the couple has a child aged 0–5 (yes = 1).

Control variables

I control for a host of sociodemographic and income characteristics of couples, with all variables coded at the couple level (see Table 1). These variables are crucial selection factors that might influence intracouple specialization levels (Poortman & Mills, 2012; Soons et al., 2009). The age group of the younger partner (5-year intervals from 25 to 54) and the age difference between partners (from 1 = 0–2 years [ref.] to 4 = 10+ years) might shape the earnings and bargaining power between partners. Similarly, education (from 1 = both high school or less [ref.] to 6 = both BA or above) is associated with variation in human capital, earnings potential, and attitudes (Schoen & Weinick, 1993), all of which shape specialization in significant ways. Other characteristics that might shape earnings and labor supply differentials (and attitudes toward marriage and family more broadly) include immigration status (both third generation [ref.], one third generation, or neither third generation) and race/ethnicity (both white [ref.], one white, neither white) (Crissey, 2005). I also control for couple's total income, a log-transformed continuous variable measuring couples' total economic resources. Moreover, I include an indicator variable for census metropolitan areas (0 = no [ref.]), as it affects the cultural and socioeconomic climates that couples are embedded within, with larger cities having higher costs of living, more employment opportunities, and a larger concentration of sexual minorities (Denier & Waite, 2017). Other factors that might affect specialization include whether at least one partner attended school last year (0 = no [ref.], 1 = yes), one partner is retired (0 = no [ref.], 1 = yes), home ownership (0 = no [ref.], 1 = yes), and health status (1 = both have health issues [ref.], 2 = one has health issue, 3 = neither has health issues). Finally, in Analysis 2, I control for the number of young children (0 = one [ref.]; 1 = 2 or more) instead of the presence of a young child.

Analytical strategy

As a first step, I show the proportions (or means/SD) of the sociodemographic and income characteristics of couples by region and the gender composition of couples in Table 1, with significance tests of whether the distribution differs in Québec and the ROC, and tests of whether the distribution differs between couples of different gender composition within each region.

I examine two dimensions of household specialization, namely labor supply and earnings. First, I fit ordinal logit models to estimate the level of specialization in labor supply. Second, given that the outcome "share of earnings" ranges from 0.5 and 1, I fit fractional logit regressions to predict earnings disparities within couples.

For each dimension of specialization, I conduct two sets of analyses with different samples. In Analysis 1, I pool all couples, comparing the level of specialization by the gender composition of couples (with the reference group being DSCs). Second, to examine regional differences in marriage-cohabitation gaps, I include an interaction term between marital status and region (with the ROC as the reference group). Finally, I introduce a three-way interaction between marital status, region, and gender composition to further analyze how cross-regional marriage-cohabitation gaps differ by the gender composition of couples. At each step, I run models with and without adjusting for the presence of a young child to examine whether differences in specialization can be explained by the distribution of couples with young children.

T A B L E 1   Weighted % and mean/SD of sociodemographic and income characteristics by region and gender composition of couples.

Variables	Different-sex couples			Female couples			Male couples		
	ROC	Québec	Total	ROC	Québec	Total	ROC	Québec	Total
Census year									
2006 (ref.)	33.52	34.36	33.71[a]	26.95	28.43[b]	27.34	26.36	30.16	27.45[a]
2011	33.52	33.82	33.59	34.95	32.14	34.23	38.00	34.20	36.90
2016	32.95	31.82	32.70	38.09	39.43	38.43	35.64	35.67	35.65
Married (ref. = cohabiting)	83.63	52.17	76.45[a]	36.11[c]	18.50	31.62[a]	32.93	17.57	28.52[a]
Having a child 0–5 (ref. = no child 0–5)	70.78	74.63	70.48[a]	9.88[c]	11.59[b]	10.31[a]	1.92	1.27	1.73[a]
Age group of the younger partner									
25–29 (ref.)	13.61	15.59	14.06[a]	18.03	17.51[b]	17.90	18.90	18.04	18.65[a]
30–34	18.36	18.99	18.50	19.67	19.05	19.50	21.97	20.46	21.53
35–39	19.67	19.31	19.59	18.91	18.50	18.81	20.36	19.10	20.00
40–44	20.50	19.20	20.20	20.35	20.41	20.38	19.11	19.79	19.31
45–49	18.65	17.85	18.47	16.33	17.87	16.72	14.28	15.82	14.72
50–54	9.21	9.06	9.18	6.69	6.66	6.69	5.39	6.77	5.80
Age difference between partners									
≤2 years (ref.)	51.86	49.68	51.36[a]	38.96[c]	41.85	39.70[a]	34.54	34.75	34.60[a]
3–5 years	29.36	29.90	29.48	29.69	28.17	29.29	27.75	29.53	28.26
6–10 years	15.14	16.09	15.36	22.69	22.80	22.71	24.42	22.99	24.01
>10 years	3.63	4.34	3.79	8.66	7.21	8.29	13.29	12.73	13.13
Educational attainment									
Both ≤HS (ref.)	18.11	14.48	17.28[a]	9.84[c]	9.56	9.77	11.36	8.07	10.42[a]
≤HS and Some college	21.58	21.52	21.56	14.82	16.59	15.27	13.88	13.57	13.79
≤HS and ≥BA	7.09	4.83	6.57	9.39	5.92	8.50	11.87	7.26	10.54
Both some college	18.92	25.84	20.50	16.72	23.17	18.37	14.51	18.67	15.70
Some college and ≥BA	14.31	16.45	14.80	20.46	23.43	21.22	20.23	25.30	21.68
Both ≥BA	19.99	16.88	19.28	28.77	21.29	26.86	28.15	27.14	27.86

(Continues)

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Variables	Different-sex couples			Female couples			Male couples		
	ROC	Québec	Total	ROC	Québec	Total	ROC	Québec	Total
Race/ethnicity									
Both white (ref.)	67.95	83.90	71.59[a]	72.43[c]	89.33[b]	76.74[a]	61.30	82.34	67.34[a]
Either white	9.51	5.37	8.57	14.35	6.47	12.35	23.84	12.71	20.64
Neither white	22.54	10.73	19.85	13.21	4.19	10.91	14.87	4.96	12.02
Immigration status									
Both third generation (ref.)	41.48	69.74	47.93[a]	42.93[c]	73.74[b]	50.79[a]	35.30	64.16	43.60[a]
Either third generation	23.37	11.19	20.59	33.15	17.51	29.17	34.64	23.51	31.44
Neither third generation	35.15	19.07	31.48	23.90	8.75	20.04	30.05	12.33	24.96
Combined total income/1000									
Mean	108.59	95.70	105.65[a]	100.33[c]	90.91[b]	97.93[a]	118.10	103.36	113.87[a]
SD	142.11	86.40	131.60	87.69	56.30	80.95	134.86	77.78	121.43
CMA (ref. = elsewhere)	71.32	69.89	70.99[a]	80.83[c]	79.33[b]	80.45	87.52	85.63	86.98[a]
At least one partner in school (ref. = other)	14.46	17.36	15.12[a]	22.30[c]	23.21[b]	22.53	18.94	23.68	20.30[a]
One partner retired (ref. = neither retired)	1.10	0.92	1.06[a]	1.61	1.43	1.57	1.30	1.30	1.30
Homeowner (ref. = renter)	80.86	76.97	79.97[a]	68.80[c]	70.28[b]	69.18[a]	63.10	67.96	64.51[a]
Health status									
Both have health issue (ref.)	9.65	5.92	8.80[a]	17.43[c]	9.42	15.38[a]	13.62	8.30	12.09[a]
One has health issue	16.20	12.64	15.39	21.50	17.03	20.36	18.51	14.66	17.40
Neither has health issue	74.15	81.44	75.82	61.06	73.56	64.26	67.88	77.07	70.51
Weighted N couples	9,722,740	2,875,080	12,597,815	39,680	13,595	53,275	43,040	17,355	60,395

Abbreviations: CMA, census metropolitan area; HS, high school; ROC, rest of Canada; SD, standard deviation.

[a]Difference between ROC and Québec within the same type of couple is significant at p < .05 or lower (two-tailed test).

[b]Difference between female and male couples within Québec is significant at least p < .05 or lower (two-tailed test). Differences between female and different-sex couples, and between male and different-sex couples within each region are all significant at least p < .05 or lower (two-tailed test).

[c]Difference between female and male couples within the ROC is significant at least p < .05 or lower (two-tailed test).

In Analysis 2, I focus on a subset of couples with young children. As mentioned, couples with young children are more susceptible to higher degrees of specialization, but having children has different legal implications for cohabiting couples in the two regions. I replicate the steps above by adding a two-way and three-way interaction term sequentially, yielding three models in total. Instead of the presence of a young child, I adjust for the number of young children.

All models include census year fixed effects, and cluster standard errors at the provincial level (10 provinces). Models are weighted to account for complex sampling strategy.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics of samples

Table 1 shows the distribution of the sample by sociodemographic and income characteristics in Québec and the ROC—showing the selectivity of couples residing in the two regions that have different levels of legal protections for cohabitors upon union dissolution. For all three types of couples, the share of married couples and the share of couples with young children were higher in the ROC than in Québec—except for male couples, with only 1.3% of them having young children in Québec, compared with 1.9% in the ROC. Significance tests show that regional differences in all sociodemographic and income characteristics are significant for DSCs and male couples (except for retirement status for male couples). Female couples were similar in more characteristics across regions (e.g., education, retirement, and school attendance, among others).

Within each region, the distribution of these characteristics was significantly different between DSCs and female couples, and DSCs and male couples. However, within regions, female and male SSCs were more similar. It is worth noting that in Québec, the share of married female and male couples was almost the same (about 18%), whereas in the ROC, the proportion of married couples was higher for female (36%) than male couples (33%).

### Intrahousehold specialization in labor supply

For ease of interpretation, Figure 1 shows the average marginal effects (AMEs) of key variables, including being married, region, and gender composition of couples, for each level of specialization in labor supply based on ordinal logistic regressions (for full regression results, see Table S1). The AME of marriage can be interpreted as the size of the marriage-cohabitation gap, with an AME of 0 indicating no marriage-cohabitation gap in specialization.

In general, marriage was positively associated with a more specialized arrangement. Models 1 and 2 show that Québec couples were more likely to have an equal arrangement relative to their ROC counterparts. Comparing couples by gender composition, SSCs were less likely to specialize than DSCs, with male couples being the least likely to do so. Adjusting for the presence of a young child in Model 2 slightly reduced the gap between married and cohabitating couples, and brought SSCs closer to DSCs, but differences by gender composition remained salient.

To investigate whether marriage-cohabitation gaps in specialization vary across institutional contexts, Models 3 and 4 include an interaction term between marital status and region, with and without the control of having a young child. Models 5 and 6 further include a three-way interaction between marital status, region, and the gender composition of couples to unpack variation in regional differences for DSCs and SSCs. To aid interpretation, Figure 2 shows predicted probabilities of adopting the lowest and highest level of specialization based on Models 5 (panel A) and 6 (panel B).
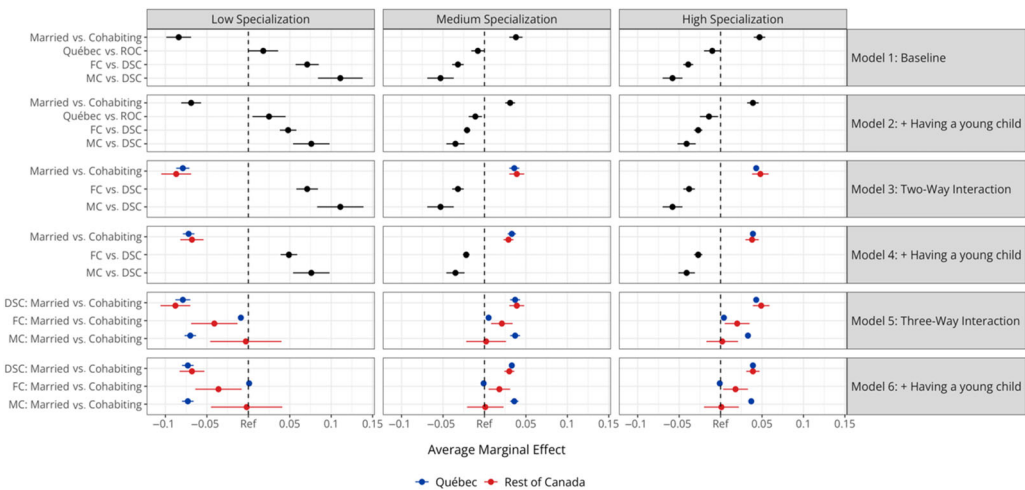
FIGURE 1 Average marginal effects on specialization in labor supply. Results based on Models 1–6 in Table S1. In addition to the variables shown in the figure, all models control for census year, age group of younger partner, age difference, educational attainment, ethnicity/race, immigration status, combined total income, census metropolitan area, at least one partner in school, one partner is retired, homeowner, health status. Models 2, 4, and 6 include the presence of a young child. DSC, different-sex couples; FC, female couples; MC, male couples; ROC, rest of Canada. [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]
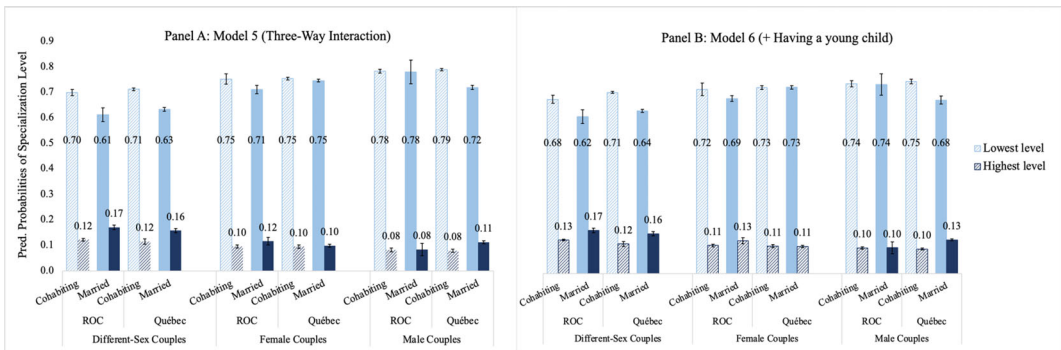
FIGURE 2 Predicted probabilities of low and high specialization levels by region and gender composition of couples. Results based on Models 5 and 6 in Table S1. ROC, rest of Canada. [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

As shown in Models 3 and 4, there was no significant difference in the marriage-cohabitation gap across regions, with or without controlling for having a young child. However, breaking down patterns by the gender composition of couples revealed significant heterogeneity. In fact, differences by the gender composition of couples were significant ($p < .05$) within each region, whereas cross-regional differences were less pronounced. For DSCs, there was no regional difference at any level of specialization. For female couples, the gap differed between Québec and the ROC only at the lowest level of specialization in Model 5, but the regional difference was significant at all levels of specialization once the presence of a young child was included (Model 6), with the gap being slightly larger in the ROC. As shown in Figure 2, there was no difference in the likelihood of adopting low or high levels of specialization between married and cohabiting couples in Québec for female couples, suggesting that

marital status was not a strong distinguishing factor in terms of specialization in labor supply for female couples in this region. For male couples, marriage-cohabitation gaps were consistently larger in Québec at all levels of specialization in both Models 5 and 6. It is worth noting, however, that the AMEs of marriage in the ROC were close to 0, and showed a wide uncertainty, making it unclear whether married male couples specialized more than cohabitors in this region.

In general, the size of marriage-cohabitation gaps were the largest for DSCs in both regions compared with SSCs. However, the AMEs of marriage were very similar for DSCs and male couples in Québec, with female couples showing the smallest gaps.

Overall, DSCs in both regions had the highest probabilities of adopting the highest level of specialization (and the lowest probabilities of equal arrangement) relative to SSCs, as shown in Figure 2.

Intrahousehold specialization in labor supply among couples with young children

Given that a young child increases the demand for care work and that sharing a child together hastens cohabiting couples' entry into a more protective legal regime in the ROC, Analysis 2 investigates marriage-cohabitation gaps in the same outcome variable based on a subset of couples with a child aged 0–5. Models control for the number of young children. Results are based on the same modeling strategy (see ordinal logistic regressions in Table S2), conveyed in terms of AMEs of key variables (Figure 3) and in predicted values (Figure 4).

Results among couples with young children shown in Models 1 and 2 in Figure 3 largely resemble those reported in Figure 1 but with overall smaller AMEs. Married couples were more likely to adopt a higher level of specialization than cohabiting couples; Québec couples were less specialized; male couples were the least specialized, and DSCs the most.

Whereas no significant regional differences were found in Models 3 and 4 in Figure 1, gaps were larger in Québec at all specialization levels among couples with young children in Model 2 ($p < .05$); however, these differences were not pronounced. Model 3 in Figure 3 further shows substantial heterogeneity across regions by the gender composition of couples. First, cross-regional differences in the marriage-cohabitation gap were significant for DSCs and male couples, but not female couples. Second, DSCs also differed from male couples.
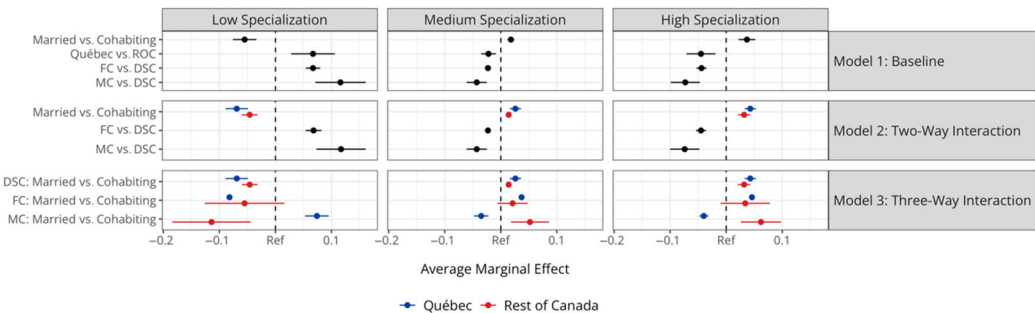
FIGURE 3 Average marginal effects on specialization level in labor supply. Results based on Models 1–3 in Table S2. In addition to the variables shown in the figure, all models control for census year, age group of younger partner, age difference, educational attainment, ethnicity/race, immigration status, combined total income, census metropolitan area, at least one partner in school, one partner is retired, homeowner, health status, and the number of young children. DSC, different-sex couples; FC, female couples; MC, male couples; ROC, rest of Canada. [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]
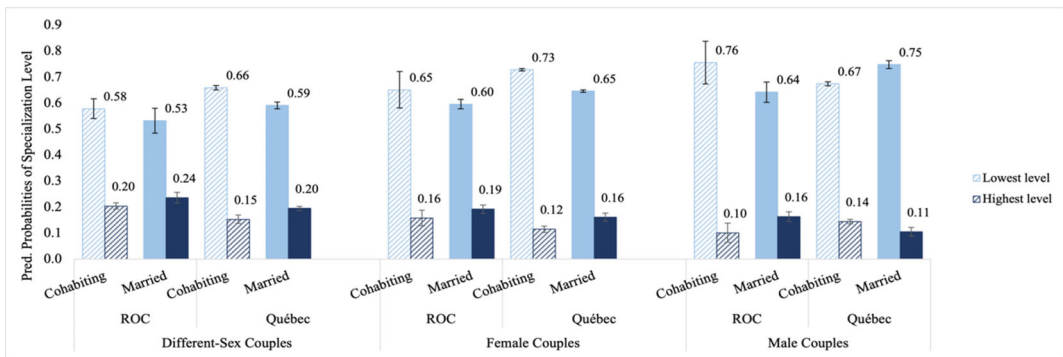
FIGURE 4 Predicted probabilities of low and high specialization level in labor supply by region and gender composition of couples. Results based on Model 3 in Table S2. ROC, rest of Canada. [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

Among DSCs, marriage-cohabitation gaps were larger in Québec (as hypothesized), but the opposite was true for male couples. Moreover, the AMEs of marriage were reversed for male couples in Québec across all specialization levels, suggesting that married male couples with young children were in fact more equal than their cohabiting counterparts (predicted probabilities of adopting the lowest level of specialization = 0.67 vs. 0.75 for cohabiting and married couples, respectively; and 0.14 vs. 0.11 for the highest level of specialization in Figure 4). Finally, whereas in Québec marriage-cohabitation gaps among female couples were nonexistent in Analysis 1, here, we see a clear distinction between married and cohabiting couples: the former specialized more than the latter.

Overall, comparing predicted probabilities across all couples, DSCs with young children were among the most unequal in terms of their employment arrangements, whereas cohabiting female and male couples in Québec were among the most equal.
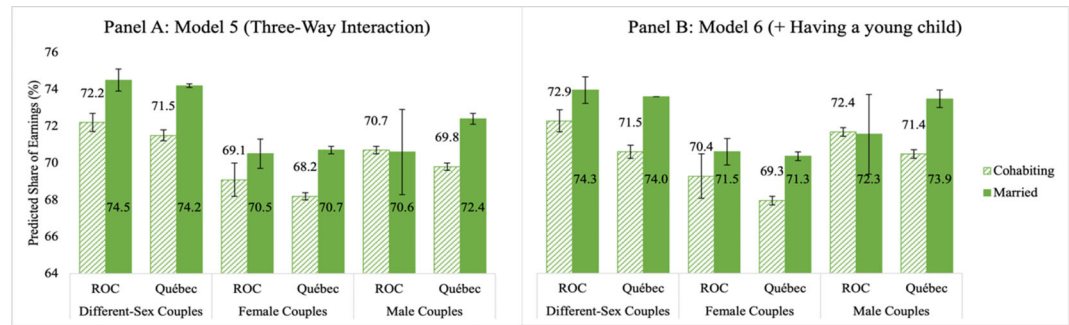
Share of earnings by the higher earner

Turning to the share of combined earnings provided by the higher earner, Figure 5 shows the AMEs of key variables based on fractional logit regressions (for full regression results, see Table S3) and Figure 6 visualizes predicted values based on Models 5 and 6. As expected, married couples generally had higher earnings disparities than cohabiting couples across Models 1–4, and Québec couples had lower earnings disparities than ROC couples (except in Model 1, where the confidence interval for the AME of marriage includes 0). After adjusting for having a young child, the negative AME of Québec became significant in Model 2, suggesting that the higher share of couples with young children in Québec might contribute to the overall earnings disparity within couples. Results also show that SSCs were more equal in earnings than DSCs (especially among female couples), even after controlling for the presence of a young child. This deviates from results on specialization in labor supply, where male couples on average showed the most equal arrangements.

The interaction between marital status and region in Model 3 shows that the marriage-cohabitation gap was larger in Québec ($p < .001$). The cross-context difference was even more evident once the presence of a young child was adjusted for in Model 4: The AME of marriage was significantly reduced in the ROC, whereas marriage-cohabitation gaps in Québec remained large. It is possible that married and cohabiting couples were different in
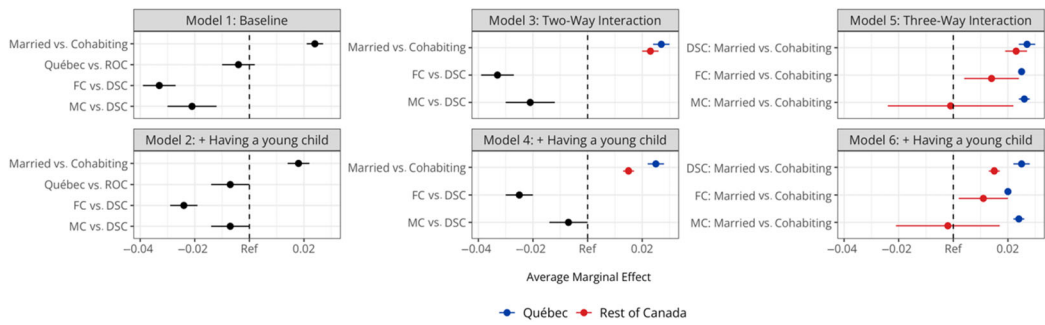
FIGURE 5 Average marginal effects on the share of earnings. Results based on Models 1–6 in Table S3. In addition to the variables shown in the figure, all models control for census year, age group of younger partner, age difference, educational attainment, ethnicity/race, immigration status, combined total income, census metropolitan area, at least one partner in school, one partner is retired, homeowner, and health status. Models 2, 4, and 6 include the presence of a young child. DSC, different-sex couples; FC, female couples; MC, male couples; ROC, rest of Canada. [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

FIGURE 6 Predicted share of earnings of the higher earner by region and gender composition of couples. Results based on Models 5 and 6 in Table S3. ROC, rest of Canada. [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

intracouple earnings inequality due in part to a higher share of married couples having young children. But this distributional difference seemed to affect ROC couples much more than it did Québec couples.

The three-way interaction in Models 5 and 6 yields a few notable findings. First, in Model 5, marriage-cohabitation gaps were larger in Québec than in the ROC for all couples ($p < .05$). Second, male couples in the ROC were the only group for which the direction of the marriage-cohabitation gap in both Models 5 and 6 was unclear. Third, adjusting for having a young child in Model 6 resulted in a salient decrease in the AME of marriage in the ROC for DSCs, which was mainly driven by an increase in earnings disparites among cohabiting couples (see Figure 6). In addition, regional differences in the marriage-cohabitation gap disappeared for female couples once the control for having a young child was introduced. Finally, within each region, there was no significant difference in the marriage-cohabitation gap by the gender composition of couples, except in Model 6, when female couples in Québec stood out from other couples. In other words, there are clear regional differences in marriage-cohabitation gaps, but few differences by the gender composition.

Overall, predicted values in Figure 6 suggest that on average, female couples had the lowest level of earnings disparity (with the higher earner contributing to about 68%–71% of the combined income, compared to about 71%–75% among DSCs and male couples).

## Share of earnings by the higher earner among couples with young children

Figure 7 visualizes earnings inequality among couples with young children based on fractional logit models (see Table S4). Results from Models 1 and 2 resemble those reported in Figure 5. On average, cohabiting couples and couples in Québec had lower earnings disparities. Female couples were the least unequal in earnings, followed by male couples. The larger marriage-cohabitation gap in Québec in Model 2 was largely driven by DSCs, as shown in Model 3.

Breaking down the pattern by gender composition of couples, we see that cross-regional differences were statistically significant for DSCs and female couples, but not male couples, as evinced by the wide confidence interval for male couples in the ROC. This is the primary difference between the results in Figure 5 and those illustrated in Figure 7.

Overall, the predicted share of earnings in Figure 8 shows that among couples with young children, DSCs (especially those in the ROC) had the highest earnings disparities (about 77%–78%), and female couples had the lowest (about 71%–75%).
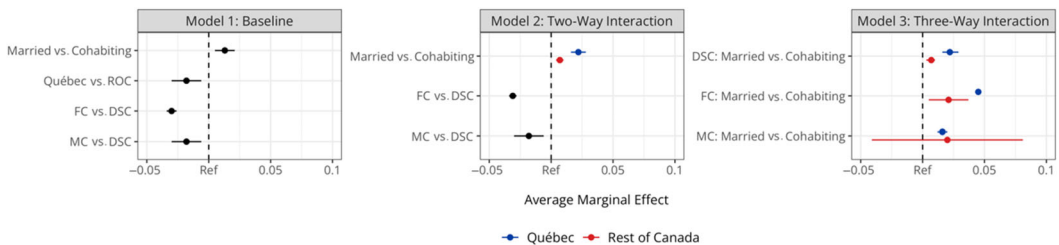
FIGURE 7 Average marginal effects on share of earnings. Results based on Models 1–3 in Table S4. All models control for, in addition to the variables shown in the figure, census year, age group of younger partner, age difference, educational attainment, ethnicity/race, immigration status, combined total income, census metropolitan area, at least one partner in school, one partner is retired, homeowner, health status, and the number of young children. [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]
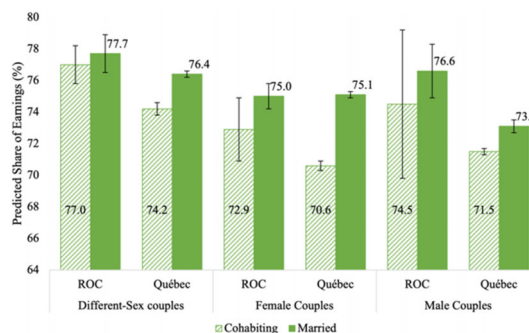
FIGURE 8 Predicted values of share of earnings by region and gender composition of couples. Results based on Model 3 in Table S4. ROC, rest of Canada. [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Despite a large literature on contextual variation in differences between married and cohabiting couples across a range of outcomes, past research has not adequately considered how different legal regimes governing cohabitation can shape intrahousehold specialization. Moreover, few studies have compared married to cohabiting couples among SSCs. Therefore, prior research was unable to discern if variation in levels of intrahousehold specialization stems from heightened gendered expectations attached to marriage or stronger legal protections for married couples. The current study filled these lacunae by examining marriage-cohabitation gaps in intrahousehold specialization (in both labor supply and earnings) among DSCs and SSCs across two institutional contexts in Canada. I hypothesized that the marriage-cohabitation gaps in specialization would be larger in a context where protections for cohabiting couples upon union dissolution are less marriage-like (i.e., Québec) and that this would apply to SSCs, too, although at an overall lower level of specialization compared to DSCs.

In general, my first hypothesis (which states that marriage-cohabitation gaps should be larger in Québec than in the ROC) is partially supported. Results of specialization in terms of labor supply were more ambiguous, but those in terms of earnings inequality rendered more support for the hypothesis. More concretely, analyses of specialization in labor supply revealed substantial heterogeneity along the lines of gender composition: marriage-cohabitation gaps were not different across regions for DSCs; were larger in the ROC for female couples; and larger in Québec for male couples. Results also differed for the subset of couples with young children: gaps were larger in Québec for DSCs; not different for female couples; and, surprisingly, reversed for male couples in Québec—where married couples were more equal in employment arrangements than cohabitors.

By contrast, marriage-cohabitation gaps were generally larger in Québec in terms of earnings, with two notable exceptions: i.e., there were no significant regional differences among female couples (when controlling for the presence of a young child); and among male couples with young children.

These mixed findings do not render a clear support for the legal perspective. However, two additional points are worth noting. First, if the difference in legal protections for cohabitors across the two contexts was the main factor driving cohabitors to specialize less in Québec, we would expect to observe a similar level of specialization among married couples in the two regions. However, results showed that couples in Québec—married and cohabiting—on average specialized less than those in the ROC. One possible explanation is that marriage is more deinstitutionalized in Québec, leading to more gender egalitarian practices in marriage (Cherlin, 2004; Le Bourdais & Lapierre-Adamcyk, 2004). On the other hand, in absolute terms (i.e., predicted values), cohabiting couples in Québec generally showed the lowest level of specialization in both labor supply and earnings, even though differences relative to married couples may not be consistently larger in Québec.

Second, instead of finding diminished differences between married and cohabiting couples in Québec—as the literature that spotlights the normalization of cohabitation argues—the current study found either no significant cross-regional differences or lager marriage-cohabitation gaps in Québec, with one exception (i.e., female couples in terms of labor supply). This challenges received wisdom for two major reasons. First, Québec had a higher share of couples sharing children in long-term cohabiting unions. Second, compared to the ROC, children of cohabiting parents in Québec are more likely to be biological offsprings as opposed to stepchildren (Le Bourdais & Lapierre-Adamcyk, 2004). Both of these facts are typically associated with higher specialization levels (Snoeckx et al., 2008). There are, thus, reasons to believe that gaining access to legal protections within a shorter amount of time upon having a child might increase parental couples' specialization levels in the ROC.

From this perspective, the current study echoes past research that showed that cohabiting women in Québec had higher average earnings than their ROC counterparts (Kerr et al., 2006; Laplante & Fostik, 2016), and thus smaller intracouple earnings differentials. In line with recent legal studies, the small difference between married and cohabiting couples in specialization in the ROC might correspond to decreasing labor supply and earnings for cohabiting women after becoming eligible for a protective alimony regime (Chiappori et al., 2017; Goussé & Leturcq, 2022). Similarly, Hamplová et al.'s (2014) null finding in income-pooling between Québec and the ROC could be reconciled if explained from a legal perspective.

The current study further contributes to the extant literature by revealing differences in marriage-cohabitation gaps by the gender composition of couples—an axis of variation that has not been scrutinized before. By adding analyses of SSCs, I heeded Widiss' (2016) call to test the relative significance of legal protections in intracouple labor and earnings allocation. My second hypothesis—which posited that SSCs should also exhibit larger marriage-cohabitation gaps in Québec—received mixed results, with a few key differences between female and male couples.

Results for female couples generally did not support this hypothesis. Unlike studies in the United States that suggested a negative association between gaining legal protections and labor supply among female couples (Dillender, 2015; Hansen et al., 2020), married and cohabiting female couples in Québec were highly similar in labor supply (as both engaged in a low degree of specialization). However, as in previous studies, marriage seemed to confer protection to female couples with young children, although regional differences were not clear. In terms of earnings inequality, results were not only in line with prior research regarding the overall low level of earnings difference among female couples (Aldén et al., 2015; Dilmaghani & Dean, 2023), but pointed to larger marriage-cohabitation gaps in earnings disparities in Québec, driven by cohabiting couples' low earnings disparity in this region in both absolute and relative terms.

Among male couples, results were more in line with Hypothesis 2. This was especially the case for male couples in Québec, who largely resembled DSCs in marriage-cohabitation gaps. However, the story was different among those with young children, where the gaps were either not different across regions (i.e., earnings) or inverted—i.e., with married couples being more equal than their cohabiting peers (i.e., labor supply in Québec). Moreover, there appeared to be large uncertainties around estimates among male couples in the ROC, which were not driven by a small sample size but large within-region variability.

Overall, these results point to distinct specialization dynamics specific to each couple type (corresponding to gender composition) on the one hand, and highlight how gender continues to shape household specialization on the other. Despite differences in the size of marriage-cohabitation gaps, results showed that the specialization level in both outcomes was consistently the highest among DSCs compared with SSCs, supporting my third hypothesis. Unlike SSCs, married DSCs also consistently specialized to a greater extent than cohabiting DSCs. This suggests that apart from legal protections associated with marriage, the heightened expectation to perform economically differentiated roles in marriage was partly contingent on heteronormative dynamics within couples. Conversely, results for SSCs complicated past research (Giddings et al., 2014; Jepsen & Jepsen, 2015) as marriage was not necessarily associated with stronger specialization due to either normative expectations or legal protections and, in some cases, the relationship might even be reversed. Consequently, my results contribute to the literature on gender dynamics in heterosexual unions and further speak to Cherlin's (2004) speculation regarding the lack of established norms surrounding same-sex marriage due to its recency.

The current study has a few limitations. First, this study could not examine how couples' behaviors changed over time, given the lack of information on the duration of the relationship and the cross-sectional design of census data. Future research should analyze cross-regional

differences while comparing specialization dynamics before and after entry into marriage to better understand couples' response to the level of legal protections.

Second, this study did not have direct measures of how couples made decisions related to employment and earnings, especially their knowledge about legal rights and obligations vis-à-vis cohabitation and marriage. Whereas research in the area remains scant, some descriptive findings might be suggestive. For example, a survey showed that about 85% of cohabiting respondents in an English Canadian province, Ontario, (falsely) believed that they automatically had the same protections as married couples after living together for a few years (Belleau et al., 2023). Interestingly, the false belief regarding the same protections might have partly contributed to cohabiting DSCs' willingness to specialize more in the ROC than their Québec peers.

Conversely, other surveys showed that the share of cohabiting couples in Québec who accurately knew that they would not have the same protections as married couples regardless of relationship duration had increased from about 40% in 2007 (Chambre des notaires du Québec, 2007) to 51% in 2015 (Belleau et al., 2017). Scholars surmised the increased awareness might be a result of the high-profile case of *Eric v. Lola* in 2013 when the Supreme Court ruled that the exclusion of ex-cohabitors from the right to spousal support was justified in Québec (Belleau et al., 2017). The Québec government reiterated its longstanding position in the judgment: "[…] not to regulate the private relationships of *de facto* spouses on the basis that their individual autonomy and freedom should be respected" [Quebec (Attorney General) v. A—SCC Cases, 2013]. This differs from the principle held by English provinces, which seeks to "[…] allow the economically dependent spouse to maintain her standard of living" (Laplante & Fostik, 2016, p. 65). There is also some evidence suggesting a potential alignment between value orientation, union type, and specialization: Individuals with a strong ideological commitment to autonomy and equality were more likely to be cohabiting than married, with the association being stronger in Québec than in the ROC (Laplante & Fostik, 2016). Similarly, a qualitative study found that many Québec couples rejected the notion of spousal support and were in favor of economic independence after the relationship dissolved (Belleau & St-Pierre, 2014).

Using the Canadian case, the current study highlights the need to incorporate the legal perspective on top of cohabitation's prevalence and acceptance, although more research on the direct link between legal regimes and specialization is warranted. By including analyses of SSCs, it advances gender-based and legality-based theoretical perspectives on household specialization. Given results on heterogeneous patterns specific to female and male SSCs, future work should pay closer attention to how economic decisions are made within sexual minority households.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ORCID

Chih-lan Winnie Yang https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3713-426X

REFERENCES

Aldén, L., Edlund, L., Hammarstedt, M., & Mueller-Smith, M. (2015). Effect of registered partnership on labor earnings and fertility for same-sex couples: Evidence from Swedish Register Data. *Demography*, *52*(4), 1243–1268. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13524-015-0403-4

Barg, K., & Beblo, M. (2012). Does "Sorting into Specialization" explain the differences in time use between married and cohabiting couples? An empirical application for Germany. *Annals of Economics and Statistics*, *105*(106), 127–152. https://doi.org/10.2307/23646459

Becker, G. S. (1991). *A treatise on the family: Enlarged edition*. Harvard University Press.

Belleau, H., Lavallée, C., Leckey, R., & Pugliese, M. (2023). *Economic practices and social and legal representations of life together: Portrait of Ontario*. INRS—Urbanisation Culture Société. https://espace.inrs.ca/id/eprint/13538/

Belleau, H., Lavallée, C., & Seery, A. (2017). Unions et désunions conjugales au Québec: Rapport de recherche. In *Première partie: le couple, l'argent et le droit*. INRS Centre—Urbanisation Culture Société. https://espace.inrs.ca/id/eprint/5763/

Belleau, H., & St-Pierre, P. C. (2014). Conjugal interdependence in Quebec: From legal rules to social representations about spousal support and property division on conjugal Breakdown1. *Canadian Journal of Law and Society/La Revue Canadienne Droit et Société*, *29*(1), 43–58. https://doi.org/10.1017/cls.2013.34

Bergsvik, J., Kitterød, R. H., & Wiik, K. A. (2020). Parenthood and couples' relative earnings in Norway. *European Sociological Review*, *36*(2), 218–235. https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcz062

Bianchi, S., Lesnard, L., Nazio, T., & Raley, S. (2014). Gender and time allocation of cohabiting and married women and men in France, Italy, and the United States. *Demographic Research*, *31*, 183–216. http://10.4054/DemRes.2014.31.8

Brines, J., & Joyner, K. (1999). The ties that bind: Principles of cohesion in cohabitation and marriage. *American Sociological Review*, *64*(3), 333–355. https://doi.org/10.2307/2657490

Chambre des notaires du Québec. (2007). *Perception du mariage et de l'union libre* (pp. 3–89). Chambre des notaires du Québec.

Cherlin, A. J. (2004). The deinstitutionalization of American marriage. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *66*(4), 848–861. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0022-2445.2004.00058.x

Chiappori, P.-A., Iyigun, M., Lafortune, J., & Weiss, Y. (2017). Changing the rules midway: The impact of granting alimony rights on existing and newly formed partnerships. *The Economic Journal*, *127*(604), 1874–1905. https://doi.org/10.1111/ecoj.12385

Crissey, S. R. (2005). Race/ethnic differences in the marital expectations of adolescents: The role of romantic relationships. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *67*(3), 697–709. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2005.00163.x

Denier, N., & Waite, S. (2017). Sexual orientation wage gaps across local labour market contexts: Evidence from Canada. *Relations Industrielles/Industrial Relations*, *72*(4), 734–762. https://doi.org/10.7202/1043174ar

Dillender, M. (2015). Health insurance and labor force participation: What legal recognition does for same-sex couples. *Contemporary Economic Policy*, *33*(2), 381–394. https://doi.org/10.1111/coep.12076

Dilmaghani, M., & Dean, J. (2023). Sexual orientation and intra-household specialization before and after the legal recognition of same-sex marriage in Canada. *Applied Economics*, *56*(29), 3460–3484. https://doi.org/10.1080/00036846.2023.2206626

Domínguez-Folgueras, M. (2013). Is cohabitation more egalitarian? The division of household labor in five European countries. *Journal of Family Issues*, *34*(12), 1623–1646. https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X12464948

Evans, A., & Gray, E. (2021). Cross-national differences in income pooling among married and cohabiting couples. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *83*(2), 534–550. https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12721

Giddings, L., Nunley, J. M., Schneebaum, A., & Zietz, J. (2014). Birth cohort and the specialization gap between same-sex and different-sex couples. *Demography*, *51*(2), 509–534. http://10.1007/s13524-013-0267-4

Goldberg, A. E., Smith, J. Z., & Perry-Jenkins, M. (2012). The division of labor in lesbian, gay, and heterosexual new adoptive parents. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *74*(4), 812–828. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2012.00992.x

Goussé, M., & Leturcq, M. (2022). More or less unmarried. The impact of legal settings of cohabitation on labour market outcomes. *European Economic Review*, *149*, 104259. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.euroecorev.2022.104259

Hamplová, D., & Le Bourdais, C. (2009). One pot or two pot strategies? Income pooling in married and unmarried households in comparative perspective. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, *40*(3), 355–385. https://doi.org/10.3138/jcfs.40.3.355

Hamplová, D., Le Bourdais, C., & Lapierre-Adamcyk, É. (2014). Is the cohabitation–marriage gap in money pooling universal? *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *76*(5), 983–997. https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12138

Hansen, M. E., Martell, M. E., & Roncolato, L. (2020). A labor of love: The impact of same-sex marriage on labor supply. *Review of Economics of the Household*, *18*(2), 265–283. http://10.1007/s11150-019-09454-1

Heuveline, P., & Timberlake, J. M. (2004). The role of cohabitation in family formation: The United States in comparative perspective. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, *66*(5), 1214–1230. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0022-2445.2004.00088.x

Hull, K. E. (2019). Same-sex marriage: Principle versus practice. *International Journal of Law, Policy and the Family*, *33*(1), 51–74. https://doi.org/10.1093/lawfam/eby018

Jepsen, C., & Jepsen, L. (2015). Labor-market specialization within same-sex and difference-sex couples. *Industrial Relations: A Journal of Economy and Society*, *54*(1), 109–130. https://doi.org/10.1111/irel.12078

Kahn, J. R., García-Manglano, J., & Bianchi, S. M. (2014). The motherhood penalty at midlife: Long-term effects of children on women's careers. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *76*(1), 56–72. https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12086

Kerr, D., Moyser, M., & Beaujot, R. (2006). Marriage and cohabitation: Demographic and socioeconomic differences in Quebec and Canada. *Canadian Studies in Population*, *33*(1), 83-117. https://doi.org/10.25336/P6ZS5H

Kiernan, K. (2001). The rise of cohabitation and childbearing outside marriage in Western Europe. *International Journal of Law, Policy and the Family*, *15*(1), 1–21. https://doi.org/10.1093/lawfam/15.1.1

Killewald, A. (2016). Money, work, and marital stability: Assessing change in the gendered determinants of divorce. *American Sociological Review*, *81*(4), 696–719. https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122416655340

Laplante, B., & Fostik, A. L. (2016). Cohabitation and marriage in Canada. The geography, law and politics of competing views on gender equality. In A. Esteve & R. J. Lesthaeghe (Eds.), *Cohabitation and marriage in the Americas: Geo-historical legacies and new trends* (pp. 59–100). Springer International Publishing.

Le Bourdais, C., & Lapierre-Adamcyk, É. (2004). Changes in conjugal life in Canada: Is cohabitation progressively replacing marriage? *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *66*(4), 929–942. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0022-2445.2004.00063.x

Le Bourdais, C., Lapierre-Adamcyk, E., & Roy, A. (2014). Instabilité des unions libres: Une analyse comparative des facteurs démographiques. *Recherches Sociographiques*, *55*(1), 53–78. https://doi.org/10.7202/1025645ar

Liefbroer, A. C., & Dourleijn, E. (2006). Unmarried cohabitation and union stability: Testing the role of diffusion using data from 16 European countries. *Demography*, *43*(2), 203–221. https://doi.org/10.1353/dem.2006.0018

Nock, S. L. (1995). A comparison of marriages and cohabiting relationships. *Journal of Family Issues*, *16*(1), 53–76. https://doi.org/10.1177/019251395016001004

Perelli-Harris, B., & Gassen, N. S. (2012). How similar are cohabitation and marriage? Legal approaches to cohabitation across Western Europe. *Population and Development Review*, *38*(3), 435–467. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1728-4457.2012.00511.x

Poortman, A.-R., & Mills, M. (2012). Investments in marriage and cohabitation: The role of legal and interpersonal commitment. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *74*(2), 357–376. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2011.00954.x

Quebec (Attorney General) v. A—SCC Cases, 33990 (Supreme Court of Canada January 25, 2013). https://scc-csc.lexum.com/scc-csc/scc-csc/en/item/10536/index.do

Rangel, M. A. (2006). Alimony rights and intrahousehold allocation of resources: Evidence from Brazil. *The Economic Journal*, *116*(513), 627–658. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0297.2006.01104.x

Richman, K. (2015). *License to wed: What legal marriage means to same-sex couples*. NYU Press.

Risman, B. J. (1998). *Gender vertigo: American families in transition*. Yale University Press.

Sayer, L. C., England, P., Allison, P. D., & Kangas, N. (2011). She left, he left: How employment and satisfaction affect women's and men's decisions to leave marriages. *American Journal of Sociology*, *116*(6), 1982–2018. https://doi.org/10.1086/658173

Schoen, R., & Weinick, R. M. (1993). Partner choice in marriages and cohabitations. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *55*(2), 408–414. https://doi.org/10.2307/352811

Snoeckx, L., Dehertogh, B., & Mortelmans, D. (2008). The distribution of household tasks in first-marriage families and stepfamilies across Europe. In *The international handbook of stepfamilies* (pp. 277–298). John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Soons, J. P. M., Kalmijn, M., & Teachman, J. (2009). Is marriage more than cohabitation? Well-being differences in 30 European countries. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *71*(5), 1141–1157. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2009.00660.x

South, S. J., & Spitze, G. (1994). Housework in marital and nonmarital households. *American Sociological Review*, *59*(3), 327–347. https://doi.org/10.2307/2095937

Statistics Canada. (2015). *National Household Survey (NHS)*. Statistics Canada, Government of Canada. https://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p2SV.pl?Function=getSurvey&SDDS=5178

Statistics Canada. (2017a). Census in brief: Same-sex couples in Canada in 2016. https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/98-200-x/2016007/98-200-x2016007-eng.cfm

Statistics Canada. (2017b). *Guide to the census of population, 2016*. Chapter 9—Sampling and weighting for the long form. Statistics Canada, Government of Canada. https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/98-304/chap9-eng.cfm

Statistics Canada. (2021). *Consumer price index, annual average, not seasonally adjusted* (Table 18-10-0005-01). Statistics Canada. https://doi.org/10.25318/1810000501-eng

Stratton, L. S. (2005). *Specialization in household activities within cohabiting versus married households*. 2005 Annual Meeting of the Population Association of America.

Waite, S., & Denier, N. (2019). A research note on Canada's LGBT data landscape: Where we are and what the future holds. *Canadian Review of Sociology—Revue Canadienne De Sociologie*, *56*(1), 93–117. https://doi.org/10.1111/cars.12232

Widiss, D. (2016). Legal recognition of same-sex relationships: New possibilities for research on the role of marriage law in household labor allocation. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, *8*(1), 10-29. https://doi.org/10.1111/jftr.12123

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of this article.