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DIVISION OF LABOR AND RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION: EXAMINING THE MEDIATING ROLE OF SELF ESTEEM

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DIVISION OF LABOR AND RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION: EXAMINING THE
MEDIATING ROLE OF SELF ESTEEM

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THESIS

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Family Sciences in the
College of Agriculture, Food and Environment
at the University of Kentucky

By

Ellen Elizabeth Keith

Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Dr. Donald Bruce Ross III, Professor of Family Sciences

Lexington, Kentucky

2024

ABSTRACT OF THESIS

DIVISION OF LABOR AND RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION: EXAMINING THE
MEDIATING ROLE OF SELF ESTEEM

As a result of feminist movements, rejections of gender roles, and changing economic
conditions, profound changes have occurred within the structure of American families.
This study delves into the intricate dynamics of divisions of household labor (DoL), self-
esteem, and relationship satisfaction within the context of contemporary relationships.
Drawing on data from the Panel Analysis of Intimate Relationships and Family Dynamics
(Pairfam), this study tested five hypotheses, and investigates how perceptions of fairness
in DoL tasks influence self-esteem and relationship satisfaction. Significant associations
were found between reported share of DoL and indicated fairness of DoL, indicated
fairness of DoL and relationship satisfaction, and self-esteem and relationship
satisfaction. Results suggest an interconnectedness of individual and relational wellbeing,
having implications for both clinicians and researchers.

KEYWORDS: Division of labor, feminist theory, relationship satisfaction, self-esteem

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DIVISION OF LABOR AND RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION: EXAMINING THE
MEDIATING ROLE OF SELF ESTEEM

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To my parents, thank you for always believing in me. I would not be where I am today without your unwavering support. To my cohort, thank you all for being by my side throughout every step of this journey. I cannot imagine a better support system than you all.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1   Background

  According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2023), both spouses were employed in 48.9% of married couple families in 2022, a 2.1% increase from 2021. In 29% of marriages, both spouses earn around the same, and 16% of marriages have a female breadwinner (Fry et. al, 2023). As a result of feminist movements, rejections of gender roles, and changing economic conditions, profound changes have occurred within the structure of American families. Feminist movements have encouraged the exploration of identity and individualism (Iannello, 2010), and ultimately challenged traditional gender roles. However, it is possible that some effects of the deep-rooted beliefs surrounding gender remain.

  From traditional viewpoints, there is a belief that traditional divisions of labor ensure marital quality and stability (Yu, 2015). Although this idea was conceptualized in a way that emphasizes the importance of teamwork, efficiency, and fairness within the family, the gendered undertones in this foundation have reinforced societal expectations of what it means to be a man or woman. Ultimately, the continued pressure to adopt these roles to fit the mold of masculinity and femininity further oppresses both men and women (Garcia-Preto, 2011; Hornsey, 2008).

  Previous literature has examined relationships between divisions of labor and relationship satisfaction (Carlson et al., 2020; Yu, 2015; Yavorsky et al., 2015), as well as the associations between self-esteem and relationship satisfaction (Erol & Orth, 2014).

While these findings contribute to the understanding of divisions of labor, self-esteem, and relationship satisfaction, research is still needed to examine the mediating role self-esteem may have on the associations between fairness of the divisions of household labor and relationship satisfaction.

1.2   Breadwinner Model

Within the context of families across the globe, the breadwinning role refers to the primary or sole income earner in the relationship (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Historically, the male as breadwinner and female as homemaker dynamic has been thought of as the 'traditional' family structure (Garcia-Petro, 2011). Although the term itself has roots in the 19th century (Seccombe, 1986), the male-breadwinner female-homemaker ideal has been consistently reinforced throughout history by gendered social norms, changing economic conditions, and various legal factors.

Although gender norms are often reinforced through our social interactions (Thébaud et al., 2021), legal influence has pushed the traditional division of labor. In 1932, Congress passed the National Recovery Act. According to the National Women's History Alliance, this law forbade more than one person within the same family from holding a federal job, resulting in the loss of jobs for many women. In 1944, the G.I. Bill of Rights was signed into law, providing benefits to veterans (e.g.: low mortgage loans, unemployment relief, educational funds, insurance, etc.), and the only way for a woman to receive these benefits was by marrying a veteran. In 1948, the American tax law was passed, providing tax breaks to men who were married to a woman who earned little to no income (Yu, 2015). Despite the intent of the laws passed in 1932, 1944, and 1948, these laws further enhanced the dominance of the male breadwinner structure.

Despite its persistence throughout the 20th century, there has been a decline in the number of families who subscribe to the traditional family structure. The economic changes, increase in numbers of single parent households, more women entering the workforce, more couples remaining childless, and many other influential factors throughout the last several decades have been a catalyst for major shifts in the family structure as we previously knew it (Drago at al., 2005).

1.3   Division of Labor

From traditional viewpoints, there is a belief that traditional divisions of labor, or DoL, (i.e.: male as breadwinner, female as homemaker) ensure marital quality and stability (Yu, 2015). Although this ideal was conceptualized in a way that emphasizes the importance of teamwork, efficiency, and fairness within the family, the changing structure of American families challenges this norm.

While the traditional division of labor (i.e.: male as breadwinner, female as homemaker) has historically been referred to as the 'traditional' family structure (Garcia-Petro, 2011), the changing dynamics of American families caused by women's movements and women's increased labor force participation has influenced the decline of this structure (Yavorsky et al., 2015). The division of household labor differs from family to family, but often these arrangements fall into one of these three categories: conventional (female does most of the housework), egalitarian (more equitable split; partners do around the same amount of housework), or counter conventional (male does most of the housework) (Carlson et al., 2020). Though there is a decline in the representation of the traditional family structure across American families, the pressure to uphold gendered norms persists. Analyses of dual earner families find that even when

women have full time jobs, they still take care of most of the household labor (Noonan et al., 2007).

1.4   Self Esteem

For decades, individuals have measured their worth by their ability to uphold the standards of masculinity and femininity (Garcia-Preto, 2011). Deviations from these unrealistic expectations are often deemed as failures; If a man is not the provider for his family, he is seen as weak. If a woman prioritizes her career over starting a family, she is no longer seen as feminine. For both men and women, the pressures to conform to certain societal expectations can be extremely oppressive (Garcia-Preto, 2011). Since self-esteem is understood to be measured by confidence in one's self-worth and identity, it is likely influenced by conformation to gender roles and social identity (Hornsey, 2008).

Self-esteem has been proven to have significant impacts on one's own relationship satisfaction, but also their partners relationship satisfaction. Specifically, one study finds that when controlling for the effects of their partner's self-esteem, an individual's own self-esteem predicted not only their own relationship satisfaction, but that of their partner as well (Erol & Orth, 2013).

1.5   Relationship Satisfaction

Over the last several decades, relationship satisfaction, the many different factors influencing it, and its role in personal and family well-being has gained the interest of many researchers (Bradbury, Fincham, & Beach, 2000). Relationship satisfaction can be defined as an individual's evaluation of current state of their relationship, their own feelings about the relationship and their perception of their partner's feelings about the relationship (Rusbult, 1983). Throughout previous research, different characteristics (i.e.:

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commitment, trust, security, and emotional support) have been used to help individuals evaluate their satisfaction within their romantic relationships (Walker et al., 2023).

While there is research evaluating relationships between many different aspects and reported relational satisfaction, some studies have also found a relationship between self-esteem and reported relationship satisfaction. Specifically, studies have found that self-esteem predicts individual relationship satisfaction and partners' shared relationship satisfaction (Erol & Orth, 2013), and that changes in self-esteem (increases or decreases) can predict change in reported relationship satisfaction (Erol & Orth, 2014).

Numerous studies have found different aspects that shape relationship satisfaction, and among these aspects is the division of household labor. While some previous literature has found that egalitarian divisions of labor are seen as more fair than other arrangements and therefore improving relationship satisfaction (Carlson et al., 2020), other studies have found that couples may not need to split housework 50-50 to be satisfied, highlighting that their satisfaction with current arrangements is more influential in their overall relationship satisfaction than just having even 50-50 split (Stevens et al., 2001).

1.6   Theoretical Framework: Feminist Theory

Feminist lenses are adopted in attempts to understand systems in which inequalities exist, proposing change can occur with the acknowledgment, understanding, and disruption of power and oppression (Arinder, 2020). Feminist theorists assert the belief that gender is socially constructed, with scholars challenging the oppressive outcomes of traditional divisions of labor (Smith et al., 2009).

Some gender scholars argue that division of household labor inequalities, regardless of employment statuses of each individual within couple, are likely a result of "doing gender" (i.e.: women may take on extra household tasks and care for children, while men may strive to secure the breadwinner role for the family, or participate in less housework) (Yavorsky et al., 2015). This belief is supported by the results of a study (Carlson & Lynch, 2013), finding a reciprocal relationship between husbands' and wives' gender ideologies/attitudes and the division of housework. The same study found that when husbands' and wives' attitudes differ, the husbands' beliefs are a stronger determinant of the division of labor. These results indicate power imbalances exist within intimate relationships, consistent with feminist principles. When adhering to social gendered norms, individuals ultimately reinforce the inequalities and power imbalances that feminist scholars and activists work to eliminate.

Many egalitarian-liberal feminists hold beliefs that social and relational arrangements within personal lives should be freely chosen, and characterized by fairness (Baehr, 2021). This aspect of egalitarian feminism is supported by equity theory, suggesting that when individuals perceive relationships as equitable and fair, they are most satisfied (Carlson et al., 2020).

CHAPTER 2. METHODOLOGY

2.1   Purpose

The purpose of this study is to investigate the associations between the relative

share of DoL tasks, indicated fairness of DoL, self-esteem, and relationship satisfaction.

The present study tests five hypotheses:

- **H1:** Relative share of DoL tasks will be negatively and significantly
  associated with indicated fairness of DoL.

- **H2:** Relative share of DoL tasks will be significantly and negatively
  associated with self-esteem.

- **H3:** Indicated fairness of DoL will be positively and significantly associated
  with self-esteem.

- **H4:** Indicated fairness of DoL will be positively and significantly associated
  with relationship satisfaction.

- **H5:** Self-esteem will be positively and significantly associated with
  relationship satisfaction.

2.2   Procedure

The present study utilized a secondary dataset to test associations between DoL

tasks, indicated fairness of DoL, self-esteem, and relationship satisfaction. Specifically,

the dataset used was a longitudinal German dataset, the Panel Analysis of Intimate

Relationships and Family Dynamics (i.e.: Pairfam). This dataset takes a life course

approach by collecting data at an individual level from the selected participants, referred

to as anchors, but also from their partners, parents, and children. Annual data collection

began in 2008-2009 (referred to as Wave 1), with most recent data collection being Wave 14 (2021-2022). Data from Wave 11 (2018-2019) was used in the present study.

The initial sample (Wave 1) took place in 2008 and included 12,000 randomly selected individuals (i.e.: anchors) from three birth cohorts: 1971-1973 (ages 35-37 at baseline), 1981-1983 (ages 25-27 at baseline), and 1991-1993 (ages 15-17 at baseline). Beginning in Wave 2, data was collected from anchors, anchors' partners, parents, and children. Anchors are compensated 10€, and anchors' partners, parents, and children are compensated 5€ (see Brüderl et al., 2022, for more information regarding data collection process).

The Pairfam dataset was chosen for this study because it provides rich data encompassing individuals' experiences in many different domains. The annual surveys collect valuable information in many different domains, which in turn, provides information for all variables in the present study. Participants in this survey provided valuable information regarding divisions of labor in their current relationships and their perception of fairness of the division of labor, as well as information about their self-esteem and relationship satisfaction.

The sample size of this dataset was also advantageous. Specifically, having a large national random sample size is more likely to be representative of the population, increasing the generalizability and reliability of the results.

2.3   Sample Characteristics

The Pairfam dataset provided demographic information for all participants. Data was collected from 9,467 (N) participants in Wave 11 of this survey. The ages of participants ranged from 14 to 49 years old, with a mean age of 29.98. 4,422 participants identified as male (approximately 46.7% of the sample), while 5,044 of the participants identified as female (approximately 53.3% of the sample). Educational attainment ranged from 0 years (or currently enrolled) to 20 years, with an average of 10.68 years. Household income ranged from 0 € to 90,000 € per month. Although the range was broad, the average monthly net household income in this sample was 3,449.12 €, equivalent to 3,779.20 USD. 32.9% of the sample is currently married (n= 3,098). 2,225 participants indicated that they are employed full time, and 2,219 indicated that they are not. Demographic variables are summarized in Table 2.1 below.

Table 2.1: Demographic Characteristics of Participants
(N= 9,467)

	n	Mean	Standard Deviation	Range	%
Age	9467	29.98	10.49	14-49 (years)	
Gender					
Male	4,422				46.7
Female	5,044				53.3
Education (Years)	9388	10.68	6.257	0-20 (years)	
Monthly Net Household Income	6068	3,449.12	2706.158	0-90,000 ((€) Euros)	
Marital Status					
Never married	5,928				62.9
Married/civil union	3,098				32.9
Divorced/dissolved civil union	378				4
Widowed/surviving partner in civil union	22				.2
Full-Time Employment					
No	2,219				49.9
Yes	2,225				50.1

2.4   Measures

2.4.1   Relative Share of Labor: Division of Labor Tasks

To measure the division of labor tasks, the "relative share of labor" scale was used. This scale was only administered to participants cohabiting with their current partner and at least one child. This measure assessed the division of household chores and childcare responsibilities within the participant's partnership. Participants were asked about the relative division of labor between themselves and their partner in 5 different domains of labor tasks: housework (cooking and cleaning), shopping, taking care of children, financial and administrative matters, and working on the house, apartment, or car. Participants were asked the following question: **"**To what extent do you and [name of current partner] share duties in the following domains?" For each domain (housework, shopping, taking care of children, financial and administrative matters, and working on the house, apartment, or car) responses were recorded using a Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Completely my partner), to 5 (Completely me).

2.4.2   Indicated Fairness of Division of Labor

To measure the participants' perception of the fairness of the division of labor, a one item measure was used. This question was used to gauge participants' perception of fairness regarding both housework and paid work. Participants were asked to use a 5-point Likert scale to answer the following question: "Looking at both housework and paid work: Overall, how fair is the division of labor between you and your partner?" Answers ranged from 1 (I do much more than my fair share), to 5 (I do much less than my fair share) (see Appendix B).

2.4.3 Self Esteem

To limit the volume of data collected, researchers used a 3-item adapted version of the 10-item Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) to assess the participant's overall view of themselves, or their self-esteem. The items used for the interviews were 1. "Sometimes I believe that I am worthless," 2. "I like myself just the way I am," and 3. "All in all, I am pleased with myself." Participants were asked to rate their agreement with each statement on a scale of 1 (Not at all) to 5 (Absolutely) (see Appendix C).

2.4.4 Relationship Satisfaction

Two items were taken from the German version of the Relationship Assessment Scale (i.e.: RAS; Sander & Bocker, 1993). The first item participants answered was regarding their partners' ability to meet their needs. Using a 5-point Likert scale, participants rated their agreement with the following statement: "[Name of current partner] can fulfill my needs very well." Answers ranged from 1 (Not at all) to 5 (Absolutely). The second item used in this measure was a question relating to the participants' overall satisfaction in their current relationship. Participants used an 11-point Likert scale to respond to the following question: "All in all, how satisfied are you with your relationship?" Answers for this item ranged from 0 (Very dissatisfied) to 10 (Very satisfied) (See Appendix D).

2.5 Analytical Strategy

This study utilized a path analysis to examine the relationship between division of labor tasks, fairness of division of labor, self-esteem, and relationship satisfaction (see Figure 2.1). Preliminary analyses examine a bi-variate correlational matrix across all

study variables. Data will be analyzed with SPSS 29 (IBM Corporation, 2016) and analyses will be run through AMOS 29.0 (Arbuckle, 2014) to obtain estimates. Full information maximum likelihood (FIML) was used to account for missing data. FIML is preferable to other methods because it allows all available data to be utilized when estimating model parameters and standard errors (Enders, 2001). Standardized coefficients were reported in analysis. A range of fit indices was used to assess the goodness-of-fit, including the Chi-square statistic/degrees of freedom ratio, comparative fit index (CFI), and the Root Mean Square Error Approximation (RMSEA). Age, gender, level of education, and total household income were included in the analysis as control variables

Figure 2.1: Path Analysis
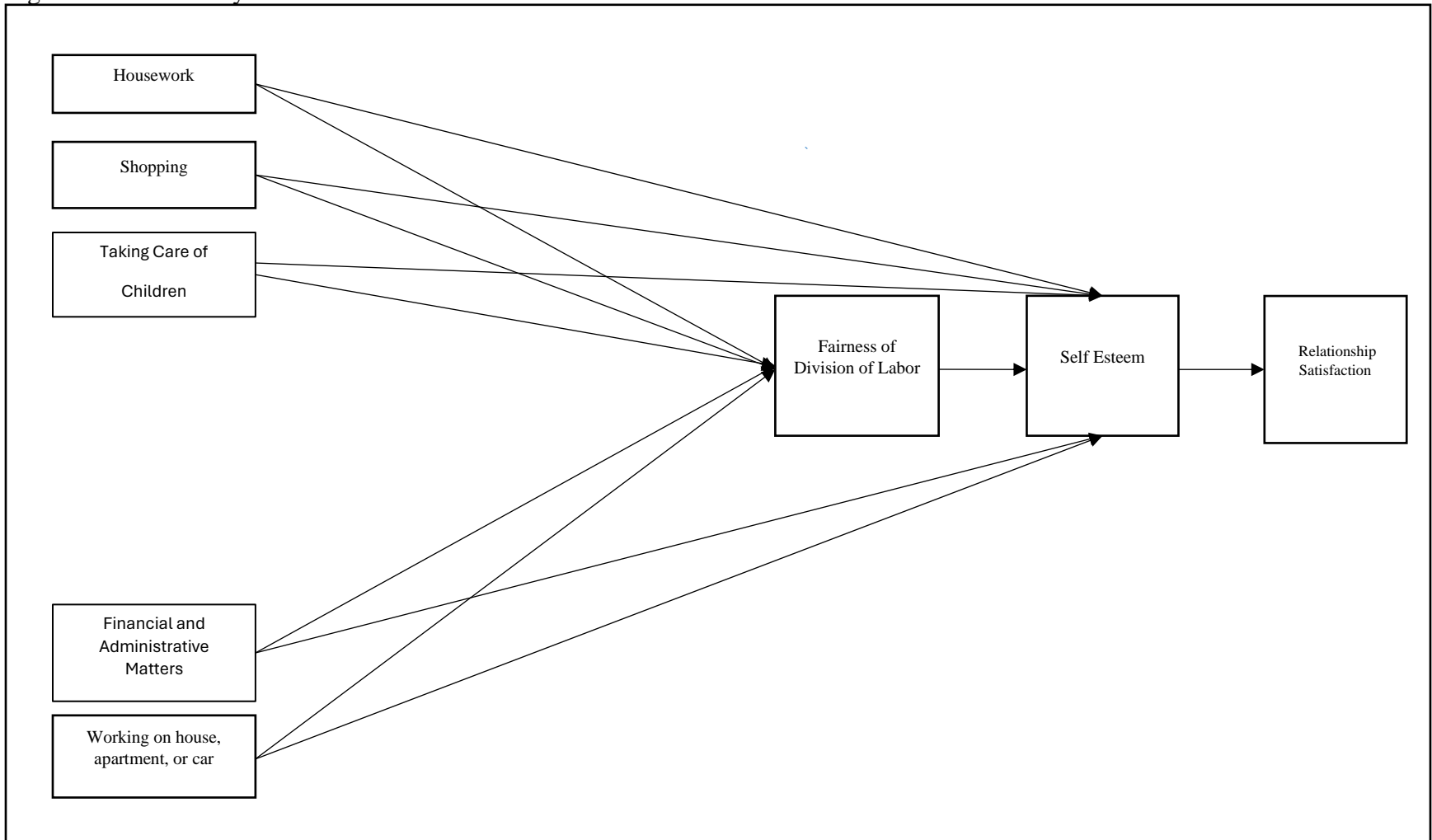
CHAPTER 3. RESULTS

3.1   Preliminary Analyses

In the bivariate correlation analysis, many strong associations were found. Specifically, the DoL task of housework showed a statistically significant positive correlation with DoL task of shopping (p < .001) and DoL task of taking care of children (p < .001). In turn, housework was found to have strong negative correlations with the DoL task of home, apartment, or car repairs (p < .001), indicated fairness of DoL (p < .001), self-esteem (p < .001), and relationship satisfaction (p < .001).

Significant positive correlations were also found between the DoL task of shopping and DoL task of taking care of children (p < .001) and the DoL task of financial and administrative matters (p < .001). Significant negative correlations were found between shopping and relative share of home, apartment, or car repairs (p < .001), indicated fairness of DoL (p < .001), self-esteem (p < .001), and relationship satisfaction (p< .001).

When looking at the task of taking care of children, strong negative correlations were found in relation to share of home, apartment, or car repairs (p< .001), indicated fairness of DoL (p < .001), self-esteem (p < .001), and relationship satisfaction (p < .042).

A significant positive correlation between financial/administrative matters and the share of home, apartment, and car repairs was found (p < .001). There appears to be significant negative associations between financial/administrative matters and indicated fairness of DoL (p < .001), as well as financial/administrative matters and relationship satisfaction (p < .001).

Significant positive associations exist between the share of home, apartment, and car repairs and indicated fairness of DoL (p < .001) and self-esteem (p < .001).

Strong positive associations were found between the indicated fairness of DoL and self-esteem (p < .003) and relationship satisfaction (p < .001). An additional significant positive association was found between self-esteem and relationship satisfaction (p < .001).

Control variables appeared to be related to indicated fairness of DoL, self-esteem, and relationship satisfaction. Age appears to be significantly related to the relative share of taking care of children (p < .001), self-esteem (p < .001), relationship satisfaction (p < .001). Gender is significantly related to relative share of housework (p < .001), shopping (p < .001), taking care of children (p < .001), time spent working on house, apartment, or car (p < .001), fairness of division of labor (p < .001), and self-esteem (p < .001). Education appears to be related to share of taking care if children (p < .001), financial and administrative matters (p < .002), self-esteem (p < .001), and relationship satisfaction (p < .001). Household monthly income is related to share of time spent working on house, apartment, or car (p < .043), and self-esteem (p < .001).

Results and significant correlations, as well as means, standard deviations, skewness, and ranges of the study are displayed below (see Table 3.1)

Table 3.1: Bivariate Correlation Matrix of Study Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1 . DoL Tasks: Housework												
2. DoL Tasks: Shopping	.468***											
3. DoL Tasks: Taking Care of Children	.551***	.311***										
4.DoL Tasks: Financial & Administrative Matters	.001	.081***	-.026									
5. DoL Tasks: Working on Home, Apartment, or Car	-.449***	-.206***	-.394***	.074***								
6. Fairness of DoL	-.441***	-.253***	-.273***	-.112***	.182***							
7. Self-Esteem	-.070***	-.053***	-.067***	.000	.071***	.045**						
8. Relationship Satisfaction	-.054***	-.057***	-.037*	-.076***	-.007	.174***	.245***					
9. Age	-.024	.010	.095***	.025	.007	.017	.046***	-.199***				
10. Gender	.637***	.306***	.564***	-.027	-.669***	-.355***	-.133***	-.011	.059***			
11. Education	-.005	.003	-.066***	.046**	-.008	-.010	.035***	-.094***	.675***	.062***		
12. Household Income	-.019	-.024	-.022	-.002	.033*	.025	.083***	.008	.081***	-.034**	.054***	
Mean	3.24	3.22	3.36	3.23	3.06	2.87	3.8652	7.7066	29.98	1.53	10.6815	3449.12
Standard Deviation	1.111	1.003	1.203	1.030	1.558	.691	.86348	1.84014	10.490	.499	6.25733	2706.158
Skewness	.040	.090	.900	.189	.316	-.349	-.743	-1.020	.093	-.132	-.721	11.211
Range	6	6	6	6	6	4	4	10	35	1	20	90,000
Range Min	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	14	1	0	0
Range Max	7	7	7	7	7	5	5	10	49	2	20	90,000

3.2   Structural Equation Modeling & Model Fit

Figure 2 (see below) presents the results of the analysis examining the associations between relative share of tasks (i.e.: housework, taking care of children, etc.), indicated fairness of DoL, self-esteem, and relationship satisfaction. Model fit indices suggests that the model fit the data reasonably well. Model Fit: (x^2 (5, 9,467) = 14.092, p= .015; RMSEA: .010; 95% CI [.004, .016]; CFI= .999; TLI= .991). x^2 /df= 2.818. Standardized and unstandardized coefficients are shown. Significant paths are shown.

Relative share of housework was negatively and significantly associated with fairness of DoL (β= -.341., p < .001), relative share of shopping was negatively and significantly associated with fairness of DoL (β= -.047., p < .002), relative share of financial and administrative matters was associated with fairness of DoL (β= -.108., p < .001), and relative share of working on the house, apartment, or car was associated with fairness of DoL (β= -.109., p < .001). Additionally, indicated fairness of division of labor appears to be associated with relationship satisfaction (β= .193., p < .001), and self-esteem appears to be associated with relationship satisfaction (β= .269., p < .001).

Figure 3.1: Working Model Results
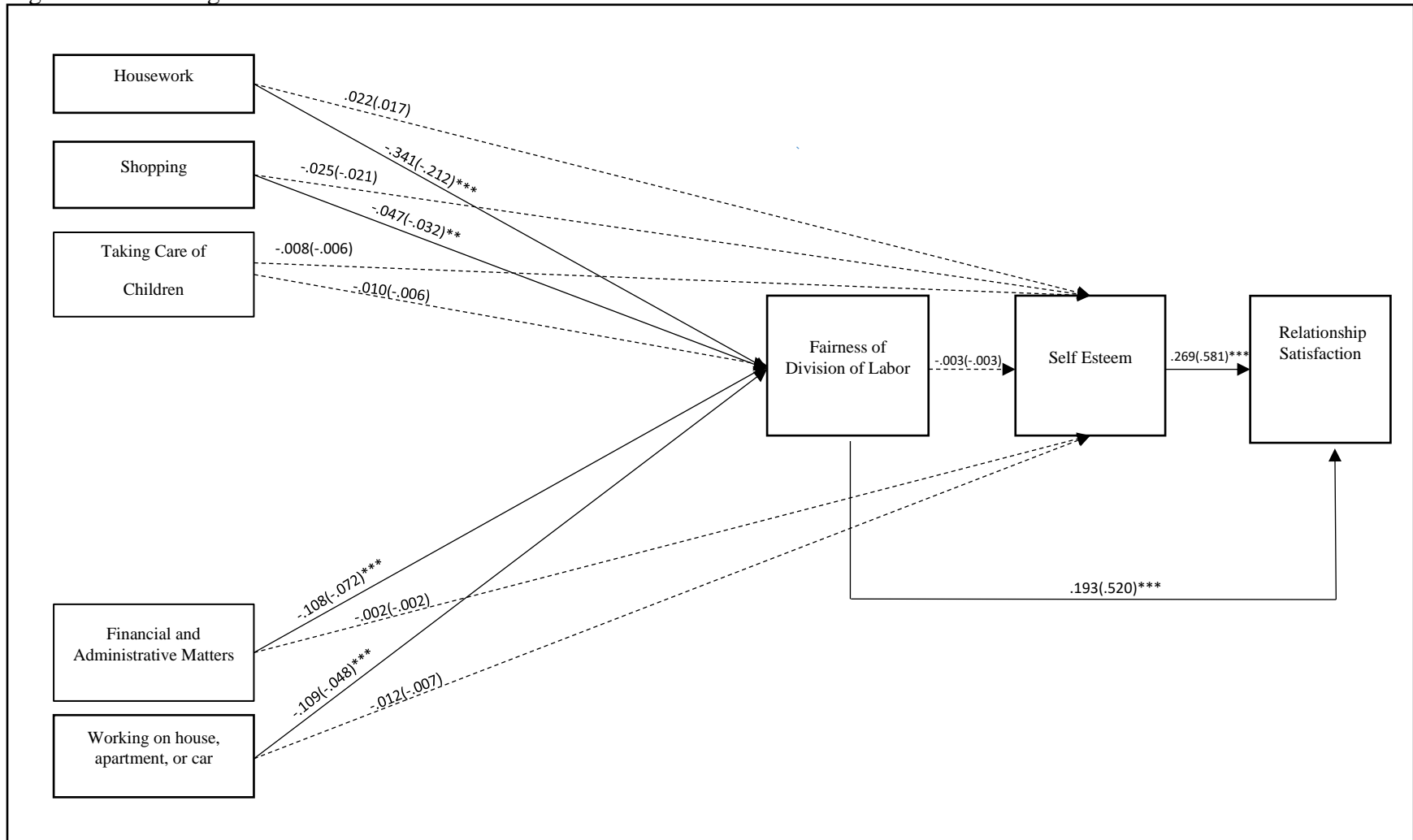
Note: Three stars (***) indicates p<.001, two stars (**) indicates p<.01, and one star (*) indicates p<.05.

Model Fit: (x^2(5, 9,467) = 14.092, p= .015; RMSEA: .010; 95% CI [.004, .016]; CFI= .999; TLI= .991). x^2/df= 2.818.

CHAPTER 4. DISCUSSION

The results of this study extend existing literature regarding the role of household division of labor by investigating the role this plays in relationship satisfaction. When analyzing the role of specific household chores and childcare tasks on the indicated fairness of division of labor and on self-esteem, and while examining the mediating role of self-esteem in the relationship between fairness of division of labor and relationship satisfaction, many significant associations were found.

4.1   Structural Equation Modeling

The model used in the present study controlled for age, gender, education, and monthly net household income. Although no significant results were found when looking at years of education completed, all other control variables showed significant results. Age showed significant relationships with self-esteem and relationship satisfaction, gender showed significant relationships with fairness of division of labor, self-esteem, and relationship satisfaction household income showed significant relationships with self-esteem.

There is a slight negative skew for relationship satisfaction (-1.02). This indicates more concentration on the right side, meaning higher relationship satisfaction. Monthly net household income was shown to have a positive skew (11.21), indicating more concentration on the left side, indicating lower income levels.

It was originally hypothesized (H1) that there would be a negative and significant relationship between all DoL tasks (i.e.: housework, shopping, taking care of children, financial and administrative matters, and working on home, apartment, or car) and

indicated fairness of DoL. This hypothesis was partially supported. Although there were

significant associations between housework, shopping, financial and administrative

matters, and working on home, apartment, or car and indicated fairness of DoL, no

significant relationship was found between taking care of children and indicated fairness

of DoL (p < .623). These findings indicate that as the relative share of DoL (excluding

taking care of children) tasks increases, perceived fairness of DoL decreases.

Hypothesis 2 stated that DoL tasks and self-esteem would be negatively and

significantly associated. This hypothesis was partially supported. All DoL tasks (except

housework) were found to be negatively associated with self-esteem, but none of these

associations appeared significant. The association between housework and self-esteem

was positive, but not significant (β= .022, p < .324). This finding indicates that as share

of housework increases, self-esteem slightly increases. Although this result may be

surprising, previous literature has found that women with traditional gender ideologies

were more likely to take on the larger share of household labor and be satisfied with that

arrangement, as they may believe that they are fulfilling their role as a woman (Stevens et

al., 2001). Since self-esteem is understood to be measured by confidence in one's self-

worth and identity (Hornsey, 2008), these results may support that self-esteem is

positively associated with the conformation to gender roles and social identity (i.e.:

women taking care of children).

While correlation analyses indicated a significant association between fairness of

DoL and self-esteem (p < .003), results of the path analysis indicate a negative and

insignificant association between indicated fairness of DoL and self-esteem (β= -.003., p

< .873), meaning there was no strong relationship found between fairness of DoL and

self-esteem. Hypothesis 3 stated that the indicated fairness of DoL would be positively and significantly associated with self-esteem. This hypothesis was not supported. Potential explanations for these results could be that other variables that were not accounted for in the analysis of the working model have stronger relationships with self-esteem than DoL fairness, as we know that many different factors influence self-esteem (Wagner et al., 2014; Eryilmaz & Atak, 2011; McMullin, & Cairney, 2004). Although no significant associations were found between indicated fairness of DoL and self-esteem, our results did indicate significant relationships between monthly household income and self-esteem ($\beta= .074$, $p < .001$), between gender and self-esteem ($\beta= -.145$, $p < .001$), and between age and self-esteem ($\beta= .040$, $p < .008$).

Results of prior studies have indicated the positive associations between perceived fairness of labor and relationship satisfaction (Carlson et al., 2020; Stevens et al., 2001). Hypothesis 4 Indicated fairness of DoL will be positively and significantly associated with relationship satisfaction. This hypothesis was supported in the analysis of the working model, with a statistically significant, positive association between fairness of DoL and relationship satisfaction ($\beta= .520$, $p < .001$).

Previous literature has found that self-esteem and relationship satisfaction are positively associated (Erol & Orth, 2013; Eryilmaz & Atak, 2011). In line with these findings, hypothesis 5 stated that there would be a strong, positive association between self-esteem and relationship satisfaction. Unsurprisingly, this hypothesis was supported in the analysis of the working model used in this study. This finding suggests a positive relationship, meaning that if an individual reports high self-esteem, they are also more likely to indicate higher relationship satisfaction.

4.2 Clinical Implications

The results of this study have important implications. First, the correlation analysis displayed a strong correlation between gender and the indicated fairness of labor. It is possible that these results validate previous literature finding that gender ideologies and attitudes have a direct influence on divisions of household labor (Carlson & Lynch, 2013). As a therapist, recognizing the gendered expectations that an individual may have will help to identify other patterns and dynamics that may be at play in their romantic relationship. If power imbalances exist in a relationship due to gender, the therapists' ability to recognize these dynamics is important in beginning to help clients overcome these imbalances.

Considering the significant positive relationships between perceived fairness of divisions of labor and relationship satisfaction, as well at the association between self-esteem and relationship satisfaction, is crucial in clinical work with individuals and couples. Experiential therapy models such as the Satir model in romantic relationships (Simon, 2004). Virginia Satir's human validation model (the Satir model) is a strength-based approach with a few main assumptions; all people are capable of change and possess the resources to allow them to grow, humans are inherently good, coping is related to a person's sense of self-worth, change occurs from experiences and leads to insight, and healthy relationships are based on equality (Satir et al., 1991). With these assumptions in mind, particularly assumptions related to self-esteem and equality within relationships, clinicians can educate, support, and encourage clients to make changes within themselves, and therefore their relationships.

Virginia Satir's three generational family reconstruction process is used to help clients enable their freedom to make choices (Robinson & Metcalf, 2018). In the first stage of this process, the perceptions clients have about themselves and those in their lives are addressed, as are the origins of these beliefs. In this stage, interventions focus on allowing clients to recognize their strengths and resources. Following Satir's model, a therapist may encourage clients to reframe negative thoughts or experiences into a more positive perspective. Satir's model poses that self-acceptance and change can occur when a client is able to observe all parts of themselves and recognize how all parts may be serving as a resource, especially if the client doesn't initially view it that way (Averbeck & Metcalf, 2023).

In the next stage, expectations are examined. In the context of gender roles, this phase of change is particularly important in raising both client and clinician awareness of potential expectations related to traditional divisions of labor. Bringing awareness to these expectations can help facilitate positive changes by creating new interactions within the relationship and improve self-concept. In the final phase, new rules and expectations are enacted. During this phase, clients can discover their self-worth and ability to see things from different perspectives, allowing more compassion for themselves and others (Robinson & Metcalf, 2018).

The application of this model to the findings of this study fits well by addressing the expectations of the role of those in the relationship and family, encouraging clients to see their internal resources and strengths, and fostering a relationship of equality. By raising awareness of expectations that a person may have based upon gendered norms allows the possibility for reframing and changing these beliefs. By encouraging clients to

recognize their internal strengths and resources, self-esteem can be positively impacted, leading to beneficial changes in the client's romantic relationships. If the findings of the present study hold true, setting new expectations and increasing an individual's self-esteem will likely have benefits on not only the fairness of divisions of household labor, but also on overall relationship satisfaction.

4.3   Limitations

Though the present study found significant results, the study does not come without limitations. The first limitation of the present study is the cross-sectional research design. While Pairfam data is collected from the same participants (Anchors) annually, the data used in this study was from a single point in time (Wave 11). As a result, the results of the present study are not able to be interpreted from a casual perspective.

Through random sampling, a substantial number of participants provided the data used in this study. Although random sampling methods help create a representative sample to reduce bias and increase generalizability of the findings, the contextual differences may be a limitation. The Pairfam data collection takes place in Germany, and it is possible that differing geographic locations, economic conditions, and cultural factors are influencing the results, therefore decreasing generalizability.

A final limitation of this study was the lack of control over the variables used in the data collection process. German studies do not collect data on the participant's race or ethnicity; therefore, these variables were not able to be addressed in the present study.

4.4   Future Directions

Considering the limitations of the present study can help guide future research. Regarding the cross-sectional nature of this study, future research could take a longitudinal approach to examine how these variables may change over time. By doing this, insight may be provided about the potential cause and effect relationships between the study variables.

Future research would benefit from addressing different aspects of diversity that this study did not address, specifically relationship composition and racial or ethnic identity. In future research, addressing differences in relationship composition (i.e.: same sex couples vs. opposite sex couples) could provide insightful information. The racial and ethnic diversity of the present study's sample is unknown, as are the possible influences of racialization on divisions of labor. Future research could address potential racial and ethnic differences in divisions of labor and the influence it may have on self-esteem and relationship satisfaction. Attempts to increase the reliability and generalizability of these findings could be made by collecting an even more diverse sample.

Additionally, the current study did not include analyses of gender differences. While gender was discussed in the review of previous literature, gender differences were not addressed in the analysis of the working model. Future research would benefit from looking at potential gender differences in the relative shares of DoL tasks, indicated fairness of DoL, self-esteem, and relationship satisfaction.

4.5   Conclusion

The changes in the structure dynamics of American families caused by women's movements and women's increased labor force participation have influenced the decline of the traditional family structure (Yavorsky et al., 2015). As a result, the need for understanding the complex relationships that exist between perceptions of fairness of divisions of labor, self-esteem, and relationship satisfaction remains. The findings of the present study support existing literature regarding the potential repercussions of perceived unfairness of divisions of household labor, and these results have important implications for clinicians and researchers.

APPENDICES

Appendix A. Relative Share of Labor Scale

(Presented in Wave: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13.)

"To what extent do you and [name of current partner] share duties in the following domains?"

- **Housework (cleaning, cooking, washing):**
    o This task is taken over by:
        ▪ 1: (Almost) completely my partner
        ▪ 2: For the most part, my partner
        ▪ 3: Split about 50/50
        ▪ 4: For the most part, me
        ▪ 5: (Almost) completely me

- **Shopping**
    o This task is taken over by:
        ▪ 1: (Almost) completely my partner
        ▪ 2: For the most part, my partner
        ▪ 3: Split about 50/50
        ▪ 4: For the most part, me
        ▪ 5: (Almost) completely me

- **Working on house, in apartment, or car:**
    o This task is taken over by:
        ▪ 1: (Almost) completely my partner

- ■ 2: For the most part, my partner

- ■ 3: Split about 50/50

- ■ 4: For the most part, me

- ■ 5: (Almost) completely me

- **Financial and administrative matters:**

  - o This task is taken over by:

    - ■ 1: (Almost) completely my partner

    - ■ 2: For the most part, my partner

    - ■ 3: Split about 50/50

    - ■ 4: For the most part, me

    - ■ 5: (Almost) completely me

- **Taking care of children**

  - o This task is taken over by:

    - ■ 1: (Almost) completely my partner

    - ■ 2: For the most part, my partner

    - ■ 3: Split about 50/50

    - ■ 4: For the most part, me

    - ■ 5: (Almost) completely me

Appendix B. Indicated Fairness of Division of Labor

Presented in Wave: 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13.

"Looking at both housework and paid work: Overall, how fair is the division of labor between you and your partner?"

- 1: I do much more than my fair share

- 2: I do a bit more than my fair share

- 3: I do about my fair share

- 4: I do a bit less than my fair share

- 5: I do much less than my fair share

Appendix C: Self Esteem Scale

Presented in Wave: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13

- **"Sometimes I believe that I am worthless."**

    o 1: Not at all

    o 5: Absolutely

- **"I like myself just the way I am."**

    o 1: Not at all

    o 5: Absolutely

- **"All in all, I am pleased with myself."**

    o 1: Not at all

    o 5: Absolutely

Appendix D: Relationship Satisfaction

Presented in Wave: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13

"When you think about your partnership, to what extent do the following statements apply to your situation?"

- **"[Name of current partner] can fulfill my needs very well."**

  o 1: Not at all

  o 5: Absolutely

- **"All in all, how satisfied are you with your current relationship?"**

  o 0: Very dissatisfied

  o 10: Very satisfied

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