

Housework and Couple Satisfaction: Satisfaction with Housework Division and Gender Ideology among Italian Dual-Earner Couples

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Abstract

This article reports on a study that examined the division of housework in 105 Italian dual-earner couples and the relationships between this division, the participants' satisfaction with it, gender ideology, and couple satisfaction. The findings show that women devoted much more time to housework than men, performed a greater number of routine female tasks, and reported lower levels of satisfaction with housework arrangements. However, women and men did not differ in levels of couple satisfaction. Satisfaction with housework distribution was found to mediate the relationship between actual housework performance and couple satisfaction in different ways for women and men: Women's couple satisfaction was explained by satisfaction with the distribution of traditionally female (routine) tasks and men's couple satisfaction was linked to satisfaction with the distribution of hours devoted to housework. Gender ideology directly influenced couple satisfaction: Women and men with less traditional gender ideologies were more satisfied with their relationships.

Keywords: housework division, housework satisfaction, gender ideology, couple satisfaction, dual-earner couples

1. Introduction

Despite the rising female involvement in the market labor force and the increasing liberalization of gender ideologies in the last decades, women still remain largely responsible for household labor in all countries where data on this topic are available (Lachance-Grzela & Bouchard, 2010; Geist, 2005; Todesco, 2013). Indeed, it is still valid to talk about a female "double presence," as Balbo (1978) proposed, or a "double shift," the term Hochschild (1989) used to describe this situation. In Italy, among dual-earner couples, the greatest amount of domestic labor is performed by women, who spend much more time than men tending to housework and childcare (Saraceno & Naldini, 2013). In 2008–2009, among double-earner couples aged between 25 and 49 years, women performed 72.7% of all domestic labor. Considering only housework tasks, such as cooking, cleaning, and laundry, this percentage increased to 78.6%. Differences in comparison to the 2004 data are very small, even if men's contribution to domestic labor has slightly increased (ISTAT, 2015). Women devoted 19.4% of their daily time to household labor, and men devoted 7.9%. Seventy-seven percent of the daily time dedicated to housework tasks by dual-earner couples is spent by women (ISTAT, 2010).

The antecedents and consequences of the domestic labor division between married or cohabitant women and men have been dealt with extensively by sociologists, above all in the United States, where the main theoretical perspectives have been developed, and empirical data has been collected. Recently, also comparative research on gender stratification has started to investigate cross-national variations in the division of domestic labor, and/or micro- and macro-level factors that influence it (Crompton, Brockmann, & Lyonette, 2005; Forste & Fox, 2012; Greenstein, 2009; Öun, 2013). For example, Anxo et al. (2011) studied gender differences in time allocation in France, Sweden, Italy, and the United States and found that, for domestic labor and care activities, the gender-gap disadvantage for women was extremely wide in Italy at all points in the life cycle, but especially when women were in a couple with children.

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Three main theoretical perspectives have been utilized by sociologists to analyze and predict the distribution of domestic labor by married/cohabitant couples: time availability, relative resources, and gender ideology/construction. The relative resources and gender ideology/construction approaches also have been used to explain the paradoxical finding that although married/cohabitant women perform the majority of household labor, very few feel that this arrangement is unfair (for an exhaustive review of theories and relating empirical research, see Davis & Wills, 2014; Mannino & Deutsch, 2007; Todesco, 2013). In the last decade, however, researchers have no longer searched for a theory to

...explain the complex phenomenon of the distribution of household tasks across genders. Indeed, they now share an increasingly global view of the situation and generally concur that a multitude of factors come together to maintain the traditional distribution and that micro and macro theories all have a role to play... (Lachance-Grzela & Bouchard, 2010, p. 778).

As a conclusion to his review of more than 200 studies published between 1989 and 1999, Coltrane (2000) observed that the main topic emerging from those studies was that housework is embedded in a complex and shifting pattern of social relationships and processes concerning the construction/reproduction of gender, the well-being of families, and the operation of a formal and informal market economy. The consequences of a more balanced division of domestic labor concerned primarily the women: they perceive more fairness in household arrangements, enjoy higher marital satisfaction and experience less depression. More recently, researchers have confirmed that how household labor is distributed affects mental and physical well-being. For example, Kalmijn and Monden (2011) found that when the hours spent on housework and the hours spent performing paid labor were more equally distributed between the partners, both reported fewer depressive symptoms. Mencarini and Sironi (2012), using the European Social Survey data from 26 countries, analyzed the determinants of women's happiness. They found that a large load of housework negatively impacted happiness, especially for women who were employed in the labor market for more than 30 hours per week. Sociocultural norms in terms of gender equity influences the relationship between household labor distribution and happiness: In countries where women traditionally are in charge of all housework, sharing it with their partners decreases the negative impact of housework on their happiness. In addition to the actual household chores performed, the perceived fairness regarding the division also seems to impact the women's well-being. For example, Claffey and Mickelson (2009) found that perceived unfairness in the distribution of household tasks between partners was associated with lower levels of psychological well-being.

In Italy, little research has been carried out on the antecedents and consequences of the division of domestic labor between men and women, notwithstanding that feminist scholars started to analyze it in the 1970s. Many of the studies available in the international literature draw on cross-country data-collection projects (e.g., the Family 2002 module of the International Social Survey Programme) in which Italy does not participate, in part because public and private institutions are not interested enough in this topic, such as in many others concerning gender relationships and equality (Todesco, 2013). Nonetheless, some studies exist in the sociological field. For example, a study by Carriero (2011) highlighted that the majority (55%) of 404 dual-earner couples living in Torino thought that the division of their housework was fair and that they felt satisfied with it, even if the women performed about two-thirds of the household tasks. Todesco (2013) underlined that women's contribution to domestic labor was always greater than that of their partners, but this uneven distribution was especially true for women with more traditional gender ideologies and lower personal incomes.

In this article, I attempt to contribute to the psychosocial inquiry on gender distribution of domestic labor by presenting a study with Italian dual-earner couples on the relationships between housework division, satisfaction with it, gender ideology, and couple satisfaction. As Carriero (2011) stated, Italy is interesting to study because family bonds are relatively strong and traditional gender roles persist, but to my knowledge, the abovementioned relationships have not been studied with Italian samples. Nonetheless, there is an extensive international psychosocial literature on this subject, that yielded a large amount of data which are often contradictory, mainly because the studies introduced different variables and were often based on different methodologies. Thus, the complex nature of the combined effects of gender housework distribution, perceived fairness, or satisfaction, and gender ideology on marital outcomes remains elusive. However, it is important to persist in understanding factors that influence marital quality for the effects it may have on personal and family well-being. In fact, low levels of marital quality were associated with marital instability (Birditt et al., 2010; Clements, Stanley & Markman, 2004) and also with life satisfaction, mental and physical health, and mortality (Fincham & Beach, 2010; Proulx, Helms, & Buehler, 2007; Rohrbaugh, Shoham, & Coyne, 2006). In the following paragraphs, I review some studies on this topic, focusing on those that included couple satisfaction as a marital outcome, besides partners' housework and gender ideology.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Housework division between partners and marital outcomes

Marital or couple satisfaction has often been confused with marital quality, happiness, and adjustment; sometimes, these terms have been used interchangeably (Heyman, Sayers, & Bellack, 1994). Particularly, some scholars considered marital satisfaction overlapping with marital quality (Karney & Bradbury, 1995), which may include both positive and negative dimensions (Fincham & Linfield, 1997). For this article, I prefer to use “couple satisfaction” instead of “marital satisfaction”, but in describing the research on this topic, I adopt the terms that the past authors have used. I regard couple satisfaction as a concept distinct from marital quality, and I embrace a comprehensive definition of this construct as a subjective evaluation of the global nature of one's couple relationship, which is in line with the definition offered by Scabini (1978), who refers to couple satisfaction as the emotional response to an evaluative processing of one's partner and relationship. According to this scholar, couple satisfaction is an indicator of a couple's well-being and stability (i.e., a couple's capacity to maintain a bond over time). In their recent meta-analysis on gender differences in marital satisfaction, Jackson et al. (2014), after reviewing 173 reports, concluded that, excluding studies with clinical samples, there are no significant gender differences among couples in the general population.

Amato et al. (2007) examined data from a U.S. survey involving married women and men aged 55 years or younger and found that equality in the division of household routine tasks was associated with greater marital happiness, fewer marital problems, and less likelihood of divorce among the women, but the opposite was true for the men.

Barstad (2014) studied the relationship between an index of relationship quality, including couple satisfaction, and the gender division of domestic labor among more than 8,000 Norwegian women and men. The results highlighted that among the women, an equal gender share of routine housework was associated with higher relationship quality, which decreased when their partners did little or no routine housework. Furthermore, those women who never performed intermittent work (e.g., repairs) had the best relationship quality. Recently, a study by Kobayashi et al. (2016) of more than 4,000 Japanese married women and men, confirmed that the women took on more housework than their husbands. They also found that spousal satisfaction of dual-earner couples increased as the share of housework performed on the weekdays by the other spouse increased, but this relationship was stronger among the women.

Wilkie, Ferree, and Ratcliff (1998) investigated the relationship between marital satisfaction and many psychosocial variables, including paid and domestic work, in a random sample of 382 U.S. dual-earner couples. The results showed that for both the women and men, the best predictor of marital satisfaction was the feeling of being understood by the partner; variables relating to the division of paid and housework labor were weak predictors of marital satisfaction. They affected marital satisfaction mainly through perception of fairness. Consistent with these findings were those obtained by Stevens, Kiger, and Mannon (2005), who studied the relationship between marital satisfaction and domestic labor, divided among household task, childcare, and emotional work. In their final model, which considered actual tasks performed and satisfaction with them, results highlighted, both for the women and men, that only their partners' emotion-work performance and emotion-work satisfaction were positive significant predictors of marital satisfaction. Stevens et al.'s interpretation was that marital satisfaction may be more strongly associated with the perceived gratitude and appreciation from one's partner than with housework satisfaction itself.

1.1.2 Housework division, perceived fairness/satisfaction, gender ideology, and marital outcomes

Gender ideology may be defined as an individual or societal system of beliefs, values, and attitudes concerning males and females, that can influence behaviors toward them (Lombardi, 2005). Davis and Greenstein's (2009) review on gender ideology attested that the antecedents, consequences, and explanations of many family processes are contingent upon gender ideology. They concluded that:

... gender ideology acts as a lens through which individuals view their social world and upon which they make decisions... (Davis and Greenstein, 2009, p. 100).

This concept was introduced by Greenstein in his seminal study dating back to 1996, where he suggested that gender ideology should function as a moderator variable through which inequalities in domestic labor division come to be seen as inequities. More specifically, Greenstein (1996a) hypothesized that women's reactions to the unequal distribution of domestic labor depend on their gender ideology (i.e., the actual division of household labor and gender ideology should interact in their effects on the perceived fairness of housework distribution).

Second, Greenstein also expected gender ideology to moderate the effects of perceived fairness on perceived marital quality: Although perceived fairness probably influences the perceived quality of the marriage for all the women, this effect should be stronger for egalitarian or non-traditional wives. The results supported his first hypothesis: The interaction between the wives' percent of domestic labor performed and the wives' traditionalism was a significant predictor of perceived fairness of housework division, even if a much stronger predictor was the wives' percent of domestic labor. Greenstein's second hypothesis was only partially confirmed by data: The interaction between the wives' perception of fairness and their traditionalism was a significant predictor of their perceived marital stability but not of their marital happiness. For both dependent variables, the strongest predictor was the perceived fairness of housework distribution. One of the most compelling and influential conclusions drawn by Greenstein (1996a) was that these results suggested a shifting research focus from the objective inequality in the division of household labor to the subjective processes by which these inequalities come to be seen as inequities.

Frisco and Williams (2003) analyzed the relationships among a set of variables, overlapping with those of Greenstein's (1996a) study, and also investigated the likelihood of divorce from 779 U.S. individuals involved in a two-wave panel study. In line with Greenstein's (1996a) results, findings indicated that for both the women and men, the perception of fairness in the distribution of housework was the best psychosocial predictor of marital happiness. Among the women, also a traditional gender ideology was positively associated with marital happiness; the perception of unfairness in the division of domestic labor increased the likelihood of divorce, but a traditional gender ideology together with marital happiness decreased this probability. These latter two variables were also associated with the likelihood of divorce among men. Lavee and Katz (2002) studied the relationships between the division of domestic labor, perceived fairness, and a measure of marital quality among three Israeli ethnic-religious groups reflecting traditional, transitional, and egalitarian gender ideologies. The results showed that perceived fairness mediated the link between housework division and marital quality for women, but not for men. Furthermore, among women, gender ideology moderated those relationships: Perceived fairness was associated with the division of labor for women in transitional and egalitarian families but not for traditional women. A more equitable distribution of domestic labor was directly linked to higher marital quality among egalitarian women, whereas for women in transitional families, it was mediated by a sense of fairness.

Stevens, Kiger, and Riley (2001) examined the effects of domestic labor and gender ideology on marital satisfaction, introducing as a possible mediating variable the satisfaction with domestic labor arrangements, instead of perceived fairness. Participants were 156 dual-earner U.S. couples. Among the women, the most significant positive predictors of marital satisfaction were household labor satisfaction and emotional work satisfaction, while household labor performed had a negative effect. For the men, the strongest predictors were emotional work satisfaction and household labor satisfaction. Gender ideology, together with other variables, had only an indirect effect on the women's marital satisfaction. Minnotte et al. (2005) investigated the relationships between gender ideology, work-to-family conflict, and marital satisfaction in the same sample utilized in the study of Stevens, Kiger, and Riley (2001). They hypothesized that, in addition to the role of gender ideology as a moderator variable in predicting marital satisfaction, there were interactive effects both between the partners' gender ideology and between work-to-family conflict and the respondent's gender ideology. For the women, the findings highlighted that both gender ideology and work-to-family conflict were significant predictors of marital satisfaction and, supporting Minnotte et al.'s hypothesis, their interaction significantly predicted the marital outcome. In fact, the more egalitarian the women's gender ideologies, the stronger the negative relationship between the work-to-family conflict and marital satisfaction. Among the men, the only significant predictors of marital satisfaction were the spouses' work-to-family conflict and the interaction between the spouses' gender ideologies: The men's marital satisfaction was higher when their gender ideologies were similar to those of their spouses.

More recently, a study by Olgosky, Dennison, and Monk (2014) of 220 newlywed couples underlined the importance of congruence between partners' gender ideologies for marital outcomes. They examined cognitive egalitarianism, behavioral egalitarianism, and marital quality. The results showed that for both the women and the men, marital quality decreased as the discrepancy between the partners' cognitive egalitarianism increased, and this effect was stronger for women. For the women, the association between cognitive egalitarianism and marital quality also increased when behavioral egalitarianism increased. Among the men, a higher discrepancy in behavioral egalitarianism was associated with lower levels of marital quality. In a longitudinal study, Faulkner, Davey, and Davey (2005) introduced a large set of psychosocial variables as potential predictors of couples' marital satisfaction and conflict over time. For men, a traditional gender ideology was a significant negative predictor of marital satisfaction, demonstrating an effect of gender ideology on marital outcomes that goes behind its role as a moderator variable.

Consistently, Davis and Greenstein (2009) reported some studies whose results demonstrated an association between gender traditionalism and positive marital outcomes for women, but not for men; on the contrary, non-traditional men tend to report higher levels of marital quality. Other studies, however, did not find direct effects of gender ideology on marital quality; results were also mixed for marital stability. Women are, in general, more egalitarian than men (Davis & Greenstein, 2009).

The few studies described above indicated that sometimes the objective distribution of household tasks was predictive of marital quality, especially if no subjective indicators were introduced in the studies. On the contrary, sometimes only subjective measures – perceived fairness and/or satisfaction with housework distribution – were associated with marital quality. It seems that the more psychological variables are taken into account in the research design, the more objective variables relating to gender domestic labor distribution lose power in the explanation of couple satisfaction (Stevens et al., 2005; Wilkie, Ferree, & Raticliff, 1998). This pattern becomes even more complex when gender differences are considered; in fact, although the majority of researchers have attested that the consequences of the division of household labor on marital quality are different for women and men, other studies have found the same effects between the genders (Barstad, 2014). Gender ideology has been demonstrated to moderate the relationships between an unequal division of household chores, perceived fairness or satisfaction with this distribution, and marital outcomes, especially for women (Lavee & Katz, 2002; Minnotte et al., 2005). Recently, the congruence of partner gender ideologies has emerged as an important factor in marital quality (Olgosky, Dennison, & Monk, 2014).

1.2 The present study and hypotheses

This study contributes to the debate over factors that influence couple satisfaction by examining dual-earner couples in Italy, where research in the psychological field overlooks household labor, mainly because academics and politics are not interested in this topic, notwithstanding that feminist scholars started to analyze it in the 1970s (Todesco, 2013).

Drawing on the preceding literature, while keeping in mind the persisting traditional gender roles and strength of the family ties in Italy (Carriero, 2011), my primary goal was to analyze the relationship between household labor distribution and related satisfaction, and couple satisfaction. Furthermore, I aimed to see how these relationships work for women and men, and if they are influenced by gender ideology.

In considering domestic labor, I made a distinction between housework and childcare, but in this article, I present only results about the former, agreeing with scholars who stated that they should be treated as distinct areas because their nature and predictors are different (Mannino & Deutsch, 2007). Following part of the literature (Lachance-Grzela & Bouchard, 2010), I classified housework into routine tasks or stereotypically female tasks (e.g., cleaning up, doing laundry, and washing dishes) and intermittent tasks, stereotypically male tasks that are presently performed also by women (e.g., paying bills). In asking how much time participants devote to housework and which tasks they perform, I also collected their perception of their partners' performance. This variable allowed me to check for participant response veracity, that is, in the present paper, I used the respondents' perceptions about their partners' performances as an index of response reliability, postponing their inclusion in the list of the independent variables for a future paper.

Following questions about the respondents' and their partners' housework performances, I asked how much the respondents were satisfied with those arrangements for every housework variable (Stevens et al., 2001, 2005). The literature on housework gender distribution has mainly concerned fairness and/or perception of fairness, which has often been used interchangeably with satisfaction. Nonetheless, satisfaction may exist even if the amount of housework is unfair because, as Baxter and Western (1998) exemplified, a woman may recognize that a situation is unfair but still define it as satisfactory because she cannot imagine a feasible alternative. Thus, agreeing with Baxter and Western (1998), that dissatisfaction with household arrangements may be a more powerful incentive for change than perception of its fairness or unfairness, in this study I assessed satisfaction with the distribution of housework between partners separately for time spent on housework, for female tasks, and for gender-neutral tasks (see below for these distinctions).

I studied the influence of gender ideology as a moderator variable on the relationships between housework distribution, satisfaction with it, and couple satisfaction (Stevens et al., 2001), and I also checked if it had a direct effect on couple satisfaction (Faulkner, Davey, & Davey, 2005; Frisco & Williams, 2003). In addition, I took into account the role of the interaction between the partners' gender ideology in predicting couple satisfaction (Minnotte et al., 2005; Olgosky, Dennison, & Monk, 2014).

At last, I included some variables as controls because previous research indicated that they are significantly associated with equity of household labor and/or couple satisfaction. Control variables were the education level (years of schooling), the number of labor-market hours worked per week, the length of marriage/cohabitation (number of years married/living together), and the children's ages. Men with more education do more housework, on the contrary, more educated women do less (Coltrane, 2000) and feel less satisfied with the housework division (Baxter & Western, 1998). Women who work in the labor market relatively more hours compared to other women, perform a smaller share of housework (Mannino & Deutsch, 2007), and women's labor-market hours are associated with decreased marital quality and even marriage disruption (Amato, Johnson, Booth, and Rogers, 2003; Ruppner, 2010). The results about the relationships between men's employment and housework are more mixed (Coltrane, 2000). Marital satisfaction peaks in the first year of marriage, and declines after the birth of the first child and across the first 20 years of marriage until midlife (VanLaningham, Johnson, & Amato, 2001). The presence of children, especially young children, is related to an increased load of housework, aside from childcare, for women and may adversely influence household labor satisfaction (Henchoz & Wernly, 2013) and marital satisfaction (Twenge, Campbell, & Foster, 2003).

Based on the literature just reviewed, I put forward the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Greater proportions in time spent doing housework and in the number of traditionally female (routine) tasks performed are negatively associated with both women's and men's couple satisfaction (Coltrane, 2000; Amato et al., 2007).

Hypothesis 2: Satisfaction with housework distribution between partners is more important than the proportion of the actual work performed when predicting couple satisfaction, both for women and for men (Stevens et al., 2001).

Hypothesis 3: Traditional gender ideology is positively related to women's and negatively related to men's couple satisfaction (Davis & Greenstein, 2009).

Hypothesis 4: Gender ideology moderates the relationships described in Hypothesis 1, and gender ideology and the actual division of housework – weekly hours and number of traditionally female (routine) tasks – interact in their effects on couple satisfaction; in other words, a more equal sharing in housework has a weaker positive effect for more traditional women and a stronger negative effect for more traditional men (Greenstein, 1996a, 1996b).

Hypothesis 5: The partners' gender ideologies interact in predicting couple satisfaction: More similar gender ideologies are related to higher levels of couple satisfaction (Minnotte et al., 2005; Olgosky, Dennison, & Monk, 2014).

I did not advance any hypothesis involving the gender-neutral tasks because their nature does not allow speculation about their predictive power for couple satisfaction.

2. Method

2.1 Participants and procedure

The data originated from a convenience sample of cohabitant dual-earner couples living in northeastern Italy. To qualify for inclusion in this study, partners were required to be both employed in the paid labor market, to have children, and to not utilize outside help for housework. A snowball sampling method was used to recruit participants: They were research assistants' acquaintances who helped recruit other participants. After receiving their informed consent, couples who agreed to participate were given two identical self-administered anonymous questionnaires, and each respondent was instructed to fill out his/her copy without discussing the questions with her/his partner. The completed questionnaires were collected by research assistants; the final response rate was 95%, yielding a total of 105 couples.

The average age of participants was 46 years ($DS = 6.13$) for women and 48 ($DS = 6.05$) for men; couples were living together on average from 20 years ($DS = 4.25$) and had an average of two children ($DS = 0.44$) with a mean age of 13.98 years ($DS = 5.98$); also, the mean number of cohabitant children was two ($DS = 0.45$). Women had a mean number of 13 years of education ($DS = 3.15$) and worked an average of 37 hours ($DS = 4.56$); men had a mean number of 12.55 years of education ($DS = 3.68$) and worked an average of 43 hours per week ($DS = 7.47$) in the paid workforce.

2.2 Measures

2.2.1 Dependent variable

Marital satisfaction was assessed using the Couple Satisfaction Questionnaire, a self-rating instrument validated in Italy that measures, by means of 46 items, the satisfaction with one's couple relationship from a global perspective, obtaining information on partners' attitudes and emotions (Calore, 2018; Gusmeroli, 2001; Roselli, 2001).

Examples of items are: "The relationship with my partner makes me happy" or "My marriage (relationship) suppresses my personality". Responses were given on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 ("Very disagree") to 7 ("Very agree"). Previous studies using this instrument showed that it has good reliability and validity and that the items loaded on two latent factors, one including the positive items and the other the negative items, with respect to couple satisfaction (Calore, 2018; Gusmeroli, 2001; Roselli, 2001). This separation may be ascribed to item phrasing to avoid acquiescence and may be considered a methodological artifact. Thus, only one score of couple satisfaction was computed. Twelve items were reverse-coded so that the higher the score, the more respondents felt satisfied with their couple relationship. I calculated a weighted sum of the 46 items to obtain a scale score ranging from 1 to 7. In this study, the Cronbach's alpha of the Couple Satisfaction Questionnaire was .96.

2.2.2 Independent variables

Domestic labor. The measures comprised both actual work (performed by the respondent and by his/her partner) and the satisfaction regarding the division of work. The first question concerned time spent on housework. Participants were asked to indicate "The approximate number of hours per week that you and your partner spend on household tasks." The next question was: "Are you satisfied with this division?". Responses were given on 7- point scale ranging from 1, "Not at all" to 7, "Very much". Following the precedent set in the literature (Greenstein, 1996a, 1996b, 2009; Stevens, Minnotte, Mannon, & Kiger, 2006) and in the ISTAT (2015) surveys, I computed relative measures to account for the proportion rather than the total amount of housework. Thus, the woman's (or man's) proportion of the total hours devoted to housework was calculated by dividing the woman's (or man's) hours spent on such work by the sum of both partners' hours. Such relative measures allow for easier comparisons across studies. However, to compare women's and men's performances, I also retained absolute measures of involvement, as the combination of ratios and absolute indicators allows for a complete understanding of the gendered division of household labor (Lachance-Grzela & Bouchard, 2010).

I subdivided the household tasks into two groups: traditionally female tasks (routine tasks) and traditionally male tasks (intermittent tasks), once performed mainly by men, but presently performed also by women. For this reason, I called the latter gender-neutral tasks (Greenstein, 1996b). The traditionally female tasks included grocery shopping; cooking; setting the table; dishwashing; clothes washing, drying, and ironing; tidying up; cleaning the bathroom, floors, or windows; and dusting. The gender-neutral tasks included paying bills, maintaining automobiles, banking, and fixing small electrical or plumbing problems.

For each of the two groups of tasks, the respondents answered two questions. The first was "Which of these household tasks do you perform?". The second was "Which of these household tasks does your partner perform?". The responses for every item were dichotomous: yes or no. Scores were calculated for the number of traditionally female tasks and gender-neutral tasks the respondent actually performed, as well as for his/her estimates of which tasks his/her partner performed. This question followed both lists of tasks: "Are you satisfied with this division?". Responses were given on a 7- point scale ranging from 1 ("Not at all") to 7 ("Very much"). For the number of female and gender-neutral tasks performed, I also calculated the proportions described above.

To summarize, the main domestic-labor variables considered for this study were the gender-based proportions of total weekly time spent doing housework, of traditionally female tasks, and of gender-neutral tasks. Each participant's satisfaction with all three proportions was also measured.

To obtain estimates of the respondents' reliability regarding their actual domestic housework, I compared the hours of weekly housework, the number of traditionally female tasks, and the number of gender-neutral tasks that the participants reported with their partners' perceptions of those same measures. Paired *t*-tests showed no statistically significant differences between the participants' responses and their partners' estimates for the domestic labor variables considered, indicating that the subjects' responses were reliable.

Gender ideology. To assess traditional gender ideology, I used a self-report instrument composed of 12 items (what I call the Gender Ideology Scale). The first 7 of the items were drawn from Frisco and Williams (2003); examples of these items include "A wife's most important task is caring for children" and "Even if the wife works, the husband should be the main breadwinner." The other 5 items were adapted from Spence and Helmreich's (1978) scale for assessing traditional gender ideology. Examples of items include "When the wife works outside the home, the husband should share in household tasks, such as washing dishes and doing the laundry" and "There are many jobs in which men should be given preference over women".

The original items were translated into Italian independently by two psychologists with a good knowledge of the English language, and after an agreement between them, a native English-speaker with an excellent knowledge of the Italian language prepared a backward translation. Next, the three authors reviewed the translations and reached a consensus on any discrepancy, in language and in the contents of the items, to achieve equivalence between the source and the Italian version. This process led to a perfect coincidence with the original item versions. Responses were given on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (“Strongly disagree”) to 7 (“Strongly agree”). The appropriate items were reverse coded so that higher scale scores always indicated a more traditional gender ideology. I calculated a weighted sum of the 12 items to obtain a scale score ranging from 1 to 7. In this study, the Cronbach’s alpha of the Gender Ideology Scale was .80.

Control variables. I included some other variables in the models as statistical controls. As indicated above, these were education level (years of schooling), the number of labor-market hours worked per week, the length of marriage/cohabitation (in years), and children’s age(s). No couple hired external help for housework.

2.2.3 Data analyses

To investigate gender differences in the study variables, I employed paired *t*-tests to account for the paired nature of the couple data, with Bonferroni correction to adjust for multiple comparisons. Below, I first present the descriptive statistics and the paired *t*-test, followed by a bivariate correlation matrix.

The primary focus of this paper is on predicting couple satisfaction based on the partners’ proportions of housework, their satisfaction with this division, and their gender ideologies. For this purpose, I conducted a hierarchical multiple regression to regress couple satisfaction on the independent variables (separately for men and for women). Five models were used to predict couple satisfaction. For the first, I entered the control variables. For the second model, I added the proportion of weekly hours spent on housework, the proportion of traditionally female tasks, and the proportion of gender-neutral tasks. For the third model, I also included the satisfaction scores for the three measures of housework division. For the fourth model, I added gender ideology. Finally, for the fifth model, I included the interactions between partners’ gender ideologies and the interaction between the respondent’s gender ideology and the two housework variables.

To ensure that the models did not violate key assumptions, I performed both a preliminary analysis and a model check (Barbaranelli, 2003, 2006).

3. Results

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics, paired *t*-tests, and Cohen’s *d* for the entire sample of couples. Men worked outside the home for an average of 42.72 (*SD* = 7.47) hours per week, whereas women averaged 37.11 (*SD* = 4.55) hours per week; this difference was statistically significant at the $p = .001$ level, and the effect size was large (Cohen, 1988). Women had an average of 13.03 (*SD* = 3.16) years of education, which was more than men’s, who had an average of 12.55 (*SD* = 3.68) years; however, this difference was not statistically significant.

Women reported spending an average of 23.95 (*SD* = 11.08) hours per week on housework, whereas men reported spending an average of 8.89 (*SD* = 6.92) hours per week. Women performed an average of 11.62 (*SD* = .98) traditionally female tasks, and men performed an average of 4.56 (*SD* = 2.64). On average, men performed 3.42 (*SD* = .93) gender-neutral tasks, and women performed 1.90 (*SD* = 1.23). As Table 1 shows, the paired *t*-tests indicated that men and women differed significantly on these three variables, with very large corresponding effect sizes for the traditionally female tasks (Sawilowsky, 2009). Regarding the relative measures, women contributed about 74% of the hours spent on housework. The division of traditionally female tasks between women and men was the same. However, men performed about 66% of the gender-neutral tasks.

Table 1 shows that the women reported less satisfaction with these arrangements than the men did. Particularly, there were statistically significant differences between women and men (at the $p = .001$ level) regarding satisfaction with the division of hours spent on housework and with the division of traditionally female tasks; each had a medium effect size (Cohen, 1988). The couple satisfaction scores were similar for men ($M = 6.10$, $SD = .69$) and women ($M = 6.02$, $SD = .73$). Finally, women’s gender ideology ($M = 2.61$, $SD = .92$) was less traditional than men’s ($M = 3.12$, $SD = 1.09$); this difference was statistically significant and had a medium effect size (Cohen, 1988).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics, Student's *t*, and Cohen's *d* (*N* = 105 couples)

		<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>d</i>
Labor-market hours worked per week [†]	Women	37.11	4.55		
	Men	42.72	7.47	-6.78***	.91
Years of education [†]	Women	13.03	3.16		
	Men	12.55	3.68	-1.01	.14
Weekly housework hours	Women	23.95	11.08		
	Men	8.89	6.92	14.22***	1.63
<i>Proportion[†]</i>	Women	74.29%			
	Men	25.71%			
Number of traditionally female tasks performed	Women	11.62	.98		
	Men	4.56	2.64	24.98***	3.54
<i>Proportion[†]</i>	Women	73.51%			
	Men	26.49%			
Number of gender-neutral tasks actually performed	Women	1.90	1.23		
	Men	3.42	.93	-9.45***	1.38
<i>Proportion[†]</i>	Women	33.47%			
	Men	65.58%			
Satisfaction with division of housework hours [†]	Women	4.15	1.60		
	Men	4.97	1.30	-4.62***	.56
Satisfaction with division of traditionally female tasks [†]	Women	4.06	1.77		
	Men	5.09	1.41	-5.38***	.64
Satisfaction with division of gender-neutral tasks [†]	Women	5.35	1.27		
	Men	5.45	1.07	-.64	.08
Couple satisfaction [†]	Women	6.02	.73		
	Men	6.10	.69	-1.73	.11
Gender Ideology ^{†a}	Women	2.61	.92		
	Men	3.12	1.09	-5.17***	.51

Note.

† Variables used in the regression models.

a. Gender ideology was coded such that higher scores indicated a more traditional gender ideology.

*** $p \leq .001$ after applying a Bonferroni correction for the multiple paired *t*-tests.

Table 2 presents the bivariate correlations among the variables used in the regression models, computed after excluding 19 outliers (as discussed in the following paragraphs). For both women and men, couple satisfaction was significantly positively associated with all satisfaction scores regarding the division of household tasks, and it was negatively associated with traditional gender ideology. For women, couple satisfaction had a negative relationship with the proportion of hours they spent on housework and the proportion of traditionally female tasks they performed. On the contrary, men's couple satisfaction was significantly positively associated with their proportion of housework. Among women, the relationship between traditional gender ideology and the number of hours spent doing housework was positive; however, in men, this relationship was negative.

Table 2. Zero-order correlations of variables used in multiple regressions for women ($n = 97$) and men ($n = 94$)

	X1	X2	X3	X4	X5	X6	X7	X8	X9	X10	X11	X12	X13
X1: log couple satisfaction	-	.221*	.000	.032	.094	-.361***	-.392***	.004	.534***	.557***	.399***	-.253*	.052
X2: Years of education	.105	-	-.126	-.369***	-.297**	-.352***	-.342**	-.088	.168	.217*	.219*	-.210*	-.263*
X3: Labor-market hours per week (reciprocal for men)	-.010	-.145	-	.140	.162	-.059	.073	.000	.009	.110	-.056	-.076	.124
X4: Length of marriage/cohabitation	-.010	-.282**	-.090	-	.769***	.067	.032	-.032	.074	-.017	-.122	-.027	.014
X5: Children's mean age	.17	-.095	-.013	.738***	-	.151	.096	.052	.026	-.066	-.018	.064	.096
X6: Respondent's proportion of weekly housework hours	.335**	.286**	-.023	-.089	-.094	-	.572***	.237*	-.554***	-.498***	-.487***	.207*	.184
X7: Respondent's proportion of traditionally female tasks	.175	.114	.075	-.096	-.102	.557***	-	.222*	-.556***	-.635***	-.363***	-.009	.055
X8: Respondent's proportion of gender-neutral tasks	.110	.130	.019	-.055	-.100	.231**	.287**	-	-.111	-.072	-.181	.060	.073
X9: Satisfaction with division of housework hours	.393***	.153	.196	.099	-.186	.228*	.070	-.075	-	.822***	.512***	-.068	-.135
X10: Satisfaction with division of traditionally female tasks	.281**	-.006	.129	.207*	.270**	.215*	-.017	-.085	.749***	-	.387***	-.038	-.066
X11: Satisfaction with division of gender-neutral tasks	.204*	-.072	.087	.082	.1304	.115	-.076	-.232*	.519***	.625***	-	-.136	-.001
X12: Women's gender Ideology ^a	.027	-.119	.014	-.016	-.13	-.098	.061	.046	.078	-.022	-.022	-	.076
X13: Men's gender ideology ^a	-.362***	-.173	-.052	.013	.057	-.265**	-.174	-.001	-.033	-.042	-.091	.076	-

Note. The coefficients above the diagonal represent the female respondents, and the coefficients below the diagonal represent the male respondents.

a. Gender ideology was coded such that higher scores indicated a more traditional gender ideology.

* $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$; *** $p \leq .001$.

Prior to conducting the five-stage hierarchical multiple regression, I tested the relevant assumptions of this statistical analysis about univariate and multivariate normality (Barbaranelli, 2006). The results of this preliminary analysis suggested a logarithmic transformation of the couple-satisfaction score for both men and women, and a reciprocal transformation of men's labor-market hours. The analysis also allowed to identify 15 possible univariate outliers, 1 possible multivariate outlier, and 3 possibly influential data points. The following analyses were performed without considering these 19 subjects (Barbaranelli, 2006). As a consequence, the new database had 191 subjects (94 men and 97 women). Multicollinearity was checked against the tolerance (T) index and the variance inflation factor (VIF) for the independent variables. The results showed no symptoms of multicollinearity, with the lowest T equal to .20 and the highest VIF equal to 4, in both the women's and the men's models. Upon running the models, I examined the diagnostic plots and statistics to check for violations related to residuals. The results showed that (a) the residual means were close to 0; (b) they were normally distributed; and (c) there were no particular problems of homoscedasticity. Durbin-Watson's d was about 2.30 both for men and women, an acceptable value (Barbaranelli, 2006).

The results for the five-stage multiple regression are presented in Table 3a for women and Table 3b for men.

Table 3a. Hierarchical multiple regression coefficients of women's couple satisfaction (N = 97).

Variables	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4			Model 5		
	B	SEB	β	B	SEB	β	B	SEB	β	B	SEB	β	B	SEB	β
Years of education	.011	.004	.273*	.004	.004	.093	.005	.004	.110	.002	.004	.050	.002	.004	.040
Labor-market hours per week	.000	.004	.006	.000	.004	-.010	-.002	.004	-.052	-.003	.004	-.072	-.003	.004	-.076
Length of marriage/cohabitation	.000	.005	.005	-.003	.005	-.103	-.002	.004	-.052	-.004	.004	-.125	-.004	.004	-.137
Children's mean age	.004	.003	.178	.006	.003	.258	.004	.003	.206	.006	.003	.260	.006	.003	.263
Respondent's proportion of weekly housework hours				-.217	.112	-.231	-.044	.113	-.047	-.003	.112	-.003	.002	.115	.002
Respondent's proportion of traditionally female tasks				-.291	.124	-.273*	.003	.132	.003	-.056	.131	-.053	-.061	.134	-.058
Respondent's proportion of gender-neutral tasks				.076	.066	.111	.054	.061	.080	.055	.059	.081	.052	.060	.076
Satisfaction with division of housework hours							.007	.014	.081	.007	.013	.086	.008	.014	.101
Satisfaction with division of traditionally female tasks							.030	.012	.406*	.030	.012	.409*	.030	.012	.409*
Satisfaction with division of gender-neutral tasks							.016	.011	-.163	.013	.011	.133	.013	.011	.132
Women's gender ideology ^a										-.033	.013	-.234**	-.034	.013	-.243**
Men's gender ideology ^a										.000	.011	.002	-.001	.011	.006
Interaction of partners' gender ideologies ^a													-.006	.013	-.040
Weekly housework hours × respondent's gender ideology ^b													.001	.001	.047
Traditionally female tasks × respondent's gender ideology ^b													-.002	.013	-.014
R ²	.077			.233			.393			.44			.433		
Adjusted R ²	.037			.172			.323			.36			.34		
F for change in R ²	1.916			6.021**			7.579***			3.528*			.137		
F for model	1.916			3.854**			5.570***			5.503***			4.294***		

Note:
 a. Gender ideology was coded such that higher scores indicated a more traditional gender ideology.
 b. Women's and men's gender ideology, weekly housework hours, and number of traditionally female tasks were centered at their means.
 * p ≤ .05; ** p ≤ .01; *** p ≤ .001.

Table 3b. Hierarchical multiple regression coefficients for men's couple satisfaction (N = 94)

Variables	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4			Model 5		
	B	SEB	β	B	SEB	β	B	SEB	β	B	SEB	β	B	SEB	β
Years of education	.004	.004	.109	8.506E-6	.004	.000	-.002	.004	-.066	-.005	.004	-.133	-.005	.004	-.146
Reciprocal of labor-market hours per week	.436	7.622	.006	-.267	7.365	.004	-6.605	7.204	-.094	-9.243	6.835	-.131	-8.693	6.97	-.123
Length of marriage/cohabitation	-.0007	.005	.003	-.001	.005	-.039	-.002	.005	-.054	-.004	.004	-.122	-.004	.004	-.136
Children's mean age	.001	.003	.026	.002	.003	.080	.000	.003	.022	.002	.003	.079	.002	.003	.073
Respondent's proportion of weekly housework hours				.329	.123	.342**	.240	.123	.250	.177	.118	.184	.186	.122	.193
Respondent's proportion of traditionally female tasks				-.024	.132	-.023	-.008	.128	-.007	-.038	.121	-.036	-.012	.125	-.011
Respondent's proportion of gender-neutral tasks				.029	.071	.044	.065	.069	.097	.082	.066	.123	.075	.067	.113
Satisfaction with division of housework hours							.047	.018	.415**	.052	.017	.456**	.05	.017	.442**
Satisfaction with division of traditionally female tasks							-.009	.018	-.082	-.009	.017	-.080	-.008	.017	-.07
Satisfaction with division of gender-neutral tasks							-.005	.016	.038	-.001	.015	-.008	.001	.015	.005
Women's gender ideology ^a										.003	.013	.024	.002	.014	.015
Men's gender ideology ^a										-.041	.012	-.342***	-.036	.013	-.304**
Interaction of partners' gender ideologies ^a													-.003	.010	-.036
Weekly housework hours × respondent's gender ideology ^b													.002	.002	.116
Traditionally female tasks × respondent's gender ideology ^b													-.004	.005	-.098
R ²	.012			.117			.236			.338			.354		
Adjusted R ²	.033			.045			.144			.240			.229		
F for change in R ²	.266			3.425*			4.284**			6.296**			.604		
F for model	.266			1.633			2.559**			3.454***			2.843***		

Note:
 a. Gender ideology was coded such that higher scores indicated a more traditional gender ideology.
 b. Women's and men's gender ideology, weekly housework hours, and number of traditionally female tasks were centered at their means.
 * p ≤ .05; ** p ≤ .01; *** p ≤ .001.

For Model 1, the coefficients of determination show that the control variables account for 7.7% of couple satisfaction in women but only 1.2% in men (these percentages and the ones below are in R^2). The three variables concerning the respondents' housework (Model 2) explain an additional 15.6% of the variation in women's satisfaction and 10.5% of the variation in men's satisfaction; both these changes are statistically significant. Adding satisfaction regarding the housework division (Model 3) results in a substantial increase in the amount of variance in couple satisfaction that is explained: 16% for women and 11.8% for men; these changes are statistically significant. Introducing women's and men's gender ideology (Model 4) contributed an additional 4.7% and 10.3% of the variation in women's and men's satisfaction, respectively; these changes are also statistically significant. Finally, the interactions relating to gender ideology (Model 5) explain an additional 0.3% and 1.5% of variation in couple satisfaction for women and men, respectively and these changes are not statistically significant.

Based on the coefficients in Model 1, for women, having a better education is associated with higher couple satisfaction. Model 2 shows that the effects of education are mediated by household tasks: When variables concerning women's performance in these tasks are introduced, years of education no longer has a statistically significant association with couple satisfaction, but it does have a significantly negative association with the proportion of traditionally female tasks. Thus, there is some support for Hypothesis 1; nonetheless, with the addition of housework-division satisfaction scores in Model 3, the proportion of traditionally female tasks is no longer a predictor of women's couple satisfaction, and the only positive predictor of this variable is their satisfaction with the division of the traditionally female tasks, giving partial support to Hypothesis 2. Satisfaction with the division of routine tasks remains a significant predictor of women's couple satisfaction, even when their and their partners' gender ideologies are introduced in Model 4. In this model, women's traditional gender ideology is significantly but negatively associated with their couple satisfaction, disconfirming Hypothesis 3; it is worth noting that partners' gender ideology is not related to women's couple satisfaction, however. All the independent variables (as included in Model 5), comprising the interactions involving gender ideology, together accounted for 44.3% of the variance in women's couple satisfaction. In this final model, none of the control variables, the variables concerning the actual division of housework, or the interactions are significant predictors of women's couple satisfaction. In women, the most important predictor of couple satisfaction is their satisfaction with the division of traditionally female tasks: As scores in this variable increase by 1 standard unit, the women's couple satisfaction scores increase by .41 standard units. Respondents' gender ideology is a significant predictor of women's couple satisfaction as well: As scores in traditional gender ideology increase by 1 standard unit, the women's scores in couple satisfaction decrease by .24 units.

For men, Table 3b shows that, in Model 1, none of the control variables are significant predictors of couple satisfaction. In Model 2, only the proportion of hours that men spent doing housework is positively significantly associated with their couple satisfaction, disconfirming Hypothesis 1. With the introduction of variables concerning satisfaction with household tasks in Model 3, this proportion is no longer a predictor of men's couple satisfaction. In Model 3, the only positive predictor of men's couple satisfaction is satisfaction with the division of housework hours, which partially supports Hypothesis 2. This relationship is stronger once men's and women's gender ideology are added in Model 4, for which men's gender ideology is significantly and negatively associated with their couple satisfaction, supporting Hypothesis 3. Also for men as for women, their partners' gender ideology does not predict couple satisfaction. In Model 5, the introduction of the interactions regarding gender ideology does not change the effects found in Model 4, failing to find support for Hypotheses 4 and 5. Together, the independent variables explain 35.4% of the variance in men's couple satisfaction; the most important predictor is men's satisfaction with the division of housework hours: For every 1-standard-unit increase in this variable, the predicted couple satisfaction scores increase by .44 standard units; in addition, as men's scores in traditional gender ideology increase by 1 standard unit, their scores in couple satisfaction decrease by .30 standard units.

4. Discussion

The main purpose of this study was to determine whether some variables concerning housework are predictive of couple satisfaction in dual-earner Italian couples. The motivation for this work is the perplexing result found in the psychosocial literature that women report levels of couple satisfaction that are as high as men's, even though women also report that they devote much more time to domestic labor and perform a greater number of housework tasks than men do.

I also tested the gender differences in these variables, and the results support the conclusion that there is inequity in household labor, as highlighted in every country where this topic has been investigated, that is the results showed women's overwork (Forste & Fox, 2012). In fact, in this study, the difference between women and men was about 16 hours spent on housework each week and about 7 in the number of traditionally female tasks performed.

These discrepancies are even greater than those found in many other countries, such as the United States (Lachance-Grzela & Bouchard, 2010); they are, however, consistent with Geist (2005), for which Italy was second only to Japan out of 10 industrialized countries regarding the gap between men and women in the amount of domestic work. Geist (2005) ascribed this result to the conservative regimes of these countries, which foster traditional gender relationships. From a temporal perspective, this study's findings on women's overwork are in line with those of Bimbi (1985) for the same region of Italy more than 30 years ago.

Thus, it is not surprising that women declared to be less satisfied with the arrangements of housework hours and traditionally female tasks than men did. But, in spite of women's unfavorable outcomes, they reported being as satisfied as men with their couple relationship, which supports the findings from a vast literature on the lack of significant gender differences in couple satisfaction (Jackson et al., 2014). As far as gender ideology is concerned, in this study, women reported being less traditional than men, as has often been found in past studies (Davis and Greenstein, 2009).

Regarding the potential predictors of couple satisfaction, drawing on the previous literature, I put forward five Hypotheses. Hypothesis 1 was partially confirmed for women, for whom the proportion of traditionally female tasks is negatively associated with couple satisfaction (Model 2). However, this variable is not a predictor of women's relationship satisfaction after measures of satisfaction with the domestic-labor arrangement are taken into account (Model 3). In this case, women's couple satisfaction is largely explained by their satisfaction with the distribution of traditionally female tasks, and men's couple satisfaction is largely explained by their satisfaction with the distribution of housework hours; this partly supports Hypothesis 2. Thus, this study's findings are consistent with the previous empirical data and speculations in which subjective variables, such as perceived fairness or satisfaction, were critical filters in the link between patterns of the division of domestic labor and couple satisfaction (Frisco & Williams, 2003; Greenstein, 1996a; Lavee & Katz, 2002; Stevens et al., 2001).

Why are women more satisfied with their couple relationship when their satisfaction with the distribution of traditionally female tasks increases? Baxter and Western (1998) demonstrated that women are more likely to be satisfied if their partners participate in some traditionally female tasks such as cooking meals and that their satisfaction is not as related to the amount of time spent doing domestic labor. They also concluded that, for many women, the main goal was for men to contribute to the housework, rather than to achieve an equal share of such work; this was because this goal was attainable, as the alternative was a situation in which the men do even less. From this perspective, it is conceivable that, in the present study, women's couple satisfaction is explained more by their satisfaction with the proportion of traditionally female tasks than by their satisfaction with the time devoted to housework. This could be because women are glad to avoid at least some boring tasks, because they are grateful for their partners' contributions to those tasks, and because they do not care about achieving an equal distribution of housework hours. Indeed, in the conservative Italian society, such an arrangement is still unthinkable.

It is more difficult to explain why satisfaction with the distribution of housework hours predicts men's couple satisfaction better than does satisfaction with the kind of housework done. A post hoc explanation may be that men spend so relatively few hours on these tasks (in comparison to their partners), that satisfaction with this uneven distribution becomes very salient for their couple satisfaction.

Hypothesis 3, which stated that traditional gender ideology is positively associated with women's couple satisfaction and negatively associated with men's, is not supported for the women in this study: As their levels of traditional gender ideology increase, their couple satisfaction decreases (Model 4). The incongruity between this finding and those of past research may be ascribed to societal changes that have resulted in more positive views of egalitarianism (Olgosky, Dennison, and Monk, 2014), which, in turn, may have positively affected couple satisfaction. This could also explain why Hypothesis 3, on the contrary, is supported for men: The men who reported having a less traditional gender ideology also reported being more satisfied with their couple relationship.

The predictive power of men's gender ideology in terms of their couple satisfaction, together with their low scores on the traditional Gender Ideology Scale, is at odds with the small amount of housework that these men report doing. This apparent contradiction may simply reflect the well-known discrepancy between general attitudes and specific behaviors (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980), which are often only weakly correlated. From this perspective, embracing a nontraditional gender ideology does not necessarily mean that the male group in this study engages in consistent domestic-labor behavior (e.g., equally sharing the housework hours and the traditionally female tasks).

On the other hand, social and cultural norms against the expression of prejudice in general, and of sexism toward women in particular, have increased in recent decades; consequently, individuals may feel inhibited from freely expressing negative attitudes toward women. The desire to avoid social disapproval is one of the reasons for the low levels of prejudice found in self-report questionnaires (Manganelli, Bobbio, & Canova, 2009), and this could also explain the low scores for traditional gender ideology in this research. Of course, an avenue to limit this bias is to use or construct an instrument whose contents and form bypass such bias.

This study's findings do not support Hypothesis 4, which proposed that gender ideology moderates the relationship between couple satisfaction and the actual domestic labor performed, both for women and for men. Gender ideology directly impacts couple satisfaction, but the amount of actual housework does not appear to play a role in this effect (Model 5). Independent from the amount of housework, less traditional women and men both report having more satisfying relationships. In addition, Hypothesis 5, which concerned the positive influence that similar gender ideologies has on couple satisfaction, was unsupported, both for men and for women. Thus, in the present study, a personal ideological factor appear to be a much more important determinant of couple satisfaction than the actual division of domestic labor or the presence of shared ideological perspectives about gender roles. This finding is quite surprising; a post hoc explanation may be that traditional gender roles can be restrictive for both men and women, as they negatively influence various domains of subjective experiences, including satisfaction with one's couple relationship (Faulkner, Davey, & Davey, 2005).

Although this study contributes to the scarce psychological literature on the relationship between the division of household tasks and couple satisfaction in Italian couples, its findings should be interpreted in light of its limitations. First, the study utilized a non-probabilistic regional sample, which limits its external validity and thus the possibility that its results can be generalized beyond the sampling framework, even if the proportions of housework carried out by participants are close to ISTAT's data (2010; 2015), collected with representative Italian samples. Furthermore, the sample is quite small, and given the complexity of the model, I may have failed to identify a relationship where there was one. Future research is necessary to determine whether these findings can be generalized across a diverse and larger sample of a married-cohabitating sample.

To avoid response biases, the questionnaire that I used to assess traditional gender ideology was anonymous and included both positively phrased and negatively phrased items with respect to the construct. Notwithstanding, some items overtly and directly reflect a very traditional attitude about gender roles (e.g., "Women should think less about their rights and more about being good wives and mothers"), and these items could have elicited biased responses due to the influence of social desirability. This aspect could explain, in part, the very low scores in the Gender Ideology Scale for women and men, as well as the striking findings among men that I discussed above. Consequently, future research would benefit from the use of more sensitive measures of gender ideology, so as to draw out more subtle and hidden forms of sexism (Manganelli, Bobbio, & Canova, 2009).

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