

## **Explaining Men's and Women's Participation in Household Labor: Is There a Need to Reconsider Existing Theoretical Perspectives?**

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### **Abstract**

The present study examined the extent to which Israeli men and women participate in three domains of household labor: domestic tasks, technical household maintenance, and running errands. In an attempt to understand the sources of the division of household labor in each of these domains, we examined the validity of three theoretical perspectives: relative resources theory, gender role ideology theory, and family systems theory. The sample consisted of 429 employed Jewish Israeli parents (213 men, and 216 women) with at least one child living at home. Spousal earning patterns and occupational prestige patterns contributed to explaining participation in household labor among men but not among women. Feminine gender role ideology contributed significantly to explaining men's participation in domestic tasks. Contrary to expectations, the higher the men's assessments of marital quality were, the less they participated in domestic tasks, whereas the women's experience of high marital quality was related to less participation in technical household maintenance.

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### **Key words**

participation in household labor, earning patterns, occupational prestige patterns, gender role ideology, marital quality

## **Introduction**

Following the major changes in gender roles as well as in values that may affect marital life today, studies based on accepted theories for explaining the division of household labor (presented later in this article) have revealed inconsistent findings. Some of the findings support the premises of these theories, whereas others do not. Moreover, most researchers have focused on explaining men's participation in household labor, but there is a

lack of research on the factors that explain women's participation. This is probably due to the prevailing assumption that women bear the main responsibility for domestic tasks, irrespective of personal or environmental factors. Against this background, the main contribution of the present study is its comparative examination of men's and women's self-assessments of the division of household labor in three domains: domestic tasks such as housework and child care; technical household maintenance; and running errands.

The study was conducted in Israel, which researchers consider to be a traditional society undergoing a rapid process of modernization (Lavee & Katz, 2002; Stier, 2010). Thus although the Israeli context represents a specific Middle Eastern society, knowledge about the division of household labor among working parents in Israel can shed light on the situation in other traditional societies undergoing processes of modernization.

### *Relative Resources Theory*

Most of the approaches to studying the division of household labor are founded on the well-known classic relative resources theory (Blood & Wolfe, 1960), which is consistent with principles underlying the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964). Relative resources theory describes the interrelationship between spouses in terms of costs and benefits. Thus, the spouse who controls the resources needed by the other partner is the more powerful spouse in the marital relationship. Moreover, socioeconomic resources (such as income level, professional prestige, and education) have largely been viewed as concrete resources and are typically considered male resources. Based on relative resources theory, the present study examined differences in men's and women's participation in household labor by focusing on two socio-economic resources: income and occupational prestige.

### *Income*

Izraeli (1994) distinguished between three spousal earning patterns: the *traditional earning pattern*, in which the husband earns more than the wife; the *modern earning pattern*, in which both spouses contribute equally to the family income, and the *innovative earning pattern*, in which the wife earns more than her husband. Notably, research on the relationship between earning pat-

terns and the division of household labor has led to inconsistent findings.

Studies conducted in the United States (Raley, Bianchi, & Wang, 2012), Israel (Gaunt & Boukunik, 2012), Spain (Goñi-Legaz, Ollo-López, & Bayo-Moriones, 2010), and England (Kan, 2008) have revealed that when the gap between the husbands' and wives' income levels is smaller, the husbands tend to participate more actively in household labor. In contrast, there is research evidence indicating that among innovative earners in Israel, the husband tends to participate less in household labor than among modern and traditional earners (Izraeli, 1994). This trend is explained by the "balance principle" (Hochschild & Machung, 1989, p. 278), which argues that when men lose control in the income domain they attempt to balance the damage caused to their image and maintain their masculine identity by reducing their participation in the household domain.

Moreover, the argument that among innovative earners, men tend to participate less in household labor than among other types of earners can be explained on the basis of the gender construction proposition, which is better known as *doing gender*. This proposition asserts that social differences between men and women are "constructed by means of a complex of socially guided perceptual, interactional, and micropolitical activities" (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 126). In the same vein, the gender display perspective attempts to explain differences in the time that men and women spend on household tasks. For example, South and Spitze (1994) argued that individuals use housework to affirm gender identity in the face of gender-atypical economic circumstances. When the man has difficulty sustaining traditional family roles (i.e., when he is not the main breadwinner or when he is not employed in a more prestigious occupation than his wife), both partners may act in ways that neutralize the deviation from gender norms. According to this principle, which is known as deviance neutralization (Greenstein, 2000), when the share of the partners' income is high or low for their gender, they can be expected to compensate by exaggerating their gender-normative household performance. Thus, married women who earn more than their husbands are predicted to spend more time on domestic labor than other women, and men who earn an unusually low income compared to their spouses are predicted to spend less time on housework than men in families with other earning patterns.

Following these perspectives, it can be assumed that among innovative earners, the wife's advantage in the earning domain poses a threat to the

husband's masculine identity. Hence, these men will often mention "do gender" in their daily lives by conforming closely to traditional gender role prescriptions (Braman, Kahan, Gastil, Stovic, & Mertz, 2005, p. 4). In this vein, Evertsson and Neremo (2004) reported a gender display pattern for women, and Greenstein (2000) found a gender deviance neutralization pattern in the effect of women's share of the couple's earnings on their total participation in housework. Moreover, Evertsson and Neremo (2004) revealed that culture may contribute to the relationship between a spousal advantage in income and the division of household labor. The relative resources perspective, which focuses on economic dependence, has received most support in Sweden, whereas the balance principle has received the clearest support in the United States.

In light of the inconsistency in the research findings regarding the relationships between a spousal advantage in income and participation in household tasks, we propose two competing hypotheses for men and for women: one hypothesis is based on relative resources theory, and the other is based on the balance principle.

**Hypothesis 1a** (based on relative resources theory): Among innovative earners, the men's self-assessments of their participation in household labor in the three domains (domestic tasks, technical household maintenance, and running errands) will be higher than among traditional or modern earners. Among modern earners, the men's self-assessments of their participation in household labor in the three domains will be higher than among traditional earners.

**Hypothesis 1b** (based on the balance principle): Among innovative earners, the men's self-assessments of their participation in household labor in the three domains will be lower than among traditional or modern earners. Among modern earners, the men's self-assessments of their participation in household labor in the three domains will be lower than among traditional earners.

**Hypothesis 2a** (based on relative resources theory): Among innovative earners, the women's self-assessments of their participation in household labor in the three domains will be lower than among traditional or modern earners. Among modern earners, the women's self-assessments of their participation in household labor in the three domains will be lower than among traditional earners.

**Hypothesis 2b** (based on the balance principle): Among innovative earners, the women's self-assessments of their participation in household labor in the three domains will be higher than among traditional or modern earners. Among modern earners, the women's self-assessments of their participation in household labor in the three domains will be higher than among traditional earners.

### *Occupational Prestige*

In addition to examining the contribution of economic resources to explaining the division of household labor, we enlarged our examination of relative resources theory by focusing on the contribution of a social resource, i.e., occupational prestige, as mentioned above. In contrast to economic resources, which are concrete and exchangeable, occupational prestige is a symbolic resource, and its main value lies in gaining appreciation and recognition (MacKinnon & Langford, 1994). Most existing studies on the relationship between occupational prestige patterns and men's participation in household labor have defined occupational prestige in terms of the extent of one's professional authority or the extent to which one makes professional decisions, as evidenced in a study conducted by Aytac (1990) in the United States.

In the present study, we distinguished between three patterns of occupational prestige among dual-earner couples, which correspond with the earning patterns described above: the *traditional prestige pattern* (husband has more occupational prestige than the wife); the *modern prestige pattern* (both spouses have equal occupational prestige); and the *innovative prestige pattern* (wife has more occupational prestige than the husband). In contrast to the substantial knowledge accumulated on the contribution of income to explaining men's and women's participation in household labor, there is a lack of knowledge on the contribution of occupational prestige (for a review, see Shelton & John, 1996). In line with relative resources theory, Aytac (1990) found that in the United States, men whose wives work in occupations where they are highly involved in decision-making showed a greater tendency to participate in household labor than did men whose wives do not work in those kinds of occupations. However, other research has not completely supported the above-mentioned findings. For example, Brayfield (1992) found that women who work in high-level management positions and have more occupational prestige than their husbands devoted less time to household labor,

whereas an advantage over the husband in occupational prestige was not found to reduce the burden of household labor among women in low-level management positions. Moreover, as in the case of economic resources, other findings support the balance principle approach to the division of household for men as well as for women. In this vein, a recent study conducted in Israel (Kulik, 2013) revealed that among couples with traditional occupational prestige patterns, men participate less in household labor than among couples with modern or innovative occupational prestige patterns. Thus, as in the case of earning patterns, because the research findings regarding the relationship between patterns of spousal occupational prestige and the division of household labor are inconsistent, we propose two competing hypotheses, one deriving from relative resources theory and the other deriving from the balance principle.

**Hypothesis 3a** (based on relative resources theory): Among participants with innovative occupational prestige patterns, men's self-assessments of their participation in the three domains will be higher than among participants with traditional or modern occupational prestige patterns. Among participants with modern occupational prestige patterns, the men's self-assessments of their participation in household labor will be higher than among participants with traditional occupational prestige patterns.

**Hypothesis 3b** (based on the balance principle): Among participants with innovative occupational prestige patterns, the men's self-assessments of their participation in household labor in the three domains will be lower than among participants with traditional or modern occupational prestige patterns. Among participants with modern occupational prestige patterns, the men's self-assessments of their participation in household labor in the three domains will be lower than among participants with traditional occupational prestige patterns.

With regard to women, we proposed the following hypotheses based on relative resources theory and on the balance principle:

**Hypothesis 4a** (based on relative resources theory): Among participants with innovative occupational prestige patterns, the women's self-assessments of their participation in household labor in the three do-

mains will be lower than among participants with traditional or modern occupational prestige patterns. Among participants with modern occupational prestige patterns, the women's self-assessments of their participation in household labor in the three domains will be lower than among participants with traditional occupational prestige patterns.

**Hypothesis 4b** (based on the balance principle): Among participants with innovative occupational prestige patterns, the women's self-assessments of their participation in household labor in the three domains will be higher than among participants with traditional or modern occupational prestige patterns. Among participants with modern occupational prestige patterns, the women's self-assessments of their participation in household labor in the three domains will be higher than among participants with traditional occupational prestige patterns.

### *Gender Role Ideology Theory*

Gender role ideology is generally conceived of as opinions and beliefs about the ways in which family and work roles differ or should differ by gender (Harris & Firestone, 1998). These attitudes typically run along a continuum ranging from nonegalitarian to egalitarian. Nonegalitarian attitudes reinforce or conform to expected differences in roles for men and for women, whereas egalitarian attitudes do not support the segregation of roles and maintain that female and male roles should be divided equally at home and at work (Blair & Daniel, 1991). According to gender role ideology theory, men who espouse egalitarian gender role attitudes participate more in household labor than do men with nonegalitarian gender role perspectives (Kamo, 1994). Consistent with this approach, studies have shown a low but significant association between men's egalitarian gender role ideology and the time they devote to household labor, as revealed in an American and Japanese sample (Kamo, 1994), an American sample (Presser, 1994), and an Israeli sample (Kulik, 2013). As for women, some studies based on American samples have revealed that egalitarian gender role ideology is negatively associated with participation in household labor (Presser, 1994).

Researchers have distinguished between two aspects of the general term gender role ideology: feminine gender role ideology, and masculine gender role ideology (for a review, see Beere, 1990). Whereas the first term refers to perceptions and attitudes regarding women's roles at home and in soci-

ety (Parry, 1983), the second term refers to beliefs about men adhering to culturally defined standards for male behavior (Pleck, Sonenstein, & Ku, 1993). Against this background, we proposed the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 5:** The more egalitarian the men's feminine and masculine gender role ideology, the more they will participate in household labor in the three domains. As for women, the more egalitarian their feminine and masculine gender role ideology, the less they will participate in household labor in the three domains.

### *Family Systems Theory*

Family systems theory views the family as a complex structure consisting of various smaller units or subsystems that combine to form the larger family system (Minuchin, 1974). Subsystems can be organized by different criteria such as gender and patterns of interaction between family members. According to this classification, one of the salient family subsystems is the spousal subsystem (Turnbull, Brotherson, & Summers, 1985), which fulfills various functions such as providing nursing care, guidance, and financial support to family members as well as performing household tasks. Implicit in the discussion of the family as a complex structure is the idea that the individuals and subsystems comprising the whole family system are mutually dependent and are influenced by one another (Minuchin, 1974). In this context, family systems theory attributes importance to the interaction between spouses as a key factor that explains various family processes (Cox & Paley, 1997), including the division of labor in the home as reflected in an Israeli study (Kulik & Tsoref, 2009).

In this vein, Belsky and Volling (1987) found that the husband's high assessment of marital quality is related to his participation in household tasks. This argument has also been supported by other findings, which indicate that the male partner's satisfaction with marriage before children are born, predicts his participation in raising them (Levy-Shiff & Israelashvili, 1988; Lee & Doherty, 2007). In addition, correlative studies have found a relationship between marital quality and equality in the division of household labor (Voydanoff & Donnelly, 1999; Frisco & Williams, 2003). Whereas family systems theory explains the relationship between the man's evaluation of marital quality and his tendency to actively participate in



household labor, there is a lack of research on whether women's high assessments of marital quality will be related to a greater tendency to participate in household labor. Against this background, we formulated the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 6:** The higher the men's assessments of their marital quality, the more they will participate in household labor in the three domains. Moreover, in the absence of empirical support for this hypothesis among women, we also examined whether women's high assessments of marital quality are related to their participation in the three domains of household labor.

## Method

### *Sample and Procedure*

The research sample consisted of 429 employed Jewish Israeli parents: 213 men (49.7%), and 216 women (50.3%). All of the participants were parents with at least one child under age 18 living at home (see Table 1). The demographic characteristics of this sample represent the characteristics of the general Jewish population of Israel (Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, 2014).

Research questionnaires were distributed among workers organizations throughout the country. The guiding criterion for choosing the organizations in which the questionnaires were distributed was to give proper representation to organizations according to their domain of activity: manufacturing organizations, service organizations, and commercial organizations. The sample covered a diverse range of organizations that employ workers in various fields (e.g., governmental organizations, factories, high-tech corporations, and banks). Data were collected from men and women working at 11 organizations (out of 13 organizations that were approached). After coordinating with the directors of the organizations and obtaining their consent to conduct the study, research assistants approached employees in dual-earner families with at least one child under age 18 living at home, and asked if they would agree to participate in the study. Workers were sampled randomly from each organization. Some of them completed the questionnaires immediately and returned them to the research assistants on the same day, whereas others

completed the questionnaires at home and returned them to the research assistants at a later date. Other participants (approximately 20%) were sampled using the snowball method. The time required to complete the questionnaires was approximately 25 minutes, and the response rate was 85%.

**Table 1.**  
*Distribution of Background Variables: Men (N=213) vs. Women (N=216)*

	Men		Women		
Education					$\chi^2 (2)=0.19$
Partial secondary	43 (20.2%)		42 (19.3%)		
Full secondary	66 (30.8%)		64 (29.4%)		
Post-secondary	104 (49.0%)		110 (51.3%)		
Religiosity					$\chi^2 (3)=0.49$
Secular	84 (39.5%)		81 (37.5%)		
Traditional	61 (28.6%)		64 (29.6%)		
Religious	36 (17.1%)		41 (19.1%)		
Ultra-Orthodox	32 (14.8%)		30 (13.8%)		
Earners					$\chi^2 (2)=0.18$
Traditional	91 (42.6%)		90 (41.7%)		
Modern	95 (44.5%)		96 (44.5%)		
Innovative	27 (12.9%)		30 (13.8%)		
Occupational prestige					$\chi^2 (2)=1.11$
Traditional	63 (29.1%)		56 (26.0%)		
Modern	116 (54.9%)		120 (55.7%)		
Innovative	34 (16.0%)		40 (18.3%)		
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Age	40.4	11.7	36.8	1.6	$t=3.38^{**}$
Number of children	3.0	1.9	3.0	1.9	$t=0.09$

Note: \* $p<.05$ , \*\* $p<.01$ , \*\*\* $p<.001$ .

### *Instruments*

The research questionnaire consisted of the following sub-questionnaires.

*Participation in household labor questionnaire.* The instrument was developed in Hebrew by Kulik (2013), and consisted of 16 items relating to various aspects of household labor. For each item, participants were asked to in-

icate who bears primary responsibility for that specific household task. Responses were based on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1=*always the spouse* to 5=*always me*. Higher scores indicated higher levels of participation in household labor. Varimax rotated factor analysis of the 16 items revealed three factors that combined to explain 52.0% of the variance (Eigenvalue > 1). The first factor included child care and household chores such as cooking, ironing, doing laundry, and cleaning (*domestic tasks*). The second factor included tasks related to technical maintenance of the home, such as repairs and gardening (*technical household maintenance*). The third factor included activities that link domestic life with outside affairs, such as paying bills or contact with banks and bureaucratic organizations (*running errands*). One score was derived for each factor by computing the mean of the scores on all of the items. The higher the score, the more the participant was involved in household labor. The Cronbach's alpha internal consistency values for each factor were .76 for domestic tasks, .77 for technical household maintenance, and .70 for running errands.

*Earning and occupational prestige patterns questionnaires.* Regarding earning patterns, participants were asked to respond to one question about the earning pattern in their family: The scale of responses was as follows: 1=*the husband earns more than the wife* (traditional earning pattern); 2=*the husband earns the same as the wife* (modern earning pattern); 3=*the wife earns more than the husband* (innovative earning pattern). Regarding occupational prestige patterns, participants were asked to respond to one question about the occupational prestige pattern in the family. The scale of responses was as follows: 1=*the husband's occupation is more prestigious than the wife's occupation* (traditional occupational prestige pattern); 2=*the husband's and wife's occupations are equally prestigious* (modern occupational prestige pattern); and 3=*the wife's occupation is more prestigious than the husband's occupation* (innovative occupational prestige pattern).

*Gender role ideology questionnaire.* The questionnaire was developed in Hebrew by Kulik (2013), and included 35 statements that describe gender roles in the home, at work, and in society. Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree with each statement on a 6-point scale ranging from 1=*strongly disagree* to 6=*strongly agree*. Varimax rotated factor analysis revealed two main factors that combined to explain 60% of the variance (Eigenvalue > 1), and described two distinct content areas. The first factor related to attitudes reflecting stereotypes of feminine gender roles (*feminine gender role ideology*), e.g., *Household chores are the woman's sole responsibility*. The

second factor related to attitudes that reflect stereotypes of masculine gender roles (*masculine gender role ideology*), e.g., *Fathers should not be as involved as mothers in raising children*. In the data processing stage, several items were reverse coded, such that for all items, a higher score represented more egalitarian gender role ideology. The Cronbach's alpha internal consistency values were .84 for the first factor, and .86 for the second factor.

*Marital quality questionnaire.* Marital quality was evaluated through the Israeli Marital Quality Scale (Lavee, 1995), which was based on a short form of Fowers and Olson's (1992) American Marital Quality Scale, and examined the extent of the participants' satisfaction, consensus, and compatibility in their marriage. The questionnaire used in this study consisted of 10 items, and was validated by Lavee (1995). Responses were based on a 7-point scale ranging from 1=*not at all* to 7=*to a great extent*. One score was derived by calculating the mean of the responses on all of the items: the higher the score, the higher the participants' assessments of their marital quality. The Cronbach's alpha reliability of the questionnaire used in this study was .88.

*Background questionnaire.* The questionnaire aimed to provide basic data on the participants, e.g., number of children, level of education, and religiosity.

## Results

To allow for optimal use of the sample data, we conducted multiple imputations based on the regressions of existing data. Missing data were replaced with random values based on the expectation-maximization technique that is built on the known distribution of all variables (Enders, 2010). We performed a Missing Completely at Random (MCAR) test to ensure unbiased imputation (Little, 1988). The result of this test was  $\chi^2(198)=200.95$ ,  $p = .83$ , which supported the null hypothesis. To increase randomness, five datasets were imputed.

### *Differences in Participation in Household Labor, by Earning Patterns and Occupational Prestige Patterns (Hypotheses 1-6)*

To examine differences in the extent of participation in household labor by gender, earning patterns, and occupational prestige patterns, three-way (2x3x3) MANOVAs were conducted. The model used in the analysis included three main effects (gender, earning patterns, and occupational prestige pat-

terns). Wilks' Lambda revealed two main effects: an effect for gender:  $\lambda = .43$ ,  $F(3, 417)=161.12$ ,  $p = .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .54$ ; and an effect for earning patterns:  $\lambda = .96$ ,  $F(6, 834)=2.46$ ,  $p = .024$ ,  $\eta^2 = .02$ . In addition, a statistical boundary effect was found for occupational prestige patterns:  $\lambda = .95$ ,  $F(6, 834)=2.02$ ,  $p = .062$ ,  $\eta^2 = .01$ . Moreover, a significant interaction was found between gender and occupational prestige patterns:  $\lambda = .94$ ,  $F(6, 834)=3.56$ ,  $p = .002$ ,  $\eta^2 = .03$ . However, no significant interaction was found between gender and earning patterns:  $\lambda = .98$ ,  $F(6, 834)=1.61$ ,  $p = .13$ ,  $\eta^2 = .01$ .

One-way analyses of variance for each of the three dimensions of household labor examined in the study (domestic tasks, technical household maintenance, and running errands) revealed the following differences.

*Gender differences.* Significant differences between husbands and wives were found with regard to self-assessments of participation in technical household maintenance, domestic tasks, and running errands:  $F(1, 419)=257.66$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .38$ ;  $F(1, 419)=132.72$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .24$ ;  $F(1, 419)=41.14$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .09$ , respectively. The men reported that they engaged more in technical household maintenance than did the women ( $M = 3.62$ ,  $SD = 1.13$ , and  $M = 0.98$ ,  $SD = 0.74$ , respectively), and that they engaged more in running errands than did the women ( $M = 3.89$ ,  $SD = 0.87$ ; and  $M = 2.77$ ,  $SD = 1.00$ , respectively), whereas the women reported that they engaged more in domestic tasks than did the men ( $M = 3.41$ ,  $SD = 0.75$ ; and  $M = 2.60$ ,  $SD = 0.64$ , respectively).

*Differences by earning patterns.* Of the three household domains, differences were found only with regard to participation in running errands, by type of earning pattern:  $F(2,419)=5.58$ ,  $p = .005$ ,  $\eta^2 = .03$ . However, after conducting Bonferroni tests, the source of the differences could not be identified. It can thus be concluded that no significant differences by type of earning pattern were found with regard to participation in running errands, technical household maintenance, or domestic tasks:  $F(2, 419)=0.22$ ,  $p = .81$ ,  $\eta^2 = .00$ , and  $F(2, 419)=0.41$ ,  $p = .69$ ,  $\eta^2 = .00$ , respectively.

*Differences by occupational prestige patterns.* Differences were found with regard to participation in technical household maintenance, by occupational prestige patterns:  $F(2, 419)=4.13$ ,  $p = .024$ ,  $\eta^2 = .02$ . This main effect was limited by the interaction between occupational prestige and gender:  $F(2, 419)=8.52$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .04$  (see Table 2). The results presented in Table 2 and the results of Bonferroni tests indicate that among the women, no significant differences were found with regard to participation in technical

household maintenance by occupational prestige patterns. However, *innovator* men participated more in technical household maintenance than did *modern* men; and both *innovator* and *modern* men participated more in technical household maintenance than did *traditional* men. Notably, no significant differences by occupational prestige patterns were found with regard to participation in domestic tasks or running errands:  $F(2, 419)=0.75, p = .50, \eta^2 = .00$ ; and  $F(2, 419)=2.40, p = .114, \eta^2 = .01$ , respectively.

Even though no hypotheses were formulated with regard to the relationship between education and the division of household labor, we conducted two-way ANOVAs (3 x 2 by education level and gender) to examine whether the spouse's education level is related to the division of household labor in each of the three domains (technical household maintenance, domestic tasks, and running errands). The analysis revealed no significant differences by level of education (low, middle, high):  $F(2, 423)=.40, p > .05$  for technical household maintenance;  $F(2, 423)=1.33, p > .05$  for domestic tasks; and  $F(2, 423)=.25, p > .05$  for running errands. Gender differences were the same as those reported in previous analyses. In addition, no interaction was found between gender and education level for any of the factors of household tasks.

**Table 2.**  
*Differences in Division of Household Labor, by Earning and Occupational Prestige Patterns*

		Traditional		Modern		Innovative		Total		F		
		Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Patterns ( $\eta^2$ )	Gender ( $\eta^2$ )	Interaction ( $\eta^2$ )
Earning patterns (N)		90	92	96	94	30	27	216	213			
Domestic tasks	Mean	3.63	2.53	3.66	2.62	3.41	2.72	3.41	2.60	.41	132.72***	2.11
	(SD)	(0.83)	(0.67)	(0.70)	(0.62)	(0.65)	(0.58)	(0.75)	(0.64)	(.00)	(.24)	(.02)
Technical maintenance	Mean	2.08	3.50	1.93	3.69	1.84	3.82	0.98	3.62	.22	257.66***	2.17
	(SD)	(0.75)	(1.09)	(0.71)	(1.20)	(0.79)	(1.01)	(0.74)	(1.13)	(.00)	(.38)	(.02)
Running errands	Mean	2.93	3.48	2.61	3.26	2.83	3.55	2.77	3.89	5.58**	41.14***	0.97
	(SD)	(1.04)	(0.85)	(0.97)	(0.88)	(0.96)	(0.91)	(1.00)	(0.87)	(.03)	(.09)	(.01)
Prestige Patterns (N)		54	62	129	117	36	34	216	213			
Domestic tasks	Mean	3.70	2.50	3.61	2.68	3.48	2.51	3.61	2.60	.75	132.72***	1.35
	(SD)	(0.79)	(0.62)	(0.74)	(0.64)	(0.75)	(0.66)	(0.75)	(0.64)	(.00)	(.24)	(.01)
Technical maintenance	Mean	2.06	3.27	2.01	3.62	1.73	4.28	1.98	3.62	4.13*	257.66***	8.52**
	(SD)	(0.71)	(1.17)	(0.76)	(1.10)	(0.66)	(0.88)	(0.74)	(1.13)	(.02)	(.38)	(.04)
Running errands	Mean	2.70	3.30	2.84	3.38	2.64	3.59	2.77	3.39	2.40	41.14***	1.28
	(SD)	(1.10)	(0.80)	(0.93)	(0.90)	(1.12)	(0.88)	(1.00)	(0.87)	(.01)	(.09)	(.01)

Note: 1. Responses were based on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1=*always the spouse* to 5=*always me*.  
 2. The F-value for earning patterns represents the ANOVA results for the three types of earning patterns (in the upper part of the table); the F value of prestige patterns represents the ANOVAs results for the three types of occupational prestige patterns (in the lower part of the table).  
 \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

*The Relationship of Gender Role Ideology and Marital Quality to Participation in Household labor (Hypotheses 7 and 8)*

No significant correlations were found between men's assessments of marital quality and their participation in domestic tasks, technical household maintenance, or running errands (see Table 3). As for gender role ideology, the men's feminine gender role ideology correlated with their participation in domestic tasks: the more egalitarian their feminine gender role ideology, the greater their tendency to participate in domestic tasks. Moreover, the men's masculine gender role ideology correlated with their participation in technical household maintenance: the more egalitarian their masculine gender role ideology, the more they participated in technical household maintenance.

The women's assessments of marital quality correlated negatively with their participation in technical household maintenance: the higher their assessments of marital quality, the lower their tendency to participate in tech-

**Table 3.**  
*Correlations between the Main Research Variables: Means and Standard Deviations*

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	Feminine role ideology	-	.41***	.20**	-.07	.18*	.02	.02	.30**	-.22**
2	Masculine role ideology	.34***	-	-.01	.24**	-.04	.10	.25**	.14*	-.37**
3	Marital quality	.10	.20**	-	-.01	-.06	.02	.16*	.08	-.02
4	Technical maintenance	-.01	-.29**	-.32**	-	-.04	.10	.07	.08	-.14*
5	Domestic tasks	-.14*	-.05	-.11	.21**	-	-.02	-.20**	.03	-.15*
6	Running errands	.08	-.04	-.09	.22**	.30**	-	-.07	.06	.00
7	Age	-.10	.31**	-.15*	.06	.15*	.02	-	.15*	.35**
8	Education	-.06	.19**	.07	-.00	.10	.06	-.04	-	.00
9	Number of children	-.24**	-.13*	-.11	.14*	.25**	-.08	.47**	.09	-
Men	Mean	3.40	3.49	5.40	3.62	2.59	3.38	40.24	3.49	3.25
	SD	.96	.71	.96	1.13	.64	.87	11.68	1.20	2.00
Women	Mean	3.79	3.76	5.40	1.98	3.61	2.77	36.6	3.73	3.76
	SD	.67	.68	1.09	.73	.73	1.00	10.60	.82	.68

*Notes:* 1. Correlations presented in the upper part of the table refer to men ( $n=213$ ); correlations in the lower part of the table refer to women ( $n=216$ ).

2. The values for feminine role ideology and masculine role ideology, ranged from 1 to 6; For household tasks, ranged from 1 to 5; For marital quality, ranged from 1 to 7.

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

nical household maintenance. Moreover, the women's feminine gender role ideology correlated negatively with their participation in domestic tasks: the more egalitarian their feminine gender role ideology, the less they participated in domestic tasks. In addition, the women's masculine gender role ideology correlated negatively with their participation in technical household maintenance: the more egalitarian their masculine gender role ideology, the less they participated in technical household maintenance.

### *The Combined Contribution of the Three Theoretical Frameworks to Explaining Participation in Household Labor*

To examine the combined contribution of all constructs derived from the three theoretical frameworks underlying the present study to explaining the variance in men's and women's participation in the three domains of household labor, six stepwise hierarchical regressions were conducted: three for men, and three for women (see Table 4 for men, and Table 5 for women). Thus, with regard to earning patterns, one dummy variable was modern vs. traditional earning patterns (henceforth *modern pattern*), and the other was innovative vs. traditional earning patterns (henceforth *innovative pattern*). As for occupational prestige one dummy variable was modern vs. traditional occupational prestige (henceforth *modern prestige*), and the other was innovative vs. traditional occupational prestige (henceforth *innovative prestige*).

*Domestic tasks.* The research variables explained 9% and 12% of the variance in men's and women's participation in domestic tasks, respectively. None of the background variables contributed significantly to explaining the variance in men's participation in domestic tasks, whereas number of children living at home was positively associated with women's participation in this domain of household labor: the more children there were living at home, the greater the women's tendency to participate in domestic tasks. Occupational prestige patterns and earning patterns did not contribute significantly to explaining the variance in men's or women's participation in this domain. As for gender role ideology, neither of the two factors contributed significantly to explaining women's participation in domestic tasks. However, feminine gender role ideology did contribute significantly to explaining men's participation in this domain: the more egalitarian the men's feminine gender role ideology was, the more they participated in domestic



tasks. Marital quality did not contribute significantly to explaining women's participation in domestic tasks, but was significantly and negatively associated with men's participation in these tasks: the higher the men's assessments of their marital quality, the less they participated in domestic tasks.

**Table 4.**  
*Hierarchical Regressions to Explain Men's Participation in Household labor (N=213)*

	Technical household maintenance			Domestic tasks			Running errands		
	B	S.E.	$\Delta R^2$	B	S.E.	$\Delta R^2$	B	S.E.	$\Delta R^2$
Step 1			.05			.06**			.01
Religiosity	.04	.09		.06	.05		-.01	.07	
Age	.01	.01		-.01	.01		-.01	.01	
Education	.06	.06		.04	.03		.05	.05	
Number of children	.11*	.05		-.04	.02		.01	.03	
Step 2			.06**			.01			.04
Modern prestige	.35*	.18		.15	.10		.15	.14	
Innovative prestige	.93***	.25		.03	.14		.48**	.20	
Modern earning	-.04	.17		.09	.05		-.27*	.13	
Innovative earning	.03	.25		.15	.06		-.01	.20	
Step 3			.08***			.01			.03*
Masculine	.47***	.12		-.07	.07		.25**	.11	
Feminine	-.46***	.12		.15*	.07		-.13	.09	
Step 4			.01			.01*			.01
Marital quality	-.05	.07		-.09*	.04		-.06	.06	
<i>df</i>		12,200			12,200			12,200	
<i>F</i>		4.07***			2.33**			1.63	
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>		.20			.09			.09	

*Note.* 1. Traditional prestige and traditional earning group are the reference group, respectively, in step 2.

2. Masculine means masculine gender ideology; Feminine means feminine gender ideology in step 3.

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

**Table 5.**  
**Hierarchical Regression to Explain Women's Participation in Household labor (N=216)**

	Technical household maintenance			Domestic tasks			Running errands		
	B	S.E.	$\Delta R^2$	B	S.E.	$\Delta R^2$	B	S.E.	$\Delta R^2$
Step 1			.03			.07**			.02
Religiosity	.04	.05		.01	.05		-.07	.07	
Age	.02	.01		.01	.01		.01	.01	
Education	-.03	.06		.08	.06		.09	.08	
Number of children	.09*	.04		.09*	.04		-.05	.05	
Step 2			.02			.01			.04*
Modern prestige	.01	.12		-.03	.12		.22	.16	
Innovative prestige	-.07	.17		-.12	.17		-.06	.24	
Modern earning	-.11	.11		.08	.11		-.40**	.15	
Innovative earning	-.12	.11		-.17	.17		-.10	.23	
Step 3			.09***			.01			.01
Masculine	-.43***	.09		.01	.09		-.18	.13	
Feminine	.17*	.08		-.12	.08		.02	.11	
Step 4			.04***			.01			.01
Marital quality	-.16***	.04		-.07	.04		-.05	.06	
<i>df</i>		12,203			12,203			12,203	
<i>F</i>		4.38***			2.15**			1.53	
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>		.20			.12			.09	

*Note:* 1. Traditional prestige and traditional earning group are the reference group, respectively, in step 2.

2. Masculine means masculine gender ideology; Feminine means feminine gender ideology in step 3.

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

*Technical household maintenance.* The research variables explained 20% of the variance in men's as well as women's participation in technical household maintenance. Number of children was found to contribute significantly and positively to both the men's and women's participation in this domain: the larger the number of children, the more both men and women participated in technical household maintenance. The contribution of earning patterns was not significant for men or women, whereas occupational prestige patterns contributed significantly to explaining men's participation in technical

household maintenance but did not contribute to explaining women's participation in this domain. The *B* coefficient indicate that with regard to occupational prestige, the modern and innovative men tended to participate more in technical household maintenance than did the traditional men. Both aspects of gender role ideology contributed significantly to explaining the variance in technical household maintenance, but the contribution was in opposite directions for men and women. The *B* coefficient indicate that the more egalitarian the men's masculine gender role ideology was, the more they participated in technical household maintenance. In contrast, the more egalitarian the women's masculine gender role ideology was, the less they participated in this domain. The contribution of feminine gender role ideology to explaining technical household maintenance was also in the opposite direction for men and women: the more egalitarian the men's feminine gender role ideology was, the less they participated in technical household maintenance. In contrast, the more egalitarian the women's feminine gender role ideology was, the more they participated in technical household maintenance. With regard to marital quality, a significant negative contribution was found for women but not for men: the higher the women's assessments of their marital quality, the less they participated in technical household maintenance.

*Running errands.* The research variables explained 9% of the variance in men's and women's participation in running errands. Women and men in modern earner couples participated less in running errands than did women and men in traditional earner couples. With regard to occupational prestige patterns, innovative men participated more in running errands than did traditional men. As for gender role ideology, neither of the two factors of this variable contributed significantly to explaining participation in running errands among the women, whereas the men's masculine gender role ideology contributed significantly to explaining participation in this domain: the more egalitarian the men's masculine gender role ideology was, the greater their tendency to participate in running errands. Marital quality did not contribute to explaining men's or women's participation in this domain of household labor.

## Discussion

The main conclusion is that none of the three approaches examined in

the present study fully explained men's and women's participation in the different domains of household labor. More specifically, the findings revealed that relative resources theory is partially valid, mainly in regard to explaining the contribution of occupational prestige as reflected in men's participation in two domains of household labor: men whose wives had an advantage over them in occupational prestige (i.e., the innovative occupational pattern) tended to participate more in technical household maintenance and in running errands than did men in traditional earner families (confirming the prediction of relative resources theory). Thus, whereas relative resources theory was partially supported with regard to occupational prestige patterns in two of the three household labor domains for men, women's participation in household labor was not affected by occupational prestige patterns in any of the three domains. Moreover, the findings indicate that according to the women's and men's assessments, even when women are the main providers or have more prestigious occupations than their partners they still bear the main burden of domestic tasks, which are stereotyped as feminine.

As for earning patterns, the study revealed similar findings for men and women: men and women in modern earner couples were found to participate less in running errands than their traditional earner counterparts. That is, in contrast to domestic tasks, which are typically considered undesirable, it is possible that among traditional earners, when men lose their status as breadwinner they tend to take more responsibility for running errands. This enables them to strengthen their masculine image and bolster their status in the family by taking control of the family's financial and bureaucratic affairs.

Regarding gender role ideology, the contribution of these attitudes to explaining men's and women's participation in domestic tasks was found to be complex. Notably, when men held egalitarian perceptions of masculine roles, they expressed these perceptions by participating less in technical household maintenance and running errands, which are secondary domains of household labor. In contrast, men with an egalitarian feminine gender role ideology increased their involvement in domestic tasks while decreasing their involvement in technical household maintenance. Thus, egalitarian gender role ideology can have a two-fold impact on men's participation in household labor. On the one hand, men with an egalitarian gender role ideology can ease the burden for women by participating more in domestic

tasks. On the other hand, they can increase the women's burden by participating less in technical household maintenance and expecting her to bear more responsibility for this domain.

As for the women, the more egalitarian their feminine gender role ideology was, the more they participated in technical household maintenance. However, women's egalitarian feminine gender role ideology was not related to their participation in domestic tasks, which are considered to be their responsibility regardless of their gender role ideology or earning power. This finding indicates that the relationship between women's egalitarian gender role ideology and their participation in household labor can vary, depending on the aspect of gender role ideology in question (e.g., feminine or masculine gender role ideology). Adopting an egalitarian feminine gender role ideology was not found to change women's deep-rooted patterns of participation in all three domains of household labor. However, when women adopted an egalitarian masculine gender role ideology they broadened their participation in household labor and assumed responsibility for technical household maintenance, which is sex-typed as masculine. Thus, contrary to expectations, the findings suggest that women with an egalitarian gender role ideology can also bear a heavier burden of responsibility for household labor.

Regarding the contribution of family systems theory (reflected in assessments of marital quality), as in the case of gender role ideology theory, the findings revealed that the contribution of perceived marital quality to explaining the division of household labor was different for men and women. Contrary to expectations, the higher the men's assessments of marital quality were, the less they participated in domestic tasks, whereas the women's experience of high marital quality was related to less participation in technical household maintenance. A possible explanation for this unexpected finding relates to the direction of the association between marital quality and participation in household labor. When each of the spouses was relieved of the responsibility for performing tasks that are incongruent with gender role stereotypes (i.e., when men do not engage in domestic tasks and women do not engage in technical household maintenance), they assessed the quality of their marriage as high. However, there is a need to corroborate this tentative explanation in further research.

To conclude, none of the hypotheses deriving from the theoretical approaches underlying this study was fully confirmed. Moreover, in line with

existing research evidence presented in the Introduction section, some of the findings appear to contradict the assumptions of the approaches presented in the theoretical framework. Moreover, the contribution of the three theoretical frameworks examined in the present study to explaining men's and women's participation in household tasks was limited. Technical household maintenance was best explained by the three theories, followed by domestic tasks, and finally by running errands.

We propose several explanations for the weak contribution of the theories to explaining the division of household labor in the two above-mentioned domains (domestic tasks and running errands). As for domestic tasks, which include caring for children, Raley, Bianchi and Wang (2012) argued that in contrast to other types of unpaid work, child care is not widely viewed as undesirable work, even when parents have strong attachments to the labor market. This contention contradicts the basic assumption of at least one of the theories examined this study, i.e., relative resources theory, which argues that domestic tasks (including child care) are perceived as undesirable. Thus, it is possible that this theoretical framework is not appropriate for analyzing participation in child care. As for running errands, which includes contact with organizations, it is possible that contact with complex organizations today demands specific skills and knowledge. Thus, as opposed to the principles of relative resources theory, the basic principle that explains the division of labor in this domain today is the extent of the partner's expertise in running that specific errand (Kulik, 2013). Moreover, the limited contribution of the theoretical approaches examined in this study to explaining the division of household labor among employed men and women with young children can be attributed to changes in norms and values in modern societies. Today, when individualist values have replaced collectivist values, the experience of high marital quality is expected in marriage, and is no longer considered a major incentive that can determine men's (or women's) participation in household labor. As for relative resources theory, many women have more access to financial resources and have attained more occupational prestige than in the past, so that a spousal advantage in economic resources and occupational prestige is no longer a salient factor that can explain the division of household labor.

In light of blurring gender roles and changes in the norms underlying existing theories of family life, there is a need to seek alternative ex-

planations of men's and women's participation in household labor based on more subjective perspectives than those examined in this study. Men have increasingly begun to recognize the pattern of the new father as a co-constructed activity, and paternal involvement in child care has been assessed on the basis of multiple components, such as the amount of time the father engages in child care and the quality of his engagement in that domain (Lamb, 2010). Moreover, there is increasing evidence that men's subjective perceptions of the role of parenthood and the centrality that they attribute to family (McLaughlin & Muldoon, 2014) are related to paternal involvement in family life (Habib & Lancaster, 2010). In this vein, several studies have revealed positive associations between strong paternal identity and paternal involvement with infants (Cowan & Cowan, 1990; Strauss & Goldberg, 1999), as well as with preschool-age children (Maurer & Pleck, 2006; Maurer, 2007) and school-age children (Minton & Pasley, 1996; Fox & Bruce, 2001). Thus, paternal identity may be a promising concept, and should be added to research models in future studies that aim to explain involvement of fathers in household tasks and child care.

As for women, the tendency to restrict fathers' involvement with the children, as expressed in the concept of "maternal gatekeeping" (Allen & Hawkins, 1999), is a significant factor that researchers have consistently found to affect the division of household labor. For example, studies conducted in the United States (Allen & Hawkins, 1999, p. 200) and more recently in Israel (Kulik & Tsoref, 2009) have revealed that mothers often attempt to maintain control over the household. Hence in many cases, even when fathers are willing to play an active role in raising their children, mothers do not encourage such involvement.

All of these arguments highlight the need to reconsider existing theoretical approaches underlying research on men's participation in household labor and suggest that more emphasis should be placed on men's and women's subjective perceptions of their identity as spouses and parents.

### *Limitations*

First, because the conclusions refer only to the Jewish population of Israel, future studies should also include the Arab population. Furthermore, when drawing conclusions regarding the division of household labor, it is necessary to bear in mind that Israeli society is considered to be a familistic

society in the process of transition to modernity. As mentioned, notwithstanding gradual changes in gender roles in the family and in the workplace, household labor and occupations are still highly segregated along gender lines, and these trends may affect the division of household labor between spouses. Finally, because data on the explanatory variables (i.e., spousal earning patterns and occupational prestige patterns) and the outcome variable (i.e., division of household labor) were collected at the same time, there is no way of establishing a causal relationship between the research variables. These limitations should be taken into account in future studies when attempting to gain deeper insights into the division of household labor between spouses.



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