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Couples' Ideological Pairings, Relative Income and Housework Sharing

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ABSTRACT

Our study offers and empirically tests a new conceptual framework of couples' housework sharing. We suggest that the partners' joint gender ideology, or their 'ideological pairings' will determine their housework sharing. Further, we argue the link between couples' relative socio-economic resources and their housework sharing likely depends on these 'ideological pairings'. Our results, based on data from the German Panel Study of Family and Income Dynamics (pairfam) and mixed- and fixed-effects panel regressions, offer support for this conceptualization. First, we find egalitarian attitudinal duos to share housework the most equally, traditional attitudinal duos to share housework the most unequally, and mismatched attitudinal couples to lie in between. Second, our results indicate that only egalitarian duos further equalize housework sharing when she becomes the family's main earner. Traditional duos don't adjust their housework divisions even if she outearns him. Findings for mismatched couples are mixed, but don't lend support for successful within-couple re-negotiations of housework divisions as her income share rises. Our study advances prior literature by conceptualizing the relevance of the partners' joint attitudes for gendered domestic work divisions and by making complex interactions between sociological and economic aspects visible. Further, it underscores the importance of investigating couples as an essential meso-level institution in the reproduction of gender inequalities.

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INTRODUCTION

Today, more women than ever obtain higher education and work for pay around the globe (Kollmeyer, 2012). This development is intertwined with changes in family life and changing gender roles in the private and public realm. Men engage in a larger share of domestic work and childcare, while women reduced their housework time and increased their labor market hours (Altintas & Sullivan, 2016, 2017; Bianchi et al., 2012). Yet, gender symmetry in family work (or the labor market) has not been achieved. This gender imbalance is best understood from a life course perspective. Whereas both men and women share housework and paid work rather equally at the beginning of a relationship, women, on average, still adapt their paid work to changing family needs to care for young children or sick relatives and end up performing the majority of unpaid housework and care. Men continue to prioritize paid over unpaid work. This pattern is observed in many advanced nations, even though there is considerable variation in gendered family and labor market behaviors (Cornwell et al., 2019).

The question of why couples share breadwinning and domestic duties the way they do is thus central to a deeper understanding of gendered work-family life today (England, 2010; Scarborough et al., 2019). Many studies have investigated factors contributing to gendered work divisions both on the couple level and on the level of social context in which couples' lives are embedded (for an overview see Grunow, 2019; Lachance-Grzela & Bouchard, 2010). Whereas there is broad agreement that contextual factors play a role and interact with couple level dynamics (Mandel & Lazarus, 2021), the mechanisms operating on the couple level remain controversial (Mandel et al., 2020). Prior research has focused on identifying the effect of economic and sociological mechanisms affecting the division of labor in the course of relationships, often pitting related theories against each other (Horne et al., 2018; Nitsche & Grunow, 2016).

We aim at developing the theoretical discussion of these mechanisms further, by reassessing and extending the most salient theories guiding this research at present: resource bargaining theories on the one hand and sociological theories of doing and undoing gender on the other (Grunow, 2019; Lachance-Grzela & Bouchard, 2010). Bargaining theories highlight the role of partners' relative resources, most importantly income, to explain the division of labor within couples. Theories of doing and undoing gender, in contrast, have been used to highlight the role of gender ideologies in light of social norms. Scholars usually consider the role of gender ideologies as unrelated to couples' relative income to determine divisions of housework. We argue, in contrast, that rather than conceptualizing these economic and sociological forces as competing explanations for the gender division of housework, we need to understand how these mechanisms operate and interact in different types of couples.

The novel framework we develop argues that partners in couples either agree or disagree on their gender ideology and derived ideas about preferred housework divisions. This 'ideological pairing', as we call it, has meaningful implications for how the partners share domestic work. We further argue that relative socio-economic resources will affect housework sharing, yet, whether and how this occurs will depend on the couples' 'ideological pairing'.

So far, most quantitative studies have identified significant effects of his and/or her gender ideology on the distribution of domestic work (Evertsson, 2014). However, the relationship between relative economic resources and the distribution of domestic work appears to be more ambiguous and context-dependent (Gupta, 2007; Kühhirt, 2012). A small but growing literature is beginning to move beyond this established theoretical and empirical dualism by providing deeper investigations of the interaction strategies of the partners through which gender ideology and relative resources may be linked to the gendered division of labor (Carriero and Todesco, 2018; McMunn et al., 2020;

Nitsche & Grunow, 2018). Our study is part of this new wave of research. It is the first to test the interactive effect of partners' ideological pairing and their relative income on housework sharing, using dyadic, longitudinal data. We draw on data from the Panel Analysis of Intimate Relationships and Family Dynamics (pairfam), a German panel launched in 2008 featuring yearly waves until 2021. We employ growth curve/mixed and linear fixed effects panel regression models and test whether the ideological pairings of the partners, measured in terms of attitudinal positions and agreement with single gender ideology items, play a role for whether and how their absolute and relative socio-economic resources predict division of housework-trajectories as the relationship progresses over time.

THEORY AND STATE OF RESEARCH

Since the beginning of the new millennium, two theorized types of micro-level mechanisms dominate framings of the literature assessing the gender division of housework within couples (Grunow, 2019; Lachance-Grzela & Bouchard, 2010): (1) partners' economic resources and (2) gender ideologies. Partners' economic resources are a central mechanism thought to affect housework divisions among partners in economic bargaining theories (Lundberg & Pollak, 1993)¹. The role of gender ideologies, in contrast, is highlighted by research drawing on theories of doing and undoing gender.

¹ Relative economic resources as a driver of specialization also play a role in Becker's economic theory of the family. However, housework scholars have shifted away from this theory because its basic assumptions do not correspond with the rise of dual earner couples, late 20th and early 21st century and ignore how power inequalities shape relationship dynamics (see Grunow 2019 for a literature review and summary).

Resource bargaining

Resource bargaining theories posit that economic power relations in couples shape the gender division of paid and unpaid labor, thereby creating a link between both partners' income from paid work and their unpaid housework. The partner with the higher income has more power to refrain from doing housework while investing continuously in paid work (Lundberg & Pollak, 1993; Manser & Brown, 1980, reviewed in Gupta 2007). The bargaining perspective presumes that romantic partners are self-interested and use the negotiation power that comes with their own income to wriggle out of undesired household chores. The division of unpaid work is thus repeatedly renegotiated as a consequence of changes in partners' relative income. As each partner's own income increases (or decreases), the comparative income advantage shifts from one partner to the other, causing the partners to bargain and adapt their division of work and care. Bargaining may also occur as a consequence of new demands on the partners' allocation of working time, for example, when a child is born (for a discussion see Kühhirt, 2012).

Contrasting the theoretical clarity of the concept, only a minority of studies investigating the effect of relative resources finds support for this mechanism (Grunow, 2019). Importantly, the operationalization of relative resources varies in this research, with some studies using relative income or occupational status (Fahlén, 2016; Ruppanner, 2010) and others education (Aassve et al., 2015; Lewin-Epstein et al., 2006; McMunn et al., 2020). Studies also find variation by gender, suggesting that the bargaining logic is mostly confirmed in couples in which the female partner earns less than the male partner but not the other way around (Sullivan & Gershuny, 2016).

Doing and undoing gender

Theoretical work in the tradition of doing and undoing gender (Lindemann, 2018; West & Zimmerman, 1987), and more recently on the stalled gender revolution (England, 2010; Scarborough et al., 2019; Sullivan et al., 2018) emphasizes that in contemporary societies, in spite of the increase in dual earner couples, housework is still considered the woman's responsibility. As a consequence of this social norm and its internalization, women do household chores as part of their gender display, i.e., to confirm their femininity whereas men confirm their masculinity by avoiding chores (Berk, 1985). From this perspective, gender ideologies, understood as deeply internalized beliefs in "(...) a division of paid work and family responsibilities that is based on the belief in gendered separate spheres" (Davis and Greenstein 2009: 87), are ultimately relevant to explain gendered divisions of housework. On a societal level, gender ideologies account for the fact that housework is still largely ascribed and internalized as women's responsibility by default, leading to a gendered division of housework. Within these gendered settings, individual level gender ideologies account for variation in how much men and women deviate from this pattern by performing more or less housework, given their other work and care commitments.

In line with this perspective, theories of undoing gender highlight the potential – and difficulty – to resist social psychological and normative forces to 'do gender' (Deutsch, 2007; Evertsson & Grunow, 2019; Lindemann, 2018). Importantly, theories of undoing gender presume that differences in the gender division of labor may result from individual level variation in gender ideologies.

There is clear empirical evidence that a gender egalitarian ideology of either partner is related to a more egalitarian share of housework among couples: Almost all studies who have tested for this effect have found support for it (Aassve et al., 2015; Carriero & Todesco, 2018; Evertsson, 2014; Lewin-Epstein et al., 2006; for reviews see Grunow, 2019; Lachance-Grzela & Bouchard, 2010).

Research on gender ideologies further shows that beliefs in gendered separate spheres of male breadwinning and female housework and care, referred to as 'traditional', strongly declined both in Europe and the US, while egalitarian gender ideology i.e., a belief in men's and women's joint responsibility for paid and unpaid work, expanded. At the same time, however, a new type of 'essentialist' and other 'ambivalent' ideologies spread, which mixes egalitarian attitudes on certain types of work with traditional attitudes on others (Grunow et al., 2018; Knight & Brinton, 2017; Scarborough et al., 2019). These 'essentialist' or 'ambivalent' gender ideologies are considered responsible for the lack of change in the gender division of housework and the overall stalling of the gender revolution (Ibid.).

Evidence for the association between gender ideology and gender division of housework is strong for countries belonging to the social democratic and liberal welfare regimes (Aassve et al., 2015; Cooke, 2006; Nordenmark, 2004), and for Germany, with its partly conservative partly socialist legacy and remaining divisions between the East and West (Nitsche & Grunow, 2016; Zoch, 2021), Australia (Perales et al. 2017) and Asia (Quian & Sayer 2016). Men's egalitarian gender ideology was associated with more time they spent in housework in a study on South Korea (Yoon, 2010). Two other studies don't measure gender ideology directly, but decompose the gendered housework gap in Latin America (Amarante & Rosset, 2018) and Singapore (Zang et al., 2023). Both conclude that 'doing gender' is the most plausible explanatory mechanism for gendered housework divisions. Some studies have included her or his ideology only, others have included the ideology of both. Studies indicate that both partners' gender ideology predicts gendered housework divisions (Nisic & Trübner, 2023; Nitsche & Grunow, 2016), nonetheless, some studies point at differing effects of her and his ideology (Evertsson, 2014; Lewin-Epstein et al., 2006; Yoon, 2010).

We argue that research conceptualizing his and her attitudes additively might miss a relevant part of the story: not only both partners' attitudes in isolation, but also their similarity or fit, hence their interaction, need to be examined to understand couple-level decisions and outcomes (Hudde & Engelhardt, 2021). Indeed, qualitative research indicates that it takes both partners' determined egalitarianism and resistance to social norms to keep up egalitarian divisions of paid and unpaid work in the course of family formation (Dechant & Rinklake, 2019;). Nitsche and Grunow (2018) find that ideological pairings predict changes in the sharing of childcare. McMunn et al. (2020) analyze couples' division of paid and unpaid work jointly using dyadic, cross-sectional data from the United Kingdom. They find a shared egalitarian ideology is required for gender equality in divisions of the total work load. These findings highlight that research on couple-level outcomes such as the sharing of labor needs to take a couple-level approach and analyze both partners' attitudes not only simultaneously but also interactively, from an ideological pairing perspective.

Previous works on the combination of doing gender & resource bargaining hypothesis

The clear evidence for the doing and undoing gender hypothesis, operationalized in terms of gender attitudes, combined with the mixed evidence for the bargaining hypothesis, operationalized in terms of relative resources, gave rise to a first attempt to combine the two approaches in the so-called gender-deviance neutralization hypothesis. This hypothesis suggests that couples bargain as long as her relative resources do not threaten his gender identity, in other words up to the point at which both partners earn roughly the same. Couples rising above this point use a different strategy according to the doing gender hypothesis. They neutralize their economic gender deviance – the female partner earning more than the male partner – by dividing housework more traditionally. The result is that women do more housework, in spite of their income advantage. Evidence supporting this hypothesis

is mixed (Sullivan & Gershuny 2016; Treas & Drobnic 2010). Mixed support, we argue, might be due to a major shortcoming in the deviance neutralization hypothesis: It assumes that all couples with the same economic setup are alike, thereby ignoring differences in individual gender ideology and how this may affect couple dynamics.

Couples ideological pairings: conditional bargaining

We develop the combination of the ‘doing and undoing gender’ perspective and resource bargaining further and propose a couple-level conceptualization, hereafter referred to as ideological pairings. Our main argument is that in most couple-constellations partners have no need to bargain over housework. First, there is no need to bargain if they both agree on how paid and unpaid work should be divided. If both partners hold traditional or gender essentialist attitudes, the female partner will perform the majority of housework, no matter how high her relative income is. Vice-versa, if both partners hold egalitarian attitudes, they will share housework more equally. Second, in couples in which partners disagree on their gender attitudes, bargaining will be conditional on whether he or she holds more egalitarian attitudes. If he is more egalitarian than she is, he will just perform more everyday-chores and it is unlikely that this will result in a negotiation process in which she insists he leaves these chores to her. This is because bargaining theory considers housework an unpleasant, tiring task that economically rational actors seek to avoid (Becker 1981; Ross 1987). However, if she is more egalitarian than he is, we can reasonably assume partners to use their income advantage to negotiate a lower share of housework. We suggest that by applying our ideological pairings perspective, the couple emerges as a new meaningful unit, enabling a deeper investigation of how gender ideology in couples is distributed, and how this is associated with work divisions i.e., the division of housework. Further, we hypothesize that income will be used by each partner as a

bargaining chip for (re-)negotiating housework division only among couples in which she is more egalitarian.

Whether and how couples' ideological pairings and their relative income interact in affecting housework sharing has not yet been tested empirically. However, we can build upon three studies that examined parts of this question and/or neighboring questions. Carriero and Todesco (2018) analyzed individual-level, cross-sectional data from Italy. They found evidence for an interactive effect, that is, that a solid economic bargaining position is required so that women can put their egalitarian ideologies into practice. However, their data does not include both partners and it therefore remains unclear whether the effect of women's gender ideology exists for all women with a solid economic bargaining position, or only for those who are in ideological agreement, or disagreement, with their partners. McMunn and colleagues (2020) analyze cross-sectional dyadic data from the United Kingdom and study couples' sharing of their total labor, which includes paid and unpaid work. They find that a shared egalitarian ideology is needed for the couple to belong to one of the egalitarian groups of work-sharing. Further, partners' ideological pairing and their relative education have an additive effect, where her higher education predicts more egalitarian sharing of work.. Finally, Nitsche and Grunow (2018) studied childcare (not housework) divisions and assessed the impact of relative resources for German couples agreeing and disagreeing regarding gender attitudes. Divisions of care work were most equal among couples in which both partners shared egalitarian gender attitudes. In couples disagreeing, the partners' relative income mediated the partners' share of care work, but only when she held more egalitarian attitudes. This suggest that the partners bargained for their preferred division of care work (ibid).

HYPOTHESES

Based on the prior discussions, we derive two main hypotheses.

H1: Partners ideological pairings predict the couple's division of housework.

H1a: Egalitarian attitudinal 'duos' will have the most egalitarian division.

H1b: Traditional attitudinal 'duos' will have the most unequal division.

H1c: Mismatched couples' housework divisions will lie between the two others.

H2: Changes in the couples' relative income will lead to adjustments in housework sharing, but direction and mechanisms will vary across the ideological pairings.

H2a: Egalitarian 'duos' will agree on equalizing their housework division even further as her relative income increases.

H2b: Traditional 'duos' agree on traditional divisions. They will not adjust their traditional housework sharing as her income changes. If changes are observable at all, she will increase her housework share as her income share rises, to practice gender deviation neutralization.

H2c: Mismatched couples with an egalitarian woman will bargain over housework divisions. Her housework share decreases as her income share increases.

H2d: Mismatched couples with an egalitarian man will not change their housework division as her income share rises, because he will already perform more housework than his bargaining position would suggest, and she will not push for more equal sharing as her income share rises.

DATA AND MEASURES

Data

We draw on data from the Panel Analysis of Intimate Relationships and Family Dynamics (pairfam), a panel survey from Germany². Yearly waves were collected since 2008/09. We use data release 13.0, but limit our sample to waves 1-11 (collected up to 2019) because of non-trivial changes to the data collection procedure during the pandemic. The pairfam has a three-birth cohort design. It includes focal individuals born in the years 1971-73, 1981-83, and 1991-93. In addition to focal individuals, partners and other family members were surveyed. However, the partner interviews were conducted independently and conducted via mail-only questionnaires. Roughly one third of partners were not contacted with a questionnaire, due to non-granting of permission by focal individuals. Overall, this yields a response rate of only about 50% of partners across waves³. Despite this rather low partner-response rate, the pairfam and the partner data offer many advantages. In addition to information on relationship-, education-, fertility-, and employment-careers, both partners and individuals were repeatedly surveyed on a large variety of relationship-related and attitudinal questions such as gender ideology, relationship satisfaction, the division of housework, and disagreement over work divisions. The pairfam is thus a uniquely rich data source with respect to information on partners, allowing for a deep analyses of intra-couple dynamics.

² *This paper uses data from the German Family Panel pairfam, coordinated by Josef Brüderl, Karsten Hank, Johannes Huinink, Bernhard Nauck, Franz Neyer, and Sabine Walper. pairfam is funded as long-term project by the German Research Foundation (DFG).*

³ For a detailed report on response rates across waves please see:
http://www.pairfam.de/fileadmin/user_upload/redakteur/publis/Dokumentation/TechnicalPapers/TP01_Field-Report_pairfam5.0.pdf

Analytic Sample

We restrict the analyses to heterosexual co-residential couples living together for at least two panel waves. We include both childless couples and parents because we expect our hypothesized ideological pairing effects to operate among all couples alike (a sizeable group of couples become parents during the panel, contributing both childfree observations and observations as parents). If we observed more than one co-residential relationship per focal individual, we chose the one with the longest duration. Our final sample consists of 3173 couples, and 12,426 couple year observations; 53.6 % of focal individuals are women, 47.4% are men (Table 1). We include observations from the ‘DemoDiff’ sample, an oversample of individuals from East Germany added in 2011, constituting 14.7 percent of the sample (Table 1). In total, almost a third of couples in our sample reside in East Germany (31.1%, Table 1)

Measurements and Sample Characteristics

The dependent process of interest, housework sharing, was measured at each wave on a 6-answer-option scale. Answering choices express the self-assessed division of housework between the partners as follows: ‘I do (almost) all the housework’, ‘I do most of the housework, my partner does some’, ‘We share equally’, ‘My partner does most of the housework, I do some’, ‘My partner does all the housework’. Respondents could also indicate whether ‘The majority of housework is done by a third party’.

Focal individuals and partners were surveyed separately. In surveys, both partners tend to exaggerate their own housework contribution (Schulz & Grunow, 2011), leading to discrepancies in their accounts of how housework is divided. We use information on housework divisions provided by focal individuals only, controlling for the sex of the focal partner. We are interested in the trajectories

of the division of housework in couples over time, and assume that following one individual and their account will yield a consistent estimate of housework sharing and changes therein over time. We recoded the item, so that 1 indicates ‘he does (almost) all of the housework’, and 5 indicates ‘she does (almost) all of the housework’. In our sample, women do most of the housework (average of 3.8, Table 1), which is corroborating prior research (Nitsche & Grunow, 2016).

A small minority of focal individuals report that most of the housework is outsourced to a third person (80 observations in 12462 couple-years=0.64%). We excluded those observations from the analyses. Theoretically, it would be relevant to test whether ideological pairings and their interactions with income ratios predict outsourcing. However, the limited number of couples who completely outsource doesn’t allow for further analyses. Information on whether the couple outsources some housework is available from wave 10 onwards only, making the inclusion of this variable infeasible. To measure our main predictor, gender ideological pairings, we rely on two specific questions: “Men should engage in housework to the same degree as women” (housework attitudes), and “Women should be more concerned about their family than about their career” (work-family attitudes). The housework attitudinal item is our main indicator. Prior research underscores that attitudes should be measured specifically to the behavior intended to predict (Albarracín, 2018). The family-career item does not relate to housework sharing specifically. Nonetheless, we include it as a robustness check because the work-family dimension is closely related to domestic work sharing, and because the distribution of answers on the housework attitudinal item is highly skewed.

For both items, answer options ranged from (1) ‘completely disagree’ to (5) ‘completely agree’. We coded completely agreeing and agreeing to the first item (housework) and agreeing or completely disagreeing with the second item (work-family) as an egalitarian attitude. Most respondents in our sample hold egalitarian attitudes on the housework item (83% of women and 79% of men) about half

hold egalitarian attitudes on the work-family item (43% of women, 45% of men, Table 1). We opted to code all other answer options, i.e. disagreeing and completely disagreeing with the first item, completely agreeing and agreeing with the second item, and the middle answer option, to neither to agree or disagree with each item, as traditional attitude, reflecting gender essentialism. We assume that those who do not explicitly agree with gender egalitarian stances fall more likely on the essentialist spectrum, in particular on the housework item, where non-egalitarians are a minority. Our findings are robust to alternative coding of the pairings regarding this middle group (results not shown but available upon request). Next, we combined his and her attitudes, for each item separately. This strategy yields four categories. They indicate whether a couple 1) agrees on a holding gender egalitarian attitude (“egalitarian duo”), 2) agrees on holding a traditional attitude (“traditional duo”, 3), disagrees with her being egalitarian and him being more traditional (“egalitarian woman”), or 4) disagrees with her being traditional and him being gender egalitarian on the respective item (“egalitarian man”). For each couple, we use the first available panel observation measuring gender ideology, and fix the variable to that value. We could instead have conceptualized gender ideology as a time-varying covariate. However, in order to avoid a possible feed-back loop of the actual division of housework on the gender ideology question, we decided to fix this covariate at the first available point of measurement. However, our results are robust to using time-varying measures of our gender ideological variables (not shown but available upon request).

Absolute and relative resources are measured as absolute and relative labor market income. Income is measured as 1) her yearly logged net earnings, and 2) the ratio of his and her labor market income. We created three income ratio groups: Male main earners (she contributes 0-39%), similar earners (she contributes 40-60%), female main earners (she contributes 60-100%). Non-employed women

(or men) were coded as contributing 0%. We lagged these measures by one wave, to ensure that cause precedes effect.

We control for various socio-demographic characteristics. These are the sex of the focal person, the woman's age, the focal individual's birth cohort, marital status of the couple, the number of children present in the household, an indicator for East/West German residence, and a DemoDiff sample indicator. Table 1 indicates that women are on average 35 years old (the man's age was highly correlated, not significant, and was therefore excluded), couples have 1.3 children, and that the two older cohorts make up over 90% of the sample. We also control for his and her education. Education is measured in 4 mutually exclusive categories: up to lower secondary, upper secondary (reference group), tertiary, and currently enrolled in education. We coded education enrolment as a separate education category, because a significant proportion of this rather young sample is being enrolled in education (2.9% of male observations, 4.4% of women's).

ANALYTICAL STRATEGY

To test our hypotheses, we estimate random effects growth-curve models, using a multi-level approach. We test the two ideological pairing items (housework and work-family attitudes) in separate models. We model the time trend of the couples' division of housework trajectories over waves on the first level with a linear and a quadratic term. Measurements of housework over waves are nested in couples. The second level models the covariates on the couple level, including the ideological pairings and the ideology-income ratio interactions. In these models, coefficients are estimated on both within and between couple variance. We estimate clustered standard errors. Next, we estimate fixed-effects linear panel regression models to eliminate intra-couple time constant unobserved heterogeneity. We interact the time-varying measure of relative earnings with the time-

constant measure of ideological pairings, to assess how changes in relative earnings predict changes in housework sharing for each ideological pairing type.

RESULTS

Sample Description: Ideological Pairings and Relative Labor Market Income

Table 1 shows the distributions of ideological pairings. Most individuals in Germany hold egalitarian attitudes toward housework sharing, but not toward women's work-family roles: 69% of couples classify as egalitarian duos on the housework item, but only 25% of couples on the work-family item (Table 1). Traditional duos are rare based on the housework item (6%), yet they are the largest group in the work-family item (37%). Roughly equal percentages of couples on each item are 'bargainers', consisting of a woman with an egalitarian and a man with a traditional attitudinal item response (15% housework item, 18% work-family item) or mismatched couples with a man with an egalitarian and a woman with a traditional item response (10% housework item, 20% work-family item).

Germany is a classical male breadwinner society with widespread part-time work among mothers and significant gender wage gaps. Social change towards equality in dual earning, although present, is slow (Jurczyk et al., 2019; Lang & Groß, 2020). This is reflected in our sample, in which the majority of couple years are spent in male main earner arrangements (60.6%). Female main earners are present in only 11.6%, similar earnings arrangements in 28% of couple years (Table 1). The distribution of earning arrangements varies by ideological pairings. Male main earners are most common among traditional duos (76% on the housework item, 68% on the work family item, versus 56% and 52% percent respectively in either item in egalitarian duos). Female-main-earner and similar-earner arrangements are most prevalent in egalitarian duos (Table 1a).

Main Effects: Ideological Pairings & Income Share

Figure 2a depicts predicted housework sharing by ideological pairing, for both items, net of socio-economic resource- and control variables. Housework sharing is measured on a scale from 1 (he does (almost) all housework) to 5 (she does (almost) all housework); 3 means equal sharing. We only show the y-axis range from 3 to 5 here and in subsequent figures, because women do the majority of housework in all couple-types. As hypothesized, significant differences emerge by ideological pairing. Dual egalitarian couples share housework the most equally (adjusted predictions of 3.70 for the housework item, 3.63 for the work-family item), followed by ‘egalitarian-man’ couples (3.94, 3.79 respectively). Next are ‘egalitarian woman/bargaining’ couples (4.04, 3.87 respectively). Traditional couples have the most unequal housework division (4.24, 3.91 respectively). All group differences within items are statistically significant on the $p \leq .05$ level, apart from the small difference between bargaining and traditional couples on the work-family item. Note that the ideological pairings based on the housework item predict larger differences in housework sharing among the couples than those based on the work-family item. This indicates the housework-item predicts the variance in housework sharing more precisely than the work-family item, as expected. Figure 2 shows predicted housework sharing by her income share, net of ideological pairings, resource- and control variables. Housework sharing is more equal the larger her income share is (male main earners=3.84, similar earners=3.78, female main earners=3.69). These differences are small, yet statistically significant on the $p \leq .001$ level.

Interacting Ideological Pairings and Income Share

Next, we turn to the interaction effects between ideological pairings and the income ratio. Figure 3 presents results from the mixed models. It depicts predicted housework sharing by housework-

ideological pairings. Plotted are adjusted predictions for male main earner couples (dark grey) and female main earner-couples (light grey). Among egalitarian duos, egalitarian women couples, and egalitarian men couples, housework sharing is significantly more equal when she is the main earner, compared to when he is the main earner (3.60 versus 3.77, 3.94 versus 4.11, and 3.87 versus 4.01, respectively). Among traditional duos, there is no statistically significant difference in housework sharing between female and male main earner couples (4.33 versus 4.27). Note that in line with gender deviance neutralization her housework share is even slightly larger when she is the main earner, albeit the difference to male main earner couples being statistically insignificant.

Figure 5 shows results from the fixed-effects model for the same item and interaction (housework ideological pairing*income share). It confirms more equal sharing of housework as the couple moves into a female main earner arrangement among egalitarian duos. This equalizing effect of female breadwinning is no longer statistically significant among egalitarian man and egalitarian woman couples, suggesting it was driven by unobserved heterogeneity between couples in different earning arrangements in these two pairing groups. The ‘gender deviance neutralization’ pattern in traditional duos is still present, but misses statistical significance again.

Figures 4 and 6 illustrate the same interaction effects, this time for the work-family ideological pairings. According to the mixed-effects models, housework sharing is significantly more equal in female main earner couples compared with male main earner couples across all ideological pairings (Figure 4). The presence of the income-share effect across all groups may reflect the lower precision of the work-family attitude item in predicting housework divisions. Results from fixed effects models (Figure 6) confirm the statistically significant equalizing effect of female main earner arrangements among egalitarian duos and egalitarian man couples. However, housework sharing no longer differs significantly between the three other groups.

In sum, we find the hypothesized differences in housework sharing by couples' ideological pairings. Egalitarian duos share housework the most equally, followed by egalitarian man couples, followed by couples with an egalitarian woman. Traditional duos report the most unequal divisions. We thus confirm H1a-H1d. The findings with regards to the hypothesized interaction effects between ideological pairings and income arrangements are confirmed partly. The most salient result is an equalizing effect on housework sharing of female breadwinning among egalitarian duos. It is present across all model specifications, confirming H2a. Also, traditional duos' housework sharing does not differ significantly between male and female earner couples in three out of four model specifications, mostly confirming H2b. The hypothesized 'bargaining' effect was present only in the mixed models, but disappeared in both fixed-effects models. This indicates differences in housework sharing by income-ratios within the group of couples that are ideologically set-up for 'bargaining' are due to unobserved heterogeneity, and not a 'within-couple' bargaining effects as their income ratio changes and her bargaining power increases. We thus reject H2c. Finally, an equalizing effect of her main earning on housework sharing was present among egalitarian man couples, but only in the mixed and fixed effect model using the work-family attitudinal pairing. This largely confirms H2d.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Women still do the majority of unpaid domestic work worldwide, which is likely hindering their socio-economic advancement (Bianchi et al. 2012). Understanding why partners in heterosexual couples share the domestic workload the way they do is thus essential for deeper understandings of the "stalled gender revolution" (England 2010; Scarborough et al., 2019; Sullivan et al., 2018). Our study extends prior literature by offering and empirically testing a new conceptual framework of couples' housework sharing. It reconciles economic bargaining and sociological doing gender

theories by emphasizing interactive processes between the partners. First, we conceptualize that the partners' joint gender ideology, or their 'ideological pairings' will determine their housework sharing, or how they 'do and undo gender'. Second, we argue the link between a couples' relative resources and their housework sharing likely depends on their 'ideological pairing', differentiating the applicability of economic bargaining arguments by sociological couple-types.

Indeed, our results corroborate that both 'doing and undoing gender' and economic resource approaches plus their interaction are needed to explain housework sharing. First, couples' ideological pairings are an important predictor of how they divide housework: Egalitarian duos share the most equally, traditional duos share the most unequally, and mismatched ideological couples are in between, which confirms our first set of hypotheses. This finding extend prior research (Evertsson, 2014; Nitsche & Grunow, 2016) by pointing out the relevance of couples' interactive, in other words multiplicative, attitudes for predicating their gendered behaviors beyond their singular, or additive attitudes. Second, we find a highly significant albeit small equalizing effect of her income share on housework sharing, net of the ideological pairings, confirming differences in housework sharing by partners' relative economic resources. Among high income countries, Germany is a laggard in advancing women's full participation in paid work (Nordenmark 2004). In this context, it is, third, unsurprising that two partners' joint gender egalitarian stance is necessary to not only share housework at least approximately equally, but also to consistently further equalize housework sharing when she becomes the family's main earner. This result corroborates findings from a prior study on child care divisions in Germany, which showed that two egalitarian partners are needed to equalize child care divisions as her income share increases (Nitsche & Grunow, 2018). Our hypothesis 2c, which proposed bargained male adjustments toward more equal housework sharing among couples with mismatched gender ideologies when she becomes the main earner, was largely

rejected. It may prove fruitful for future research to re-focus from socio-economic bargaining hypotheses to the question of whether partners have aligned or opposed ideologies and life concepts, and how these are translated into relational and familial lives, in interaction with the partners' socio-economic situations. A larger emphasis on men's attitudes may also be fruitful. In our data, egalitarian men couples equalize their housework divisions as her income share rises when he holds egalitarian attitudes on women's work family reconciliation. This suggests his ideational support for women's advancement is needed to help her get rid of the 'second shift' as she moves into female main breadwinning.

In sum, our findings underscore the usefulness of zooming in on the partners' interactive attitudes, and on unifying sociological and economic theories to conceptualize gendered work sharing. Going forward, it may be particularly relevant to test the hypotheses we offer across different social contexts. This may further our understanding of how individual-, interactive meso-, and cultural macro-level factors interact in creating the stickiness of unequal domestic work division observed across the globe, or, vice versa, the required conditions for moving into equal sharing of domestic work.

We tested two different attitudinal measurements of gender ideology: Attitudes toward gendered housework sharing, and attitudes toward women's engagement in their family versus their career. Our main findings are robust across both items. In addition, we found that the item on housework is a more precise predictor of the couples' housework sharing trajectories. Reporting of the variance components in mixed models to assess model fit is not straightforward (Wu et al., 2009). We therefore re-estimated our two main models (mixed models) as linear panel regression models, yielding very similar results (not shown). The model testing the housework attitudinal pairings explained 15.82% of the overall variance, the otherwise identical model testing the work-family

attitudinal item explained only 13.36% of the overall variance, indicating better predictive power of the housework attitudinal item. It is interesting to note that most of the difference in housework sharing is due to the between variance component (20.71% versus 17.55% explained between-variance). Hence, these findings confirm the need to measure attitudes and ideology precisely with respect to the behavior intended to predict, as established in social-psychology (Albarracín, 2018). Our study has limitations. We hypothesized agreed adjustments of housework sharing to be underlying the equalizing effect of increases in her income share among egalitarian duos. While our results plausibly fit with this expectation, we cannot fully test the detailed interactive mechanism. Egalitarian duos may agree on setting and re-adjusting their housework divisions, but bargaining could also happen among these egalitarian duos. Perhaps her attempts at bargaining can be fruitful only when he is open to equalizing in the first place, based on his egalitarian ideology. Moreover, the group of egalitarian woman couples, which we hypothesized to be meeting baseline conditions for bargaining about housework divisions, appears to be heterogeneous. While they have significantly higher levels of disagreement and conflict over work divisions as we expected (Figure 1), we did not find evidence for successful re-negotiations of housework sharing within these couples as her income share increased. Rather, unobserved time-constant factors seem responsible for differences in housework divisions by income ratios among egalitarian woman couples. Further research is needed to pin down the precise mechanisms which underlie the equalization of housework sharing among egalitarian duos as she moves into breadwinning, and into the unobserved factors underlying the housework sharing variation of egalitarian woman couples by income ratio, as observed in the mixed models. These factors could lie well beyond the commonly cited sociological ‘doing gender’ or economic realm. For instance, differences in partners’ housework standards, or the degree of outsourcing of domestic work to third parties may play a role for different sharing regimes of these

couples. These aspects were not measured in the data underlying our analyses and are neither readily available in other surveys. However, our results underscore the central relevance of couples, and the interactive processes among both partners, as essential for (re-)producing gender (in)equality.

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TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1: Analytical Sample Characteristics (N couple years = 12,426, N couples = 3173)

	Frequency	Percent			
Housework attitude: egalitarian duo	8,559	68.88			
Housework attitude: egalitarian woman	1,827	14.70			
Housework attitude: egalitarian man	1,279	10.29			
Housework attitude: traditional duo	761	6.12			
Work-family attitude: egalitarian duo	3,118	25.09			
Work-family attitude: egalitarian woman	2,256	18.16			
Work-family attitude: egalitarian man	2,453	19.74			
Work-family attitude: traditional duo	4,599	37.01			
Currently living in East Germany: yes	3,903	31.41			
DemoDiff sample: yes	1,825	14.69			
Birth cohort 1991-1993	732	5.89			
Birth cohort 1981-1983	4,912	39.53			
Birth cohort 1971-1973	6,782	54.58			
Focal individual is male	5,885	47.36			
Cohabiting	9,396	75.62			
Married	3,030	24.38			
His Education: currently enrolled	362	2.91			
His Education: up to lower secondary	548	4.41			
His Education: upper secondary/vocational	6,255	50.34			
His Education: tertiary	5,261	42.34			
Her Education: currently enrolled	523	4.21			
Her Education: up to lower secondary	651	5.24			
Her Education: upper secondary/vocational	6,850	55.13			
Her Education: tertiary	4,402	35.43			
Male main earner	7,528	60.58			
Similar income	3,456	27.81			
Female main earner	1,442	11.60			
	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation	
Housework sharing (1-5)	1	5	3.8	.82	
Her age	17	60	35.2	6.5	
His age	17	72	37.9	7.0	
Number of children	0	7	1.3	1.1	
Her logged net income	0	11.2	5.4	2.9	

Table 1a: Analytic Sample Description: Attitudinal Pairings by Income Ratio (N couple years = 12,426, N couples = 3173)

Column1	Male Breadwinner	Similar Income	Female Breadwinner	Total
Housework Attitudes				
Egalitarian duo				
N	4,795	2,707	1,057	8,559
%	56.02	31.63	12.35	100
Egalitarian woman				
N	1,242	384	201	1,827
%	67.98	21.02	11	100
Egalitarian man				
N	912	238	129	1,279
%	71.31	18.61	10.09	100
Traditional duo				
N	579	127	55	761
%	76.08	16.69	7.23	100
Work-Family Attitudes				
Egalitarian duo				
N	1,623	1,030	465	3,118
%	52.05	33.03	14.91	100
Egalitarian woman				
N	1,318	685	253	2,256
%	58	30	11	100
Egalitarian man				
N	1,465	687	301	2,453
%	59.72	28.01	12.27	100
Traditional duo				
N	3,122	1,054	423	4,599
%	67.88	22.92	9.2	100
Total				
N	7,528	3,456	1,442	12,426
%	60.58	27.81	11.6	100

Table 2: Mixed Effects Regression Results: Housework Sharing and Housework Attitudinal Pairings

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>
Couple time	0.016	(0.011)
Couple time squared	-0.002 *	(0.001)
<i>Housework Attitudinal Pairing</i>		
<i>Egalitarian Duo: Reference</i>		
Egalitarian woman	0.333 ***	(0.034)
Egalitarian man	0.228 ***	(0.041)
Traditional duo	0.497 ***	(0.047)
<i>Income Ratio</i>		
<i>Male Main Earner: Reference</i>		
Similar Income	-0.073 ***	(0.019)
Female Main Earner	-0.169 ***	(0.029)
<i>Attitudinal Pairing # Income Ratio</i>		
Egalitarian Woman # Similar Income	0.037	(0.047)
Egalitarian Woman # Female Main Earner	-0.004	(0.075)
Egalitarian man # Similar Income	0.053	(0.053)
Egalitarian man # Female Main Earner	0.034	(0.075)
Traditional duo # Similar Income	0.078	(0.066)
Traditional duo # Female Main Earner	0.228 *	(0.100)
<i>Demographic Controls</i>		
Number of children	0.113 ***	(0.012)
Cohort 1981-83 (1991-93: Reference)	0.113 *	(0.048)
Cohort 1971-73 (1991-93: Reference)	0.105	(0.072)
Her age	0.003	(0.004)
Cohabiting (Marriage: Reference)	-0.128 ***	(0.024)
Currently living in East Germany	-0.104 ***	(0.028)
DemoDiff sample	0.001	(0.038)
Focal individual is male	-0.083 ***	(0.024)
<i>His Education</i>		
He is currently enrolled in education	-0.025	(0.049)
His lower secondary and less education	-0.013	(0.063)
<i>His upper secondary education: Reference</i>		
His tertiary education	0.028	(0.024)
<i>Her Education</i>		
She is currently enrolled in education	-0.172 ***	(0.046)
Her lower secondary and less education	-0.019	(0.051)
<i>Her upper secondary education: Reference</i>		
Her tertiary education	-0.122 ***	(0.024)
Her net income (log)	-0.006 *	(0.003)
Intercept	3.541 ***	(0.098)
var(coupletime)	0.003	(0.000)
var(_cons)	0.350	(0.023)
cov(coupletime,_cons)	-0.015 ***	(0.003)
var(e)	0.280	(0.009)
Number of observations	12426	
Number of groups	3173	

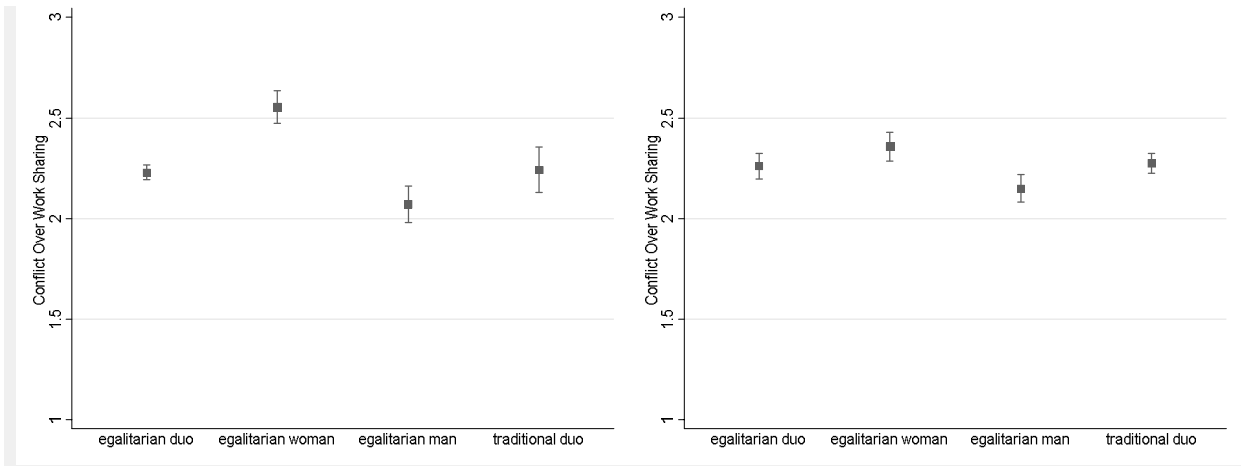
*** p<.001, ** p<.01, * p<.05

Table 3: Mixed Effects Regression Results: Housework Sharing and Work-Family Attitudinal Pairings

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>		<i>Standard Error</i>
Couple time	0.015		(0.011)
Couple time squared	-0.002	*	(0.001)
<hr/>			
Housework Attitudinal Pairing			
<i>Egalitarian Duo: Reference</i>			
Egalitarian woman	0.260	***	(0.042)
Egalitarian man	0.172	***	(0.041)
Traditional duo	0.280	***	(0.035)
Income Ratio			
<i>Male Main Earner: Reference</i>			
Similar Income	-0.048		(0.028)
Female Main Earner	-0.131	**	(0.043)
Attitudinal Pairing # Income Ratio			
Egalitarian Woman # Similar Income	-0.043		(0.047)
Egalitarian Woman # Female Main Earner	-0.054		(0.073)
Egalitarian man # Similar Income	-0.011		(0.045)
Egalitarian man # Female Main Earner	-0.079		(0.064)
Traditional duo # Similar Income	-0.015		(0.038)
Traditional duo # Female Main Earner	0.021		(0.060)
<hr/>			
Demographic Controls			
Number of children	0.121	***	(0.103)
Cohort 1981-83 (<i>1991-93: Reference</i>)	0.103	*	(0.048)
Cohort 1971-73 (<i>1991-93: Reference</i>)	0.110		(0.073)
Her age	0.004		(0.004)
Cohabiting (<i>Marriage: Reference</i>)	-0.130	***	(0.024)
Currently living in East Germany	-0.113	***	(0.029)
DemoDiff sample	0.005		(0.039)
Focal individual is male	-0.097	***	(0.024)
His Education			
He is currently enrolled in education	-0.001		(0.050)
His lower secondary and less education	-0.022		(0.066)
<i>His upper secondary education: : Reference</i>			
His tertiary education	0.043		(0.025)
Her Education			
She is currently enrolled in education	-0.164	***	(0.046)
Her lower secondary and less education	-0.042		(0.051)
<i>Her upper secondary education: Reference</i>			
Her tertiary education	-0.119	***	(0.025)
Her net income (log)	-0.007	*	(0.003)
<hr/>			
Intercept	3.433	***	(0.103)
var(coupletime)	0.003		(0.000)
var(_cons)	0.374		(0.023)
cov(coupletime,_cons)	-0.016	***	(0.003)
var(e)	0.280		(0.009)
<hr/>			
Number of observations	12426		
<hr/>			
Number of groups	3173		

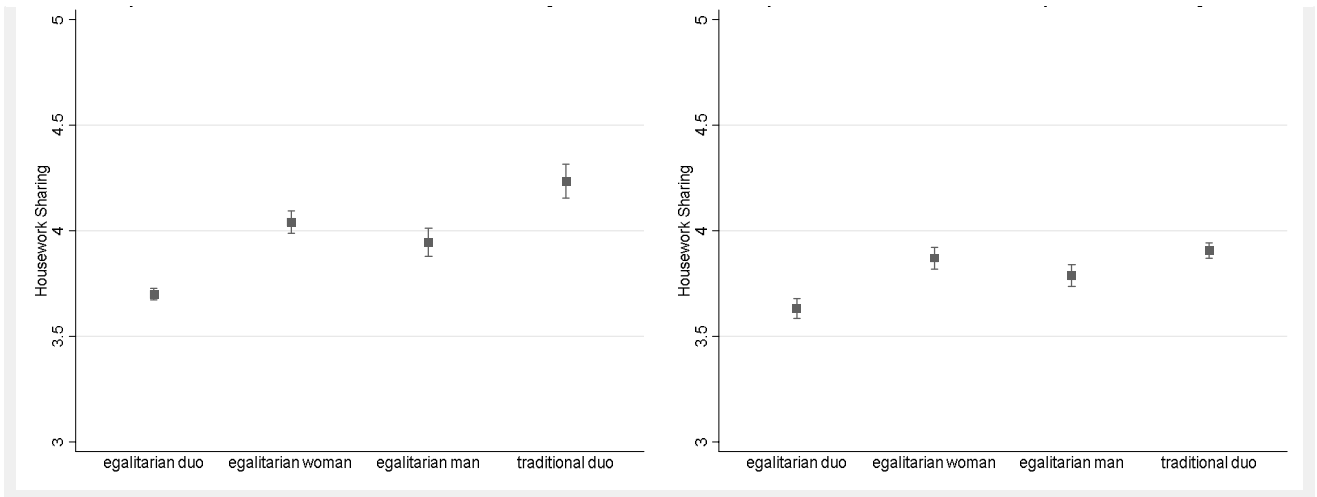
*** p<.001, ** p<.01, * p<.05

Figure 1: Adjusted Predictions of Attitudinal Pairings on Frequency of Disagreement/Conflict with Partner About the Division of Chores (e.g. housework, childcare).



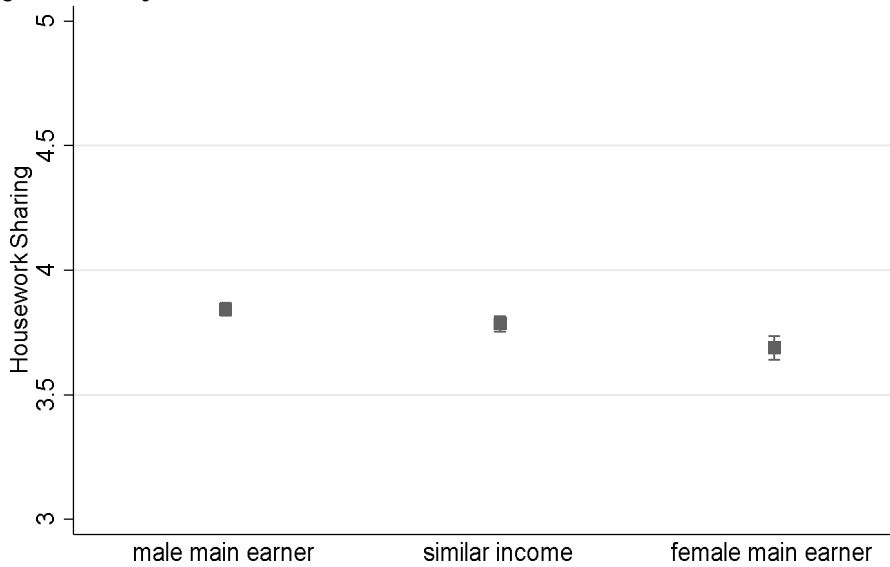
Note: Disagreement/conflict measured on a scale from 1 (almost never or never) to 5 (very often). Adjusted predictions from two separate a linear panel regression models. Models controls for her age, birth cohort, number of children, marital status, east German residence, sex of focal individual, his education, her education, her net logged income, and the partners' income ratio. Both models are estimated on a sample of N=3043 couples and N=8314 couple years. Sample sizes are smaller than in the main analytic sample due to missing values on the disagreement variable. We used listwise deletion for missingness.

Figure 2a: Adjusted Predictions of Attitudinal Pairings on Housework Sharing



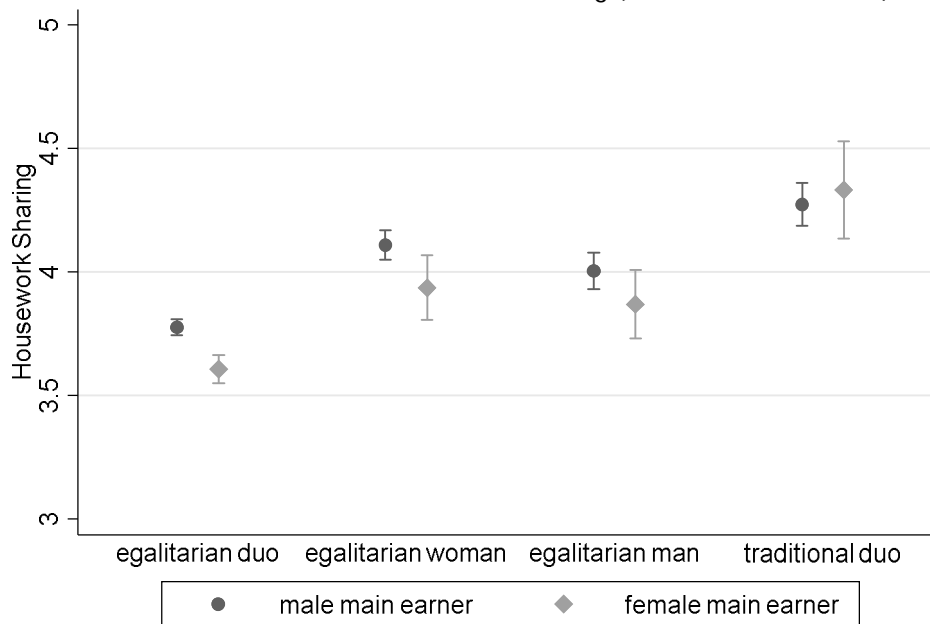
Note: Housework sharing measured on a Scale from 0 ((almost) completely the man, to 5 (almost) completely the woman). Y-axis limited to the 3-5 range. Adjusted predictions from two separate a mixed effects growth curve models.

Figure 2b: Adjusted Predictions of the Partners' Income Ratio on Housework Sharing



Note: Housework sharing measured on a Scale from 0 ((almost) completely the man, to 5 (almost) completely the woman). Y-axis limited to the 3-5 range. Model controls for housework attitudinal pairings.

Figure 3: Adjusted Predictions of the Interaction Effect between Housework Attitudinal Pairings and the Partners' Income Share on Housework Sharing (Mixed Effects Model)



Note: Housework sharing measured on a Scale from 0 ((almost) completely the man, to 5 (almost) completely the woman). Y-axis limited to the 3-5 range. Model controls for housework attitudinal pairings.

Figure 4: Adjusted Predictions of the Interaction Effect between Work-Family Attitudinal Pairings and the Partners' Income Share on Housework Sharing (Mixed Effects Model)

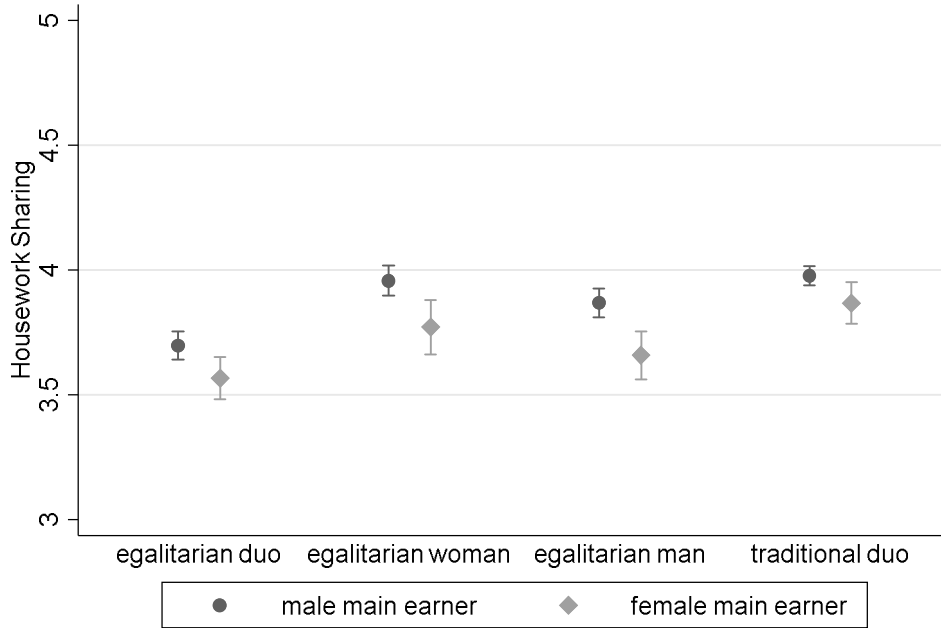
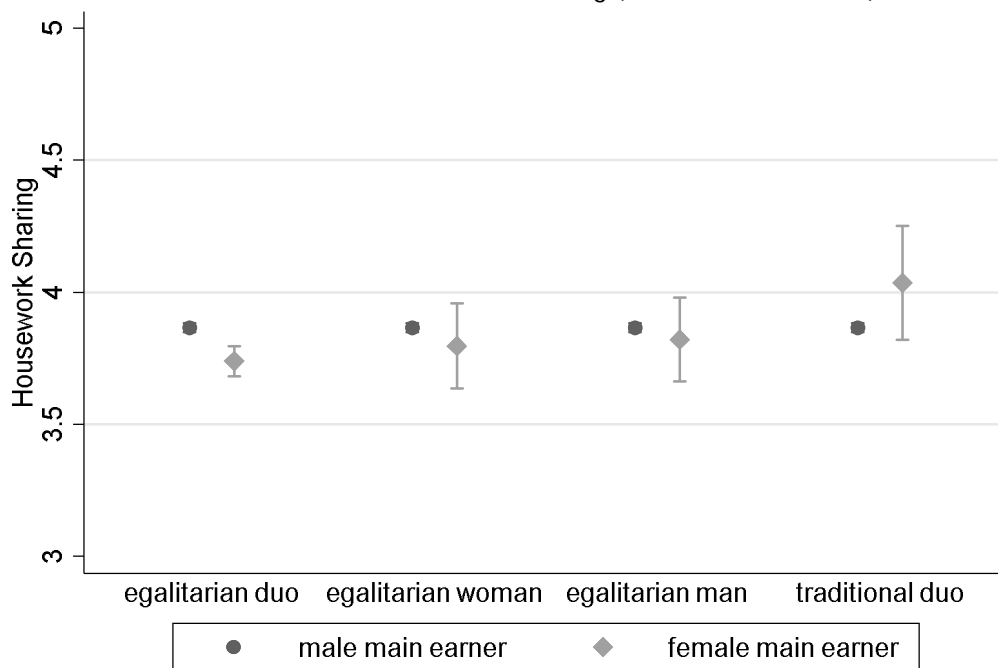
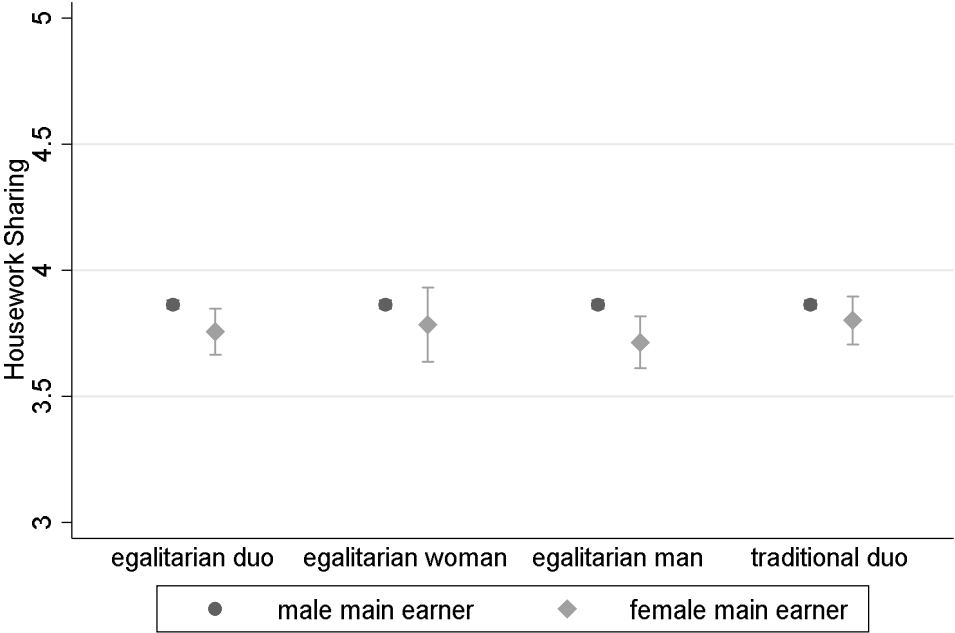


Figure 5: Adjusted Predictions of the Interaction Effect between Housework Attitudinal Pairings and the Partners' Income Share on Housework Sharing (Fixed Effects Model)



Note: Housework sharing measured on a Scale from 0 ((almost) completely the man, to 5 (almost) completely the woman). Y-axis limited to the 3-5 range. Model controls for housework attitudinal pairings.

Figure 6: Adjusted Predictions of the Interaction Effect between Work-Family Attitudinal Pairings and the Partners' Income Share on Housework Sharing (Fixed Effects Model)



Note: Housework sharing measured on a Scale from 0 ((almost) completely the man, to 5 (almost) completely the woman). Y-axis limited to the 3-5 range. Model controls for housework attitudinal pairings.