

ARTICLE

Gender (in)equality at the kitchen table: A diary study on how Parents' coordination facilitates an equal task division and relationship quality

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Abstract

Although women's labour force participation has increased, women still lag behind in financial independence and men in spending time on parenting. Insight in individuals' explicit conversations with their partner about how to coordinate daily household, childcare and paid work may help to overcome these persistent inequalities. Using a daily diary design, the present study examined to what extent daily conversations with the partner about household, childcare and paid work can boost a more equal, fair task division and relationship quality among Dutch mothers and fathers in a heterosexual relationship ($N = 1235$ daily reported conversations nested in 157 participants; 66.2% female). Mixed model results showed that (1) on days when participants conversed more with their partner about household tasks, they reported a more egalitarian task division and higher satisfaction with and fairness of the task division, and higher relationship quality (2) this higher daily satisfaction with and perceived fairness of the task division (but not egalitarianism) were, in turn, associated with higher relationship quality and (3) conversations had limited spill-over effects to the next day, stressing the importance of daily coordination. Together, these findings imply that daily household coordination helps parents to overcome traditional gender roles and align with their desired work/family division.

KEYWORDS

task division, task division coordination, fairness of task division, satisfaction with task division, relationship quality, working parents

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INTRODUCTION

During the last few decades women's labour force participation has increased rapidly (Hegewisch & Gornick, 2011) and men are increasingly involved in childcare and household labour (van den Brakel, 2020). Despite this progress towards gender equality, women still lag behind in having paid employment, in their career advancement and are overall less economically independent compared to men (European Commission, Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, 2022; OECD, 2019). A crucial factor that blocks women's economic independence is inequality in the unpaid domain (Judge & Livingston, 2008; Mayrhofer et al., 2008; OECD, 2019). Extensive research shows that in heterosexual relationships women still perform more household tasks and childcare compared to men (e.g., Dominguez-Folgueras et al., 2018; Horne et al., 2018; Mandel et al., 2021; Portegijs & Van der Brakel, 2018; Yerkes & Hewitt, 2019). More equal involvement of fathers and mothers in the unpaid domain (i.e., household and childcare) is not only linked women's economic empowerment (OECD, 2019), but also to more harmonious relationships between partners (Petts & Knoester, 2020; Shockley & Allen, 2018), better parenting (Shelton & Harold, 2008) and better emotional adjustment and cognitive development in children (Keizer et al., 2020). Furthermore, a more gender-egalitarian task division among parents promotes gender equality in children's career and family aspirations (Croft et al., 2014) and has lasting effects on their behaviours as adults (McGinn et al., 2019; Van Putten et al., 2008). Therefore, it is important to facilitate parents in reaching an equal work/family division.

The current study is situated in the Netherlands, that despite strong global standing on many indicators of gender equality (e.g., equal access to education), exhibits one of the highest rates of part-time female employment (Eurostat, 2022). Even as the majority of Dutch parents strive for a gender-equal work/family-division, they often encounter barriers in achieving this (Van den Brakel, 2020). For instance, fathers often are concerned that their employer and colleagues will disapprove when they reduce their working hours to take on more care tasks at home (Rutgers, 2019). Such systematic barriers may lead parents to drift away from their desired work/care division and instead specialize in tasks that align with traditional gender roles with mothers focusing more on caregiving and fathers advancing their careers.

To resolve these persistent gender inequalities in paid and unpaid work, emphasis is placed on changing governmental and employment law policies (e.g., increasing paternity leave take-up, flexible work arrangements, decreasing daycare costs). However, these policies do not automatically translate into behavioural change in how parents divide tasks at home with their partner (Pruckner & Sausgruber, 2013; Tankard & Paluck, 2016) or could even have countereffects (Olsson et al., 2023; Yerkes et al., 2017). In the current paper, we propose that explicit daily coordination of tasks is a way for parents to break down the ingrained gender stereotypes. Specifically, in this study among heterosexual parents, we aim to illuminate to what extent daily conversations that they have with their partner about the task division facilitate a more equal, fair and satisfying division of paid and unpaid work, and, in turn, a more sustainable relationship. As dividing paid and unpaid work involves a *daily* explicit coordination (Cluley & Hecht, 2020), we will employ a daily diary study where we investigate how *individuals* with children experience their daily coordination of the household, childcare and paid work with their partner.

HOW CONVERSATIONS MAY FACILITATE A MORE GENDER-EQUAL TASK DIVISION

In the current research we build upon the heuristic-systematic information processing model, to guide our argumentation as to why *explicit* daily coordination of typically gendered task divisions between dual-earner parents are an important way to overcome gender inequalities in paid and unpaid work. This model proposes two modes of processing information to guide behaviour (Chaiken & Ledgewood, 2012; Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Systematic processing involves an effortful analysis of all available information. Alternately, heuristic processing involves a more efficient, automatic mode of processing focusing on familiar cues that activate well-learned mental shortcuts (Chaiken & Ledgewood, 2012). Gender

could be seen as such a mental shortcut, as social expectations for behaviour that is congruent with gender roles produce powerful (internalized) norms that implicitly guide judgements and behaviour (Eagly & Wood, 2012). Based on the social role theory, these gender roles or stereotypes entail women to prioritize the caregiver and homemaker role and men prioritize the breadwinner role (Eagly & Wood, 2012). Despite more egalitarian explicit attitudes towards gender, gender stereotypes still impact behaviour, often beyond conscious awareness (Ellemers, 2018). When heterosexual parents use heuristic processing, unpaid tasks will be allocated more quickly to women. On the other hand, when using systematic processing, parents might together contemplate who has the most pressuring work deadlines or what could be considered 'fair' and could conclude that the man takes up the unpaid task. This decision-making process may also affect overall satisfaction and relationship quality. To our knowledge, building a theoretical link between the heuristic-systematic model and the social role theory to better understand the micro-dynamics of daily task divisions has not been made previously.

Initial qualitative work indeed suggests that heuristic or systematic information processing extends to partner conversations in how heterosexual parents divide their tasks. The decision-making process of dividing tasks is defined as a process that involves routine explicit conversations with the partner pertained to allocating resources, such as time and energy, to paid and unpaid work (Cluley & Hecht, 2020; Greenhaus & Powell, 2016; Poelmans et al., 2013; Wiesmann et al., 2008). Notably, qualitative studies indicate that most parents do not explicitly discuss their division but instead rely on ingrained gender-based heuristics (Eerola et al., 2021; Evertsson & Nyman, 2009; Wiesmann et al., 2008). Consequently, men and women are pulled towards a traditional task division (Dechant & Schulz, 2014; Wiesmann et al., 2008). Dividing tasks in gender-egalitarian ways requires parents to turn off the gendered short-cuts and follow a systematic decision-making process involving explicit conversations and effort within the couple (Wiesmann et al., 2008). Qualitative couple studies show that couples who had more detailed conversations about the division of tasks, especially unpaid tasks, divided tasks more gender-equally (Cluley & Hecht, 2020; Klein et al., 2007; Miller & Carlson, 2016; Wiesmann et al., 2008). Therefore, explicit conversations about task division are likely instrumental in fostering a gender-equal task division.

Furthermore, a distinction is made between routine and daily task division decisions (Cluley & Hecht, 2020). Routine decisions concern explicit decisions about how recurring childcare and household responsibilities are generally divided. For example, one parent might typically drive the children to swimming class, while the other might typically bring the children to bed. Daily decisions concern a one-off allocation of resources on a particular day, such as staying late at work or a caregiving emergency (Radcliffe & Cassell, 2014). Therefore, explicit conversations about the task division might happen on an abstract, general level (i.e., the regular schedule, referred to as baseline conversations) and a concrete, daily level (i.e., dividing concrete tasks at hand, referred to as daily conversations). General or baseline conversations may overcome traditional divisions by renegotiating how tasks are generally divided (Wiesmann et al., 2008), and daily conversations may break traditional divisions by preventing ambivalence about who is responsible for a concrete task at hand (as ambiguous circumstances are likely to lead men and women to use traditional gender-roles as convenient heuristics to desired behaviours; Gelfand et al., 2011; Ridgeway, 2011). Based on this we will distinguish between baseline conversations and daily conversations about the task division.

Hypothesis 1. Parents who have more (baseline and daily) conversations about the division of household tasks, childcare and paid work with their partner report a more gender-egalitarian task division.

How conversations may contribute to task division contentment

When parents have more task division conversations with their partner, they become more aware of each other's preferences and needs, potentially resulting in higher satisfaction with and perceived fairness of

the task division. Both satisfaction with and fairness of the task division (i.e., perceived equity in time spent on *all* tasks) are deemed important aspects of healthy intimate relationships (Carriero, 2011; Claffey & Manning, 2010; Dew & Wilcox, 2011; Galovan et al., 2014; Lively et al., 2010; Mickelson et al., 2006; Nordenmark & Nyman, 2003). Therefore, it is relevant to examine the effects of these conversations on parents' attributions towards the task division. Qualitative work showed that parents who indicated to monitor their task division expressed their preferences and searched for the most ideal arrangements (i.e., utilizing systematic processing) were more satisfied with their task division than those who did not make this effort (Wiesmann et al., 2008). Earlier studies also demonstrate that fairness is a critical factor in a partner's feelings of success in balancing work and family (Milkie & Peltola, 1999; Wilkie et al., 1998). Although most studies did not consider fairness and satisfaction simultaneously, it is recognized that these two dimensions should be distinct as there can be a disjunction (Carriero, 2011). For example, the unfairness of the task division is frequently perceived, but dissatisfaction does not necessarily follow (perhaps to avoid cognitive dissonance or to prevent relationship conflict; Carriero, 2011). Therefore, our second hypothesis is that explicit conversations with the partner about the task division are associated with more satisfaction with and fairness of the task division.

Hypothesis 2. Parents who have more conversations about the task division with their partner report more satisfaction with and fairness of the task division.

How conversations may contribute to relationship quality through a more equal task division and higher task division contentment

Conversations about the task division may also benefit relationship quality. As relationship quality is highly predictive of both individual and couple's well-being (e.g., Carlson & Kail, 2018), this is a crucial outcome to examine. Despite that partners themselves perceive conversations about the task division as incompatible with a romantic relationship (Kleingeld & Anderson, 2014; Wiesmann et al., 2008), qualitative studies show that having conversations about the task division is related to both partners feeling more respected, reduced tension and enhanced harmony and relationship satisfaction (Carlson & Hans, 2020; Klein et al., 2007; Wiesmann et al., 2008; Zimmerman et al., 2003). Therefore, we expect that daily conversations about the task division will be directly and positively related to relationship quality.

Moreover, task division conversations could also be indirectly related to relationship quality through a more gender-egalitarian task division, a factor known to enhance overall relationship satisfaction. Sharing unpaid tasks is optimal for couples' overall relationship quality (Carlson et al., 2016, 2018; Schieman et al., 2018), while an unequal division is a key factor leading to relationship distress and divorce (Qian & Sayer, 2016; Thielemans et al., 2021; for an exception see Blom & Hewitt, 2020). More critical than the actual division may be how happy or satisfied both partners are with the division. Research indeed shows that relationship satisfaction is not necessarily higher among couples who are close to a fifty-fifty split, but is better predicted by how fair individuals perceive the task division and how satisfied they are with the division it (Bodi et al., 2010; Claffey & Mickelson, 2009; Dew & Wilcox, 2011; Galovan et al., 2014; Stevens et al., 2001, 2005). A recent Japanese study showed that the actual reported household tasks division was not an explaining explanatory mechanism in of the relationship between (general) joint decision-making and marital quality, but the perceived fairness of the task division was (Taniguchi & Kaufman, 2022). Therefore another way in which conversations about the task division could be related to relationship quality is via a more satisfying and fair task division. Building from this work, explicit conversations about the task division are arguably associated with higher relationship quality through more satisfaction with and fairness of the task division, and to a lesser extent mediated by a reported gender-equal task division. In the current research, we examine two facets of relationship quality: relationship satisfaction, reflecting overall positive feelings towards one's partner and relationship, and relationship harmony, characterized by the absence of conflict between

partners' actions (Rusbult & Buunk, 1993). Both are crucial determinants of relationship stability and well-being (Amato, 2010; Birditt et al., 2010; Carlson & Kail, 2018).

Hypothesis 3. Parents who have more conversations about the division of paid and unpaid work with their partner report higher relationship quality.

Hypothesis 4. Conversations about the task division with the partner will be associated with higher relationship quality via more satisfaction with and fairness of the task division, and less so through a more gender-equal task division.

Current study

To date, studies describing conversational dynamics on task divisions are largely qualitative. Although these studies provide a valuable 'thick description' of such dynamics, they do not provide insight into the systematic nature and predictive value of these conversations for gender inequality in the task division. This study is the first to provide this systematic insight into the extent to which conversations relate to a more or less gender-egalitarian task division, higher task division contentment and relationship quality. Qualitative research shows that couples generally do talk about their division of paid work, but much less so about household tasks (Wiesmann et al., 2008). Therefore, having conversations about paid work might not necessarily be the same as conversations about household tasks. We use separate indicators for household, childcare, and paid work to test our hypotheses. Our daily diary study allows us to examine the effects of task division conversations both between and within individuals and their spill-over effects on the following day.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Participants

Participants were recruited via the authors' personal networks (using social media posts or reaching out in a WhatsApp message or in-person conversation), by distributing flyers door-to-door and in public places in the region Utrecht (a large city in the Netherlands). Undergraduate students helped with data collection as part of their curriculum. Parents signed up individually (i.e., this was no couple study) and they could participate when they were in a heterosexual relationship, lived together with their partner, when they and their partner both had paid work and had at least one child under 12 years old. While conventional G*power analysis is not suitable for daily diary studies using multilevel modelling and estimating power based on simulation requires assumptions of numerous parameters that we could not provide (as this was the very first study to quantitatively examine the research questions), we based our sample criteria on recommendations for diary studies and therefore intended to recruit at least 100 participants (Nezlek, 2020; Ohly et al., 2010).

A total of 167 parents participated in the study of which 10 participants were excluded for not meeting the criteria (e.g. being on maternity leave; $n=2$) or filling in three or more daily questionnaires in one go ($n=8$). The final sample comprised of 157 participants (66.2% women). Participants were 37.69 years old on average ($SD=6.68$), had been together with their partner for 13.83 years ($SD=6.20$), 60.3% were married ($N=94$) and they had on average 1.90 children ($SD=0.87$) of which the youngest child was 4.08 years old ($SD=3.67$). Most participants were highly educated: 41.4% ($N=65$) completed a university degree (bachelor, master or PhD), 35.0% ($N=55$) completed higher vocational education and 23.6% ($N=37$) completed lower vocational education or less. On average, mothers worked 28.99 h per week ($SD=7.25$), and fathers worked 39.04 h per week ($SD=5.31$). Note that these hours resemble the Dutch average (i.e., 39 h for men and 28.5 h for women; Van den Brakel, 2020).

Procedure

Participants were asked to complete a daily diary study about their experiences in combining work and family (or if they knew people who would like to participate), consisting of a 15-min online starting questionnaire and 5-min daily online questionnaires over eight consecutive days (sent at 7 pm). If they wanted to participate, they could send an email. Participants then received more information and a link to the starting questionnaire. Informed consent was obtained at the start of the starting questionnaire, where participants actively had to indicate that they read the information and that they gave their consent. The questionnaires were sent to their email every day. Their email address could not be linked to their answers given in the questionnaires. The starting questionnaire measured demographic information and how much participants generally talked about the task division with their partner (i.e., baseline estimation of conversations). The daily questionnaire measured partners' daily conversations about task the division and all hypothesized outcomes (e.g., childcare division, fairness of task division). Daily surveys resulted in 1235 data entries ($M = 7.90$ daily responses per person, $SD = 0.43$). As “next day” reports (e.g., describing on Wednesday morning what happened on Tuesday) seem to be reasonably unbiased (Kahneman et al., 2004), we decided to keep these in the data ($n = 15$). Responses were deleted when there was more than a 24-h delay ($n = 8$). Participation was voluntary and anonymous. The study was approved by the Ethics Committee in the Netherlands. As a reward, we randomly selected two participants to win a voucher of 50 euros.

Measures¹

The items were presented in Dutch. As survey efficiency is a priority (among others to prevent attrition), single-item measures have a long-standing tradition in daily-diary studies (Fisher et al., 2016). We also used a single-item measure for most variables. Ample research shows that when a construct is unambiguous or narrow in scope, the use of single items can be appropriate (see review of Allen et al., 2022) and is often as valid and reliable as their multi-item counterparts (Ahmad et al., 2014; Ang & Eisend, 2018; Fülöp et al., 2022; Van Hooff et al., 2007).

Baseline measures

Baseline estimation of conversations about the task division

In the starting questionnaire, the estimation to which participants generally communicate about the task division was measured for household tasks, childcare and paid work: “My partner and I communicate regularly about who does what when it comes to [the care of the children/household/paid work]” (1 = completely disagree, 7 = completely agree).

Daily measures

Daily conversations about the task division

The extent to which participants talked about the task division that day was measured again using one item for household, childcare and paid work: “To what extent did you speak with each other (e.g., talking, calling or texting) to coordinate who ... [performs what household tasks/does what childcare tasks/works on which time and on what location?]” (1 = not at all, 4 = somewhat, 7 = extensively).

¹The questionnaire also consisted of a number of other measures, which can be asked for at the request of the first author.

Relative task division

We asked participants their *relative division of household, childcare and paid work* based on previous survey measures (e.g., Yerkes et al., 2020): How did you and your partner divide the household tasks/childcare/paid work today? (1 = I spent the most time on this task, 4 = we both spent the same amount of time on this task, 7 = my partner spent the most time on this task). All items were recoded by gender on a scale from -3 to 3, such that positive numbers indicated that women performed that task more, negative numbers that the male partner performed the task more and numbers closer to zero indicated more equal task divisions.

Task division contentment

Satisfaction about the task division was measured with one item (Kluwer et al., 2002): "How satisfied are you with how the tasks (household tasks, childcare and paid work) were divided between you and your partner today?" (1 = very dissatisfied, 7 = very satisfied).

Fairness of the task division was measured with one item (Kluwer et al., 2002): "How fair do you think the division of tasks (household tasks, childcare and paid work) was between you and your partner today?" (1 = very unfair, 7 = very fair).

Relationship quality

Relationship satisfaction was assessed using one item of the time competition survey (Van der Lippe & Glebbeek, 2003): If you had to give your relationship a grade between 1 and 10, what would that be (1 = very unhappy, 10 = it's perfect)?

Relationship harmony was assessed using one bipolar item used by Vink et al. (2021): "Could you indicate how conflictual or harmonious your relationship with your partner was today?" (1 = very conflictual, 7 = very harmonious).

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics and correlations of background variables and daily measures (i.e., averaged per variable for each individual over 8 days) are shown in Table 1. On average, participants reported that women were more involved in household tasks and childcare and less involved in paid work compared to men. One sample *t*-tests showed that the mean division of household tasks, childcare and paid work significantly differed from zero [i.e., different from an egalitarian task division; $t_{\text{householdtaskdivision}}(156) = 7.15$, CI 0.395, 0.697, $p < .001$; $t_{\text{childcaredivision}}(156) = 7.38$, CI 0.394, 0.683, $p < .001$; $t_{\text{paidworkdivision}}(156) = -8.047$, CI -0.667, -0.404, $p < .001$]. Interestingly, paired sample *t*-tests showed that parents reported lower baseline conversations frequency about household tasks than childcare, $t(154) = -7.77$, CI -1.586, -0.943, $p < .001$, and paid work $t(154) = -8.47$, CI -1.537, -0.954, $p < .001$. On a daily basis parents reported to have the most daily conversations about childcare compared to household tasks, [$t(156) = 11.73$, CI 0.568, 0.799, $p < .001$] and paid work, [$t(156) = 14.22$, CI 0.762, 1.008, $p < .001$]. Furthermore, those who estimated to on baseline have more conversations about the division of household tasks, childcare and paid work also reported to engage in more daily conversations about household tasks, childcare and paid work, although these correlations were small (see Table 1). The questionnaire did not seem to have prompted conversations about the task

TABLE 1 Means, Standard Deviations and Bivariate Correlations (i.e., daily variables are averaged for each individual over 8 days).

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.	15.	16.	17.
1. Female	1																
2. Educational level	.176*	1															
3. Number of children	.030	-.006	1														
4. Weekly paid work hours	-.581**	.111	-.097	1													
Task division																	
5. Women's involvement in household tasks	.135	-.144	.112	-.251**	1												
6. Women's involvement in childcare	.195*	-.159*	.188*	-.330**	.566**	1											
7. Women's involvement in paid work	.056	.158**	-.103	.237**	-.325**	-.497**	1										
Contentment task division																	
8. Satisfaction task division	.040	-.164*	.084	.032	-.167*	-.118	.058	1									
9. Fairness task division	.010	-.188*	.089	-.023	-.083	-.051	-.036	.878**	1								
Relationship quality																	
10. Relationship satisfaction	.010	-.098	-.045	.019	-.047	.020	.021	.587**	.540**	1							
11. Relationship harmony	.030	-.150	.099	-.023	-.023	.084	-.026	.654**	.610**	.691**	1						
Conversations task division																	
12. Baseline conversations household tasks	-.125	.025	-.079	-.062	-.203*	-.193*	-.001	.080	.052	.081	.117	1					
13. Baseline conversations childcare	.105	.020	-.191*	-.107	-.054	-.068	-.045	.103	.049	.076	.059	.338**	1				

TABLE 1 (Continued)

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.	15.	16.	17.
14. Baseline conversations paid work	-.033	.192*	.066	-.005	-.161*	-.204*	.035	.156	.096	.101	-.013	.425**	.372**	1			
15. Daily conversations household tasks	-.166*	-.066	-.021	.103	-.064	-.008	-.018	-.063	-.023	.003	-.108	.229**	.178*	.173*	1		
16. Daily conversations childcare	-.061	-.026	-.148	.349	.015	-.017	.062	-.006	.028	-.010	-.070	.158*	.291**	.200*	.745**	1	
17. Daily conversations paid work	-.062	-.032	-.090	.111	.127	.049	.027	-.051	-.016	-.002	-.030	.105*	.212**	.247**	.621**	.713**	1
<i>M</i>	NA	5.60	1.98	32.32	0.55	0.54	-0.54	5.45	5.40	7.89	5.68	4.16	5.43	5.41	3.30	3.99	3.10
<i>SD</i>	NA	1.44	0.91	8.17	0.96	0.91	0.83	0.88	0.94	0.84	0.82	1.85	1.66	1.54	1.04	0.99	1.06

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

division, as mean levels of daily conversations (see Table 2) did not show a clear increase after the start of the study.²

Note that we control for number of children, educational level and weekly paid work hours, because these factors (in the socioeconomic context) have been shown to facilitate choices and constrains in romantic relationships, resulting in different capacities for relationship maintenance (Karney, 2021). Correlations indeed showed that participants' number of children, weekly paid work hours and educational level were significantly associated with our model variables. For example, the more children the participant had, the more time the female partner spent on childcare. And lastly, satisfaction with the task division and fairness of the task division correlated highly when using the aggregated scores. However, correlations were already lower on a daily level (ranging from .59 to .80). Also statistics showed no multicollinearity, indicating that these are different constructs. Although the distribution of data can be ignored with large samples (Ghasemi & Zahediasl, 2012), we observed no severe normality deviations.

Intra-class correlations

To legitimize within-person level analyses using the multilevel structure (i.e., days nested within persons) we calculated Intraclass Correlations (ICCs; see Table 3). The ICCs showed that for all measures a large part of the variance was within participants, legitimizing analyses on the within level (e.g. 37% of the variance of relationship harmony was due to differences between participants and 63% due to differences within participants).

Main analyses

H1-3 were tested in three ways. We first examined the between-level effect of the one-off estimation of conversations on all hypothesized outcomes focusing on the 8-day mean (e.g., do participants who indicated at the start that they communicate more about the task division also experience better outcomes such as a more egalitarian and more satisfying task division over the 8 days?). Second, we examined the effect of daily conversations on all outcomes examining within-participants effects (e.g., on days that participants report more conversations about household tasks, do they also experience a more egalitarian division of household tasks?). Third, we examined lagged effects, whether the effects of daily conversations spill over to the next day (e.g., do participants who talk about the division of household tasks, divide tasks more equally the next day?).

Effects of the baseline estimation of conversations were tested in SPSS 28 with separate linear regressions on each aggregated outcome (using a mean score over the 8 days), controlling for number of children, work hours, educational level and gender. Effects of explicit conversations on a daily level were tested with separate multilevel regressions on each outcome using the mixed model procedure in SPSS 28 with restricted maximum likelihood estimation. First, we ran the models with covariates only. Second, we added the daily conversations about the division of household tasks, childcare and paid work. To separate the within-person effects from the between-person effects, these daily conversational predictors were person-mean centered (Enders & Tofighi, 2007) and we controlled for the person-level grand mean-centered conversational predictors (i.e., by adding the eight-day average on a conversational predictor per person in the model; these person level grand mean centered effects are only reported in the Appendices A–C). Lagged effects were tested by modelling all hypothesized outcomes on day i as a result of conversations about the division of

²The conversations were on average perceived as positive and useful ($M_{positivity} = 5.52$ $SD_{positivity} = 1.17$; $M_{usefulness} = 5.50$ $SD_{usefulness} = 1.03$) and multilevel analyses showed that having more task division conversations was positively associated with the usefulness and (to some extent) a positive atmosphere during the conversations. See Data S1 for more information and the exact content of these questions.

TABLE 2 Means and standard deviations on daily level of conversations about the task division.

Day, variable	Day 1 (Monday), <i>M(SD)</i>	Day 2 (Tuesday), <i>M(SD)</i>	Day 3 (Wednesday), <i>M(SD)</i>	Day 4 (Thursday), <i>M(SD)</i>	Day 5 (Friday), <i>M(SD)</i>	Day 6 (Saturday), <i>M(SD)</i>	Day 7 (Sunday), <i>M(SD)</i>	Day 8 (Monday), <i>M(SD)</i>
Conversations household tasks	3.11 (1.61)	2.92 (1.65)	3.23 (1.66)	2.85 (1.66)	3.25 (1.65)	3.75 (1.79)	3.81 (1.67)	3.51 (1.56)
Conversations childcare tasks	3.93 (1.59)	3.68 (1.69)	3.70 (1.59)	3.75 (1.68)	3.90 (1.52)	4.30 (1.74)	4.39 (1.76)	4.30 (1.63)
Conversations paid work	3.52 (1.68)	3.37 (1.75)	3.19 (1.66)	3.49 (1.71)	3.21 (1.68)	2.12 (1.68)	2.37 (1.80)	3.47 (1.73)

TABLE 3 Intra-class correlations (percentage of variance explained by between effects).

Daily measures	ICC
Relationship satisfaction	.502
Relationship harmony	.370
Satisfaction with the task division	.326
Fairness of the task division	.394
Women's involvement in household tasks	.167
Women's involvement in childcare	.128
Women's involvement in paid work	.092

childcare, household tasks and paid work on day $i-1$. We controlled for conversations about the division of childcare, household tasks and paid work on day i .

Then, we tested H4 (i.e., whether conversations about the task division with the partner will be associated with higher relationship quality via a more gender-equal task division or via more satisfaction with and fairness of the task division) using the lavaan (Rosseel, 2012) package in R Statistical Software (v4.1.2; R Core Team, 2021), using restricted maximum likelihood estimation and 95% confidence with 5000 bootstrap samples. As we measured relationship quality with two items that correlated highly, we created a latent variable to reduce measurement error. First, we ran the mediation model examining the effect of the one-off estimation of conversations on the 8 day aggregate of the outcomes, and then we ran the mediation model on the daily level (within-level) with the multilevel data. We specified a saturated level on the between level by adding all variances and covariances of the endogenous variables following recommendations from the lavaan package tutorial (Rosseel, 2012). Due to the exploratory nature, we based this model on the results of H1–H3.

Results

Do explicit conversations about household tasks, childcare and paid work contribute to a gender-equal task division, task contentment and relationship quality?

A complete overview of the findings are presented in Table 4.³ In line with H1, both on a between and within level (i.e., baseline and daily level), conversations about *household tasks* were associated with the male partner being more involved in the *household tasks* [$B_{\text{one-off estimation}} = -0.097, p = .040$; ($B_{\text{Daily}} = -0.181, p < .001$)]. As the descriptive statistics showed that women performed more unpaid tasks and less paid work than their partners, we can interpret this as the task division generally being more egalitarian. Additionally, daily conversations (but not baseline estimation of conversations) about *household tasks* were also related to a more egalitarian division of *childcare* and *paid work* ($B_{\text{Childcare}} = -0.116, p = .005$; $B_{\text{Paid work}} = 0.098, p = .020$). In contrast to H1, baseline and daily conversations about *childcare* and *paid work* had no effects on the household, childcare and paid task division. A surprising significant lagged effect of conversations about paid work on the childcare division was found, such that more conversations about paid work on the previous day were associated with a more traditional division of childcare on the next day ($B = 0.081, p = .017$). No other lagged effects were found. Together, these results indicate that especially daily conversations about household tasks are an important driver for facilitating a more gender-equal division of paid and unpaid work within persons on the same day.

³ The analyses were also performed without control variables, and results were almost identical. For brevity, they are not reported. Furthermore, we performed the same analyses including only days when both partners worked. This resulted in 600 data entries, of which 206 were for men and 394 for women. Results can be found in the Appendices A–C, but again showed to be robust.

TABLE 4 Regression effects of baseline estimation and daily conversations about the division of household tasks, childcare and paid work.

Dependent variable	Baseline estimation conversations household tasks	Baseline estimation conversations childcare	Baseline estimation conversations paid work	Daily conversations household tasks	Daily conversations childcare	Daily conversations paid work	Lagged conversations household tasks on day t^{-1}	Lagged conversations childcare on day t^{-1}	Lagged conversations paid work on day t^{-1}
	B [95% CI]	B [95% CI]	B [95% CI]	B [95% CI]	B [95% CI]	B [95% CI]	B [95% CI]	B [95% CI]	B [95% CI]
Women's Involvement Household Tasks	-0.097* [-0.190, -0.004]	0.019 [-0.081, 0.119]	-0.052 [-0.165, 0.062]	-0.116** [-0.198, -0.035]	-0.061 [-0.142, 0.020]	-0.038 [-0.103, 0.027]	-0.019 [-0.097, 0.060]	0.048 [-0.033, 0.129]	0.081* [0.015, 0.147]
Women's Involvement in Childcare	-0.077 [-0.161, 0.007]	0.017 [-0.074, 0.107]	-0.082 [-0.184, 0.021]	-0.181** [-0.259, -0.103]	-0.017 [-0.094, 0.061]	-0.010 [-0.079, 0.059]	-0.028 [-0.103, 0.048]	0.035 [-0.043, 0.113]	0.008 [-0.056, 0.071]
Women's Involvement in Paid work	0.026 [-0.055, 0.107]	-0.044 [-0.131, 0.042]	0.019 [-0.079, 0.117]	0.098* [0.016, 0.180]	0.048 [-0.034, 0.129]	-0.007 [-0.051, 0.038]	0.013 [-0.066, 0.091]	-0.030 [-0.111, 0.051]	-0.037 [-0.104, 0.029]
Satisfaction with task division	0.006 [-0.081, 0.093]	0.027 [-0.067, 0.120]	0.101 ^{ms} [-0.005, 0.206]	0.109** [0.056, 0.162]	0.031 [-0.022, 0.083]	0.007 [-0.035, 0.049]	-0.010 [-0.064, 0.044]	0.006 [-0.049, 0.061]	-0.002 [-0.047, 0.043]
Fairness of task division	0.003 [-0.091, 0.097]	0.010 [-0.091, 0.110]	0.078 [-0.037, 0.192]	0.083** [0.033, 0.133]	0.034 [-0.015, 0.084]	-0.020 [-0.051, 0.011]	-0.009 [-0.060, 0.043]	0.009 [-0.043, 0.061]	-0.007 [-0.049, 0.036]
Relationship satisfaction	0.013 [-0.073, 0.098]	0.009 [-0.083, 0.101]	0.059 [-0.045, 0.164]	0.058** [0.022, 0.095]	0.054** [0.017, 0.090]	0.034 [-0.007, 0.074]	0.012 [-0.027, 0.051]	-0.003 [-0.042, 0.037]	0.003 [-0.030, 0.035]
Relationship harmony	0.062 [-0.018, 0.142]	0.026 [-0.061, 0.112]	-0.035 [-0.132, 0.063]	0.061* [0.013, 0.109]	0.000 [-0.048, 0.049]	-0.027 [-0.095, 0.042]	-0.047* [-0.093, -0.000]	0.010 [-0.037, 0.057]	0.010 [-0.028, 0.049]

Note: Controlled for number of children, educational level, work hours and gender. Unstandardized regression coefficients with 95% confidence intervals between brackets are represented in table above. One-off estimation of conversations show linear regression effects (between-level effects) and daily conversations and lagged conversations show multilevel regression effects (within-level effects). For the division items, values of zero represent equal task divisions, values below zero mean that the man does more, values above zero mean that the woman does more. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

In line with H2, daily conversations about household tasks were associated with more satisfaction with and more perceived fairness of the task division that day ($B_{\text{Satisfaction}} = 0.109, p < .001$; $B_{\text{Fairness}} = 0.083, p = .001$). This was, however, the only significant predictor. The baseline estimation of conversations about household tasks, childcare or paid work and daily conversations about childcare and paid work had no effects. Furthermore, no lagged effects were found. Thus, daily conversations about household tasks seemed to be an important driver for facilitating more contentment with the task division that same day. In line with H3, daily conversations about household tasks were associated with higher relationship satisfaction and relationship harmony that day ($B_{\text{Relationship satisfaction}} = 0.058, p = .004$; $B_{\text{Relationship harmony}} = 0.061, p = .013$). For relationship satisfaction, we also found a comparable positive effect of daily conversations about childcare ($B = 0.054, p = .002$). The baseline estimation of conversations about household tasks, childcare or paid work were not associated with higher relationship satisfaction or relationship harmony, and neither were daily conversations about paid work (and daily conversations about childcare for relationship harmony). For relationship harmony, a small significant lagged effect of conversations about household tasks on was found in an unexpected direction, such that more conversations about the household tasks the previous day were associated with lower relationship harmony on the next day ($B = -0.047, p = .049$). No other lagged effects of daily conversations were found.

Overall, the results showed that especially daily conversations about the household task division contributed to a more egalitarian task division, more satisfaction with and perceived fairness of the task division, and higher relationship satisfaction and relationship harmony that day.⁴ Generally, effects did not seem to spill-over to the next day, stressing the importance of daily conversations to coordinate task divisions.

Do conversations contribute to relationship quality via a more gender-equal task division and task division contentment?

As the analyses showed that only conversations about household tasks were predictive of subsequent divisions, so we decided to simplify the mediation models and only enter conversations about household tasks as a predictor. Results are reported in Table 5. See Figure 1 for an overview of the mediation model of the one-off estimation of conversations about household tasks. The mediation model of the one-off estimation of conversations showed a good fit with the data [$\chi^2(4) = 1.33$, CFI = 1.00, TLI = 1.04, RMSEA = .00, SRMR = .01]. However, Hypothesis 4 was not supported on this level: The model showed no significant indirect effects of generally having more conversations about household tasks on relationship quality through the reported task division, satisfaction with the task division or fairness of the task division.

The mediation model on the daily level also showed good fit with the data [$\chi^2(8) = 8.800$, CFI = 1.00, TLI = 1.00, RMSEA = .01, SRMR_{within} = .01, SRMR_{between} = 0.01]. In support of Hypothesis 4, the model showed significant indirect effects of conversations about household tasks on relationship quality through perceived fairness of the task division ($B = 0.013, p = .001$) and satisfaction with the task division ($B = 0.016, p < .001$). Indirect effects through involvement in childcare/household/paid work were not significant, although it showed the same direction for the childcare division.

Together result show that on days that parents report more household task conversations with their partner, they reported higher relationship quality the same day because they were more satisfied with the task division that day and perceived the task division as more fair that day not because they perceived

⁴In exploration of gender differences all two-way interactions between gender and the three topics of conversations on the seven outcomes (i.e., childcare, household, paid work, satisfaction, fairness, relationship satisfaction, relationship harmony) were added both with baseline estimation of conversations (between effects; 21 interactions pairs) and daily conversations (within effects; 21 interaction pairs). Of the 42 interactions, we only found two significant interactions on the overall level with the one-off estimation and three on the daily level. This implies that the effect of having conversations on perception of task division, contentment with task division and relationship satisfaction generally were the same for men and women. However, the results can be found in the Data S1.

TABLE 5 Direct and indirect effects of baseline estimation of conversations and daily conversations about household tasks.

Dependent variable	Baseline estimation conversations about household tasks estimate (SE) [95% CI]	Daily conversations about household tasks estimate (SE) [95% CI]
Direct effects ($X \rightarrow M$)		
Women's involvement in household tasks	-0.104* (0.041) [-0.187, -0.026]	-0.180** (0.033) [-0.202, -0.083]
Women's involvement in childcare	-0.094** (0.036) [-0.165, -0.023]	-0.126** (0.035) [-0.160, -0.034]
Women's involvement in paid work	-0.000 (0.035) [-0.072, 0.067]	0.127** (0.034) [0.010, 0.129]
Satisfaction with task division	0.038 (0.040) [-0.041, 0.117]	0.110** (0.023) [0.009, 0.100]
Fairness of task division	0.026 (0.042) [-0.056, 0.109]	0.101** (0.022) [0.009, 0.100]
($X \rightarrow Y$)		
Relationship quality	0.035 (0.025) [-0.012, 0.086]	0.034* (0.015) [-0.035, 0.060]
Indirect effects ($X \rightarrow M \rightarrow Y$)		
Conversations $\rightarrow$ women's involvement in household tasks $\rightarrow$ relationship quality	0.000 (0.006) [-0.013, 0.012]	-0.004 (0.003) [-0.008, 0.004]
Conversations $\rightarrow$ women's involvement in childcare $\rightarrow$ relationship quality	-0.0012 (0.008) [-0.036, -0.002]	0.005* (0.003) [-0.006, 0.004]
Conversations $\rightarrow$ women's involvement in paid work $\rightarrow$ relationship quality	-0.000 (0.003) [-0.006, 0.006]	-0.001 (0.002) [-0.002, 0.005]
Conversations $\rightarrow$ satisfaction with task division $\rightarrow$ relationship quality	0.017 (0.019) [-0.014, 0.062]	0.016** (0.004) [0.002, 0.024]
Conversations $\rightarrow$ fairness of task division $\rightarrow$ relationship quality	0.002 (0.006) [-0.005, 0.024]	0.013** (0.004) [0.001, 0.019]
Latent variable		
Relationship Satisfaction $\rightarrow$ Relationship Quality	1.000	1.000
Relationship Harmony $\rightarrow$ Relationship Quality	1.101** (0.148)	1.131** (0.003)

Note: Unstandardized regression coefficients with 95% confidence intervals between brackets are represented in table above. One-off estimation of conversations show between level regression effects and daily conversations show multilevel regression effects (within-level effects). For the division items, values of zero represent equal task divisions, values below zero mean that the man does more, values above zero mean that the woman does more. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

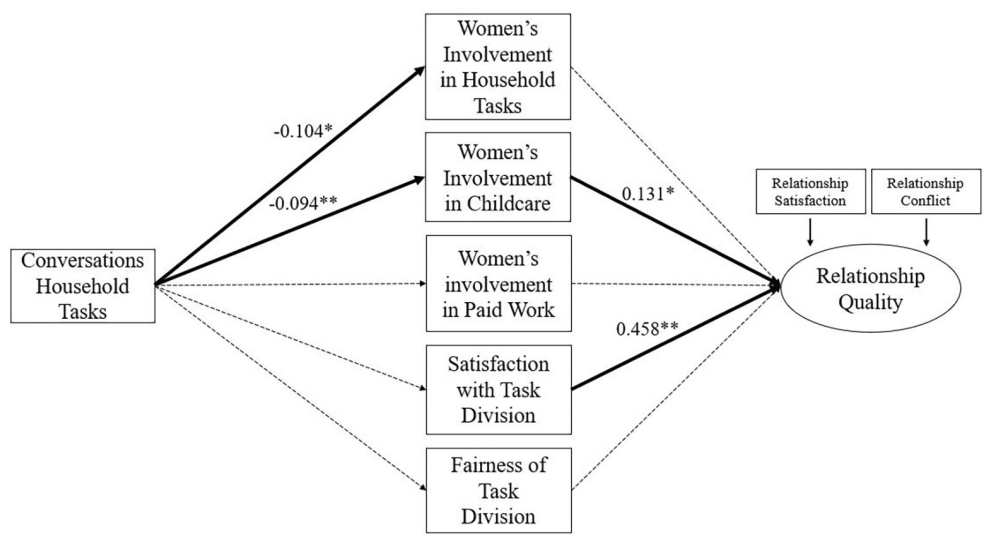


FIGURE 1 The mediation model showing the one-off estimation of conversations about the household task division on relationship quality via the task division and task division contentment, with relationship quality as a latent variable. ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

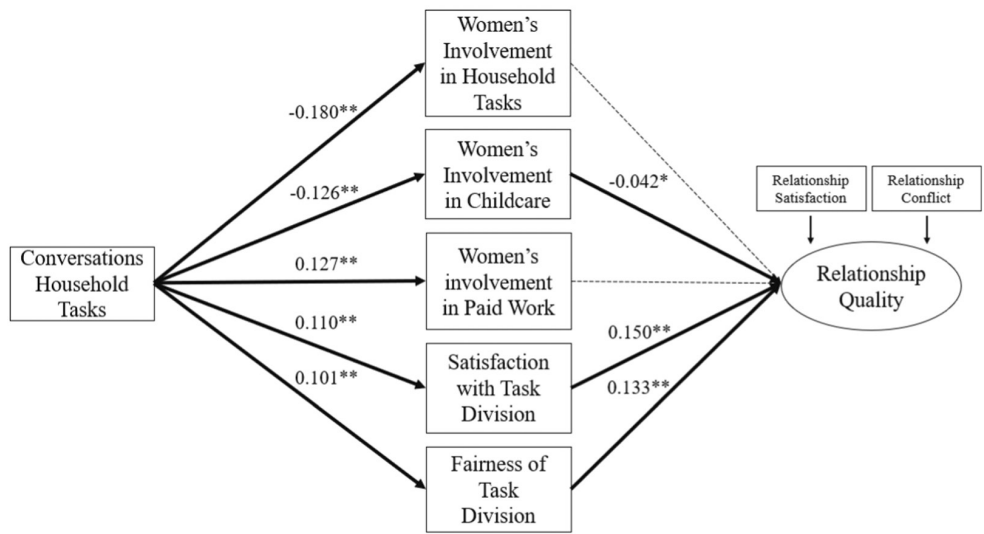


FIGURE 2 The mediation model showing the daily effects of conversations about the household task division on relationship quality via the task division and task division contentment, with relationship quality as a latent variable. ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

their task division as more equal that day. See Figure 2 for an overview of the mediation model of daily conversations about household tasks.

DISCUSSION

This daily diary study was the first quantitative study to examine whether explicit conversations about the task division with the partner facilitate a more gender-equal, satisfying and fair task division, and

higher relationship quality. We hypothesized that by talking about how to divide tasks on a daily level and a general level (i.e., baseline estimation of how much they generally talk about their task division) couples may be able to overcome traditional gender roles from seeping through and act more in line with their actual desired work/family division. Results confirmed that daily household tasks conversations were related to a more gender egalitarian perceived task division of household, childcare and paid work, alongside higher satisfaction with and fairness of the task division that same day, with limited spillover effects to the next day. Moreover, daily conversations about the household task division were related to improved relationship quality through higher satisfaction with and experienced fairness of the task division but not through the actual task division. This is in line with previous research that showed that satisfaction with and fairness of the task division are better predictors of relationship satisfaction than the actual task division (Claffey & Mickelson, 2009; Dew & Wilcox, 2011; Galovan et al., 2014; Grote & Clark, 2001; Mikula et al., 2008; Stevens et al., 2005). In contrast, daily conversations about childcare and paid work were not related to the outcomes (with the exception of childcare conversations boosting relationship satisfaction). Furthermore, parents who indicated that they in general talked more about household tasks (i.e., made a higher one-off estimation of the conversations about household tasks at the start of study) also experienced a more gender-equal division of household tasks and childcare, while one-off estimations of childcare and paid work division were not related to any outcome.

How to explain this unique effect of conversations about the household tasks? One reason could be because childcare and paid work are more visible and fixed with clearer time points (e.g. specific work shifts, pick-up time from daycare or school) and therefore ask for more coordination by default. Our data supports this, as parents reported to talk less about household tasks. This is in line with literature showing that household tasks are often overlooked (Wiesmann et al., 2008). However, statistics show that Dutch people generally spend 22h a week on household tasks (compared to 15h a week on childcare), and that men spend less time on that than women; (Roeters, 2019). Therefore, as household tasks are often hidden tasks that take a lot of time, it should be part of the conversation. By making household tasks visible through explicit conversations, it is likely that a more equal task division replaces a previous invisible or taken-for-granted unequal division. Our findings even suggest that making the household tasks visible relates to a re-division of childcare and paid work. For example, when a partner talks about the many household tasks that are left to do that day (i.e., making it visible), the other partner may be motivated to contribute their share and perform the children's bedtime ritual.

This study confirms the value of integrating theory on heuristic-systematic information processing (Chaiken & Ledgerwood, 2012) with social role theory (Eagly & Wood, 2012). Considering that a majority of working mothers and fathers wish to divide tasks more equally, one way to break reliance on gendered mental shortcuts can be by processing goals more explicitly and to deliberately discuss your choices and behaviour. In the current research, we are the first to show that if mothers and fathers apply more “deep-level” processing via explicit, daily coordination, they can reduce the impact of gendered heuristics to prevail and steer their task divisions.

While we expected that conversations held in general (one-off estimations) would be related to a more equal and satisfying task division and higher relationship quality (Wiesmann et al., 2008), our study found limited evidence for the between-level variations in partner conversations and these outcomes. Daily conversations appeared more effective in achieving an equal and satisfactory task division and higher relationship quality. This effectiveness can be attributed to daily conversations entailing concrete daily task allocations breaking reliance on routine gendered mental short-cuts for that day. On the other hand, abstract baseline conversations involve complex renegotiations about the overall structure of the already established task division, which might be more challenging to change. It could be that baseline conversations may have more lasting effects if initiated in the midst of big life events or changes, such as birth of a child (Brown & Miller, 2002; Endendijk et al., 2018), bread-winner job loss (Legerski & Cornwall, 2010) or COVID-19 (Yerkes et al., 2020) before a (new) routine has established.

Results also did not show many spill-over effects of conversations about the task division to the next day, which demonstrates the importance of daily coordination. This again suggests that partners do not really seem to plan their division of tasks up front, but divide tasks in a more concrete and ad-hoc way

on the spot. Partners might see that having to have conversations about the task division each day is an extra burden that is not worthwhile (see e.g., Wiesmann et al., 2008). However, the finding that especially daily conversations are related to many positive outcomes, such as experiencing a more satisfying division and even higher relationship quality, and that the conversations are seen as positive and useful suggests that short and very concrete conversations about who is responsible for a certain task at hand (over general conversations about the overall task division) can be an easy, low-threshold way to break traditional divisions.

Moreover, although effects were small, a small effect every day can cumulate in the long run (Funder & Ozer, 2019). For example, if the conversations result into the male partner making breakfast, in the long-term mothers may have more energy to go to work, making women more economically resilient. This could also instigate a positive feedback loop.

Limitations and future research

In addition to its numerous strengths, including its pioneering quantitative examination of task division conversations within the context of real dual-earner parents' lives (as opposed to hypothetical scenarios), its inclusion of both mothers and fathers, the differentiation of within, between, and lagged effects, and the integration of two separate theories, the study also has some limitations. First, although we differentiated between conversations about household tasks, childcare and paid work and parents overall experienced the conversations as positive and useful, the exact content, nature and depth of the conversations remain unknown. Conversations could have entailed constructive, concrete communication, but also justifications to solidify gendered task divisions (Eerola et al., 2021; Rose et al., 2015) or destructive demand-withdraw interactions (Kluwer et al., 1997). For future research, we thus recommend a mixed-method daily-diary approach (Vermeulen & van Leeuwen, 2023) where, in addition closed-ended questions, people answer open-ended questions about motivations and content of the conversations. Relatedly, while we focus on *individual* parents, a next step in the improvement of the research design is to examine daily conversations and task divisions between couples *dyadically*. Dyadic data would allow for drawing conclusions on partner-agreement and spill-over in perceptions about conversations on household, childcare and paid work and outcomes.

Second, although a diary study was suitable for our aim to differentiate between effects between persons and effects within persons, causality remains unclear. Because we only sent out a questionnaire once a day, the order of events remains speculative. Were these conversations held because partners were satisfied or did the conversations result in satisfaction? Future research could provide more insight by measuring when and why the conversation took place, or by using an experimental approach. Also, despite the initial impression that conversations improve relationships without altering gendered task divisions, we want to stress that our findings also showed that daily conversations were related to a more gender-equal task division.

Third, we measured perceptions of the task division which may not reflect the actual task division and may be biased by parents' gender ideas (Press & Townsley, 1998). It could be that over- or underestimation of the contribution to the task division is related to gender-role stereotypes. Even though recall bias is reduced with a daily diary study (Reis & Gable, 2000), parents still could have over- or underestimated their daily contributions. However, note that regardless of under or overestimation, results showed that if parents reported more conversations on a specific day than other days, they reported a more equal task division that same day. Therefore, the found effects cannot be solely attributed to between-level factors, such as explicit gender role attitudes. Moving forward, future research may measure the task division with time diaries to get a more objective view of the task division, as they are seen as the golden standard of time use measurement (Yavorsky et al., 2015). Lastly, this convenience sample was not completely representative for the Dutch population. Also, those who volunteer to participate in studies about work–family issues tend to already experience lower than average work–family conflict (Shockley & Allen, 2015). While these issues may limit the generalizability of effects, the fact that we

find effects even among this highly educated sample in a country that scores high on gender equality, that may have already be prone to talk to their partner about the task division (as they were interested in this study) may also indicate that effects might even be larger in the general population or in countries that score lower on gender equality, where is more to win with regards to gender inequality. The next step is to explore the effects of task division conversations among participants at other life stages, with other family structures (e.g., LGBTQ+ partners, divorced partners, blended families), ideally with a fully representative sample.

CONCLUSION

Findings show that couples with an established task division benefit from a daily explicit coordination of tasks, especially household tasks, to create a more gender-equal, fair and satisfying task division, and higher relationship quality. Together, these findings imply that another useful way to break with traditional task divisions is to encourage parents to (shortly) coordinate their concrete daily household tasks. In this way couples may be able to overcome traditional gender roles from seeping through and act more in line with their actual desired work/family division.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Larisa Riedijk: Conceptualization; investigation; writing – original draft; methodology; data curation; project administration; formal analysis; writing – review and editing; visualization. **Lianne Aarntzen:** Conceptualization; supervision; formal analysis; writing – review and editing. **Ruth van Veelen:** Conceptualization; supervision; formal analysis; writing – review and editing. **Belle Derks:** Conceptualization; supervision; writing – review and editing.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors have no conflict of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

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APPENDIX A

Effects of control variables on between level regression analyses of Table 3.

Mean level/aggregated outcomes	Educational level	Number of children	Weekly paid work hours	Gender (male)
	<i>B</i> [95% CI]	<i>B</i> [95% CI]	<i>B</i> [95% CI]	<i>B</i> [95% CI]
Household task division	−0.075 [−0.185, 0.035]	0.094 [−0.069, 0.256]	−0.024* [−0.047, −0.001]	0.072 [−0.326, 0.470]
Childcare division	−0.090 [−0.190, 0.010]	0.168* [0.020, 0.316]	−0.029** [−0.050, −0.008]	0.117 [−0.245, 0.479]
Paid work division	0.028 [−0.065, 0.121]	−0.062 [−0.200, 0.076]	0.039** [0.019, 0.058]	0.476** [0.138, 0.813]
Satisfaction with task division	−0.145** [0.246, −0.044]	0.101 [−0.050, 0.252]	0.016 [−0.006, 0.037]	0.251 [−0.119, 0.620]
Fairness of task division	−0.145** [−0.254, −0.037]	0.096 [−0.065, 0.258]	0.004 [−0.019, 0.027]	0.082 [−0.313, 0.478]
Relationship satisfaction	−0.062 [−0.161, 0.037]	−0.034 [−0.181, 0.113]	0.004 [−0.017, 0.025]	0.044 [−0.316, 0.403]
Relationship harmony	−0.107 [−0.200, −0.014]	0.101 [−0.037, 0.239]	0.004 [−0.015, 0.024]	0.106 [−0.232, 0.444]

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

APPENDIX B

Effects of control variables and person-level conversations variables on the day-level analyses and effects of Table 3.

Control variables (step 1 + 2)	Educational level		Number of children		Weekly paid work hours		Gender (male)		Conversations household tasks		Conversations childcare		Conversations paid work	
	B	[95% CI]	B	[95% CI]	B	[95% CI]	B	[95% CI]	B	[95% CI]	B	[95% CI]	B	[95% CI]
Childcare division	-0.096 [-0.197, 0.005]		0.188* [0.034, 0.342]		0.001 [-0.004, 0.005]		-0.442** [-0.744, -0.139]		-0.021 [-0.229, 0.188]		-0.082 [-0.325, 0.161]		0.136 [-0.055, 0.327]	
Household task division	-0.082 [-0.189, 0.025]		0.109 [-0.056, 0.273]		-0.002 [-0.006, 0.003]		-0.281 [-0.600, 0.038]		-0.236* [-0.452, -0.012]		0.005 [-0.251, 0.262]		0.267* [0.065, 0.469]	
Paid work division	0.071 [-0.022, 0.164]		-0.081 [-0.224, 0.062]		0.003 [-0.001, 0.008]		-0.083 [-0.371, 0.206]		-0.069 [-0.268, 0.130]		0.112 [-0.119, 0.344]		-0.006 [-0.188, 0.177]	
Satisfaction with task division	-0.125* [-0.222, -0.027]		0.096 [-0.054, 0.246]		0.004 [-0.000, 0.009]		-0.101 [-0.403, 0.200]		-0.111 [-0.320, 0.097]		0.101 [-0.142, 0.344]		-0.010 [-0.201, 0.181]	
Fairness of task division	-0.138* [-0.242, -0.034]		0.096 [-0.064, 0.256]		0.002 [-0.003, 0.006]		-0.038 [-0.360, 0.284]		-0.097 [-0.319, 0.126]		0.112 [-0.148, 0.371]		-0.001 [-0.205, 0.203]	
Relationship satisfaction	-0.057 [-0.152, 0.037]		-0.036 [-0.181, 0.109]		0.002 [-0.003, 0.006]		-0.015 [-0.308, 0.278]		0.013 [-0.190, 0.215]		-0.053 [-0.289, 0.183]		0.026 [-0.159, 0.212]	
Relationship harmony	-0.098* [-0.187, -0.009]		0.102 [-0.034, 0.238]		0.004* [0.000, 0.008]		-0.066 [-0.339, 0.207]		-0.136 [-0.325, 0.053]		-0.017 [-0.237, 0.203]		0.093 [-0.080, 0.266]	

Note: Unstandardized regression coefficients with 95% confidence intervals between brackets are represented in table above. **p* < .05, ***p* < .01.

Effects of control variables on the lagged analyses of Table 3.

Control variables lagged analyses	Educational level	Number of children	Weekly paid work hours	Gender (male)
	<i>B</i> [95% CI]	<i>B</i> [95% CI]	<i>B</i> [95% CI]	<i>B</i> [95% CI]
Childcare division	−0.139** [−0.239, −0.038]	0.190* [0.037, 0.342]	0.001 [−0.003, 0.006]	−0.416** [−0.716, −0.115]
Household task division	−0.117* [−0.224, −0.010]	0.115 [−0.047, 0.277]	−0.001 [−0.005, 0.004]	−0.341* [−0.660, −0.022]
Paid work division	0.068 [−0.029, 0.165]	−0.091 [−0.238, 0.055]	0.005 [0.000, 0.009]	−0.113 [−0.402, 0.176]
Satisfaction with task division	−0.139** [−0.241, −0.038]	0.116 [−0.038, 0.270]	0.005* [0.000, 0.009]	−0.120 [−0.423, 0.183]
Fairness of task division	−0.152** [−0.259, −0.045]	0.114 [−0.048, 0.276]	0.002 [−0.003, 0.007]	−0.059 [−0.379, 0.260]
Relationship satisfaction	−0.061 [−0.160, 0.038]	−0.017 [−0.167, 0.133]	0.002 [−0.002, 0.006]	−0.016 [−0.311, 0.279]
Relationship harmony	−0.109* [−0.200, −0.018]	0.105 [−0.034, 0.243]	0.004* [0.000, 0.008]	−0.097 [−0.370, 0.175]

Note: Unstandardized regression coefficients with 95% confidence intervals between brackets are represented in table above. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

APPENDIX C

The between and within effects of conversations about the task division on hypothesized outcomes on days were both partners worked (N= 600).

	Conversations household tasks person-level (between participants)		Conversations household day-level (within participants)		Conversations childcare person-level (between participants)		Conversations childcare day-level (within participants)		Conversations paid work person-level (between participants)		Conversations paid work day-level (within participant)	
	B	[95% CI]	B	[95% CI]	B	[95% CI]	B	[95% CI]	B	[95% CI]	B	[95% CI]
Daily outcomes												
Childcare division	-0.381	[-0.828, 0.067]	-0.186	[-0.491, 0.118]	-0.122*	[-0.232, -0.012]	-0.192	[-0.552, 0.169]	0.311*	[0.023, 0.600]	-0.007	[-0.117, 0.102]
Household task division	-0.161	[-0.600, 0.278]	-0.350*	[-0.649, -0.050]	-0.134*	[-0.243, -0.025]	-0.093	[-0.446, 0.261]	0.377**	[0.094, 0.660]	-0.031	[-0.139, 0.077]
Paid work division	-0.233	[-0.600, 0.134]	0.057	[-0.193, 0.307]	0.021	[-0.075, 0.118]	0.202	[-0.094, 0.498]	-0.118	[-0.355, 0.119]	0.059	[-0.036, 0.155]
Satisfaction with task division	-0.113	[-0.440, 0.215]	-0.154	[-0.377, 0.069]	0.142**	[0.064, 0.220]	0.093	[-0.171, 0.357]	0.031	[-0.180, 0.242]	0.013	[-0.065, 0.090]
Fairness of task division	-0.216	[-0.583, 0.152]	-0.058	[-0.308, 0.192]	0.113**	[0.040, 0.187]	0.016	[-0.280, 0.312]	0.074	[-0.162, 0.311]	-0.020	[-0.093, 0.054]
Relationship satisfaction	-0.003	[-0.305, 0.299]	-0.002	[-0.207, 0.203]	0.067**	[0.020, 0.114]	-0.014	[-0.257, 0.229]	-0.018	[-0.212, 0.176]	0.015	[-0.032, 0.062]
Relationship harmony	-0.186	[-0.479, 0.107]	-0.128	[-0.328, 0.073]	0.107**	[0.041, 0.174]	0.088	[-0.150, 0.326]	0.038	[-0.153, 0.229]	0.057	[-0.012, 0.125]

Note: Controlled for number of children, educational level and work hours. Unstandardized regression coefficients with 95% confidence intervals between brackets are represented in table above. **p* < .05, ***p* < .01.