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HOUSEWORK AND PERCEPTIONS OF FAIRNESS: HOW DO THEY AFFECT OLDER
MARRIED WOMEN'S AND MEN'S SEXUAL FREQUENCY AND SEXUAL
SATISFACTION?

BY

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DISSERTATION

Submitted to the University of New Hampshire
in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

Sociology

May 2020

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Kirsten E. Kemmerer

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On April 8, 2020

Original approval signatures are on file with the University of New Hampshire Graduate School.

DEDICATION

For my sisters and Kadence. You are all my favorites.

And for JMH. Thank you.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to first spend time thanking my amazing advisor for all of her help and guidance. My advisor, Dr. Rebecca Glauber, has been an amazing support system to me throughout this entire process. She was there for me at every hour, multiple times a week for calls and emails. She has been an amazing, invaluable resource. She has made me a better student, researcher, and person. This dissertation process was stressful and unpredictable, and Rebecca was there for me every step of the way. Thank you for never giving up on me, Rebecca.

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ABSTRACT

HOUSEWORK AND PERCEPTIONS OF FAIRNESS: HOW DO THEY AFFECT OLDER MARRIED WOMEN'S AND MEN'S SEXUAL FREQUENCY AND SEXUAL SATISFACTION?

This study analyzed how weekly housework hours and perceptions of fairness surrounding the division of household labor are correlated with midlife to older married women's and men's sexual frequency and sexual satisfaction. I analyzed statistical data from Wave 3 of the National Survey of Families and Households (2001-2003), and the sample consisted of 1,920 individuals (954 men and 966 women) ages 40-70 years old. Findings from my study showed that the sexual satisfaction of older Americans matters, while sexual frequency does not. For instance, results illustrated that when weekly housework increased, sexual satisfaction decreased. I also found that the perceived fairness of household labor is only correlated with older Americans' sexual satisfaction. Compared to those who perceived the housework as unfair for themselves, when housework was perceived as fair for both partners and unfair for one's spouse, respondents had increased odds of sexual satisfaction. General implications of my research suggested that who contributes to the household labor and how much one contributes matter. Specifically, for this sample of Americans, only subjective perceptions surrounding the satisfaction of one's sexual experiences are correlated with housework and perceived fairness.

Keywords: sexual satisfaction, sexual frequency, household labor, perceptions of fairness

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Sexual frequency and sexual satisfaction are important components of lasting, successful marriages and overall relationship satisfaction (Twenge, Sherman, and Wells 2017; McNulty, Wenner, and Fisher 2014). Many studies have explored marital dynamics by focusing on the division of household labor (i.e., how couples divide housework and childcare) and perceptions of fairness surrounding the division of household labor. Oftentimes, these studies explored the effect of these factors on women's and men's marital quality or satisfaction (Pina and Bengtson 1993; Frisco and Williams 2003; Goldberg and Perry-Jenkins 2004; Barstad 2014). Few, if any studies, however, have focused on the effect of these two factors—time spent on household labor and perceptions of fairness—on *sexual frequency* and *sexual satisfaction* of older married Americans. Sexual frequency and sexual satisfaction are related, but they are also distinct. For instance, measures of sexual satisfaction sometimes include items on sexual frequency. Sexual frequency focuses on amount of sexual interactions alone, whereas sexual satisfaction focuses solely on the sexual quality of a relationship. Thus, this dissertation will extend our understanding of marriage, relationships, and families by focusing on the effects of weekly time spent on housework and perceptions of fairness on older husbands' and wives' sexual frequency and sexual satisfaction.

My focus on the relationship between sexual relationships, perceptions of fairness, and time spent on household labor is particularly relevant in a time of increased labor force participation among married women and mothers. Wives' participation in the labor force has steadily increased in the past few decades (Amato, Booth, Johnson, and Rogers 2007; Hochschild and Machung 1989/2012; Blau and Kahn 2013). This increase occurred regardless

of women's race, ethnicity, age, or number of children (Amato et al. 2007), and was primarily out of necessity; couples needed the additional income and the growing economy needed more workers (Wade and Ferree 2015). More importantly, wives' increased participation in the labor force increased the number of dual-earner marriages in America. This increase affected marital relations, as well as the ways in which couples decided to divide their household labor.

Although division of household labor is a key independent variable in this study, other less-central control variables, such as religiosity, showed to be strong predictors of sexual satisfaction and sexual frequency among older married Americans. Religiosity and its effects on older Americans' sexual lives is a relationship that has been briefly explored in previous literature. Some research has found that religious influence is associated with sexual frequency and satisfaction, although gender differences exist (Iveniuk, O'Muirheartaigh and Cagney 2016). However, as of yet, there is little literature on the sexual relationships of older Americans, but the current study adds to the discourse.

Additionally, there is little literature that explores the household labor arrangements and sexual relationships of older married American couples. Older Americans also divide household labor, and have sexual lives, yet they are rarely studied. This gap in the literature needs to be addressed. Therefore, this study focused on mid-life to older Americans ages 40-70. This dissertation analyzed data from Wave 3 of the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH) and focused on older Americans who are in mid- to later-life.

In sum, this research examined how household labor and perceptions of fairness surrounding household labor influenced older Americans' sexual frequency and sexual satisfaction. I extend previous research on sexual relationships (Dogan, Tugut, and Golbasi 2013; Yoo, Bartle-Haring, Day, and Gangamma 2014), religiosity (Iveniuk et al. 2016), and

perceptions of household labor (Hochschild and Machung 1989/2012) by examining the relationship between housework and sexual relationships using a national sample of older married Americans.

Literature Review

The following literature review summarizes previous research on housework, gender, and the sexual relationships of older Americans. The first section discusses relationships and life course experiences for midlife to older Americans. The second section discusses the sex lives of midlife to older Americans. The third and fourth sections review research on the division of labor, time spent on housework, and perceptions of fairness. The fifth section reviews religiosity, satisfaction, and sexual relationships. The sixth section discusses the importance of sexual frequency and sexual satisfaction in romantic relationships. The final section reviews the literature and frames the research questions and hypotheses for this project.

Relationships and health experiences for those in midlife and older Americans. There are many unique factors that affect the lives of midlife to older Americans. Understanding and exploring the experiences of midlife and older Americans is crucial to the current study because older individuals' experiences are distinctive and exclusive. Therefore, certain variables and experiences will likely affect older Americans differently than their younger counterparts. For purposes of the current research and the variables analyzed in this study, the following review of the literature will explore older Americans' experiences with romantic and personal relationships and their health.

Relationships play a crucial role in the lives of older Americans. Social and emotional support in general are important for individuals of all ages, but they are particularly important to older aged individuals. Having a spouse is the greatest support factor in old age (Liang et al.

2005). A spouse plays a huge role in social support and provides the greatest guarantee of that support in old age. Similarly, the institution of marriage is also extremely important to elder individuals. Liang and colleagues (2005) found that being married and having a relationship during old age guarantees social support.

However, not all romantic relationships are beneficial to older Americans. In order for a marital relationship to be beneficial to an elderly individual, there must be a high level of marital quality that exists within the partnership (Liu and Waite 2014). In fact, having a relationship with high levels of negative marital quality can subsequently affect an older individual's physical health, particularly their cardiovascular health. It also must be taken into consideration that marital quality and sexual satisfaction tend to decline in marriages over time (McNulty et al. 2014). Thus, although older married individuals benefit in numerous ways when they have higher marital quality, they are also less likely to be satisfied than their younger married counterparts.

Similar to partnered or romantic relationships, relationships with children, family, and friends can also be important to midlife and older Americans. Relationships act as resources for elderly individuals and help them to age healthfully and successfully. Both friends and relatives are a source of emotional and psychological support for older individuals (Adams and Blieszner 1995). In particular, research illustrates a strong connection between having quality friendships and psychological well-being among older adults. Friends are seen as more crucial for an older individual's psychological well-being, but family relationships affect overall happiness, too. However, the likelihood of having supportive family and friends decreases as an individual grows older, and social isolation increases (Hsieh and Hawkey 2018). However, although relationships with relatives and friends are important, having poor marital quality in a

relationship ameliorates any affect these relationships may have on older Americans (Hsieh and Hawkley 2018). Thus, a marital/spousal relationship remains the most crucial relationship in an older individual's life (Liang et al. 2005; Hsieh and Hawkley 2018).

Health is another important component in the lives of older Americans. One's physical and mental health can affect a number of experiences and interactions that an older individual incurs. Whether a natural health transition, or a severe physical or mental ailment, health has been shown to affect an older individual's life in a number of ways.

Physical health can directly affect one's physical ability, sometimes tangibly limiting someone from being able to engage in sexual intercourse (Karraker and DeLamater 2013). Older adults report that expression of sexuality can potentially change due to a partner's physical health (Roney and Wallace Kazer 2015). Physical inability, stemming from body weight/obesity is negatively associated with couples' sexual activity (Kwon and Schafer 2017). Older adults, particularly women, may have issues maintaining active sexual lives if they are physically overweight (Kwon and Schafer 2017). Men's weight, in particular, is not associated with lower sexual frequency. However, decreasing physical health among men has been shown to be a consistent predictor of sexual inactivity (Karraker and DeLamater 2013). In fact, male partner's physical health is one of the most common reasons for sexual inactivity among older adults. Thus, although physical health ailments consistently affect sexual activity among midlife to older Americans, gender differences exist.

Physical health, specifically, can affect one's romantic and sexual relationships. In particular, health plays a role in determining marital quality and sexual satisfaction among older Americans. Good health is often associated with sexual frequency, and men and women in excellent health are often more likely to be sexually active compared with their peers in worse

health (Lindau and Gavrilova 2010). Similarly, interest in sex is also associated with health. People in very good or excellent health are more likely to report an interest in sex compared to those in poorer health (Lindau and Gavrilova 2010). In fact, changes in marital quality and cardiovascular health are more closely related for older married Americans than for their younger counterparts (Liu and Waite 2014). However, gender differences exist. The link is stronger for women than it is for men. That is, negative marital quality affects women's health, particularly their cardiovascular health, more severely than it does men's health (Liu and Waite 2014).

When discussing romantic and marital relationships, mental health is an important factor to consider. Mental health indicators, such as stress and strain, can negatively affect one's marital relations. As one transitions into their later years of life, he or she is likely to experience both physical and mental health ailments, which can produce stress, which then can negatively affect his or her marital quality (Hsieh and Hawkley 2018). Similarly, Hsieh and Hawkley (2018) found that when marital partners are averse or ambivalent toward their partners, this can also produce stress and strain in a relationship. Stress and strain are problematic mental health factors that can negatively affect the lives and relationships of older Americans.

Similarly, psychological well-being and self-esteem are important individual mental health components that need to be explored when discussing older Americans' relationships. Oftentimes these mental health variables can be strengthened by positive spousal, social, and familial relationships. Strong child-parent relationships and friendships (Adams and Blieszner 1995) as well as spousal support (Wagner et al. 2018) can strengthen both psychological well-being and self-esteem in older adults. Thus, when older individuals are mentally healthy, they are likely to be happier in their social and romantic relationships.

Sexual relationships of midlife and older Americans. The sexual experiences of midlife and older Americans are distinctive and important. There is very little known about how sexual health and sexual relationships change as individuals age. Thus, exploring the correlates of sexual activity and satisfaction for midlife and older Americans provides insight into their understudied sexual relationships.

Sexual activity and sexual relationships are both important components to overall quality of life for most individuals across their lifespans (Dogan et al. 2013). Thus, it is reasonable to assume that the sex lives of midlife to older Americans, though unique, are just as important to explore. The following literature reviews what we do know about the sexual lives of older Americans, and this dissertation attempts to fill in the current gaps in the literature that exist.

Sometimes, a sexual relationship between an older couple depends simply on partner availability. The availability of social partners is limited once individuals age (Jensen and Rauer 2015). Oftentimes, having sexual access to a partner decreases if a spouse is ill, but the sexual relationship is sometimes reestablished after recovery (Karraker and DeLamater 2013). Similarly, sexual activity may decrease when an individual experiences divorce or becomes a widow, but, again, sexual activity can be reestablished with new partner after these life changes occur.

Changes in sexual behavior fluctuate after the transition to old age. In general, sexual functioning changes in numerous ways as an individual enters into old age. In mid- to later-life Americans sexual activity is often sparse or non-existent. Literature that does exist often focuses on specific issues like sexual dysfunction or frequency. However, some researchers found that in a sample of older Americans, these older Americans had no sexual activity whatsoever in the past twelve months or more (Karraker and DeLamater 2013). Oftentimes this inactivity is

associated with relationship duration, age, and poor physical health. However, Karraker and DeLamater (2013) also found that sexual inactivity increases with age, but infrequent sex (measured as having sex once a month or less) remains mostly stable across all age groups. Thus, age does not always have an effect on prevalence of sexual activity among older Americans.

As has been established, age is an important variable to explore when considering sexual frequency and sexual satisfaction. Older men often report lower levels of sexual desire, compared to their younger counterparts (Gralla et al. 2008). Similarly, for marriages from one month through twenty-five years, sexual frequency decreases as marital duration increases (Jasso 1985). As the research supports, age is correlated with sexual frequency. However, it is important to note that research on sexual satisfaction is sparse; most research focuses on sexual frequency.

Research similarly supports the relationship between age and sexual frequency. Research using the National Survey of Families and Households 1988 has shown that age relates to frequency of marital sex (Call, Sprecher, and Schwartz 1995). This research indicates that frequency of marital sex changes throughout the life course. Results from a multivariate indicate that age is the single factor most highly associated with marital sexual frequency (Call et al. 1995). Other researchers have found age-related decreases in sexual behavior as well (Gray, Garcia, and Gesselman 2018; Thomas, Hess, and Thurston 2015).

Sexual satisfaction is a variable that has been understudied among midlife and older Americans, but sparse research does exist. Predominantly, some research exists on older women's sexual satisfaction. Some research supports that despite declines in physical health and sexual activity, sexual satisfaction appears to be stable for older women (Thompson et al. 2011).

For women ages 60-89, regardless of declines in sexual functioning and sexual frequency, sexual satisfaction remains stable. Similarly, among sexually active women, aging is not a deterrent to sexual satisfaction (Thomas et al. 2015). Psychosocial variables, such as communication with a romantic/sexual partner, overall relationship satisfaction, and importance of having sex, matter more to a women's sexual satisfaction than aging does.

Although literature on the sexual experiences of midlife to older Americans is sparse and somewhat lacking, there is sufficient research that focuses on the marital relationships and marital quality of older individuals. Oftentimes, social and health transitions can increase stress and reduce marital quality (Hsieh and Hawkey 2018). Lowered marital quality produces increased levels of loneliness among an already isolated age-group. In contrast, healthy marital relationships are so important for older individuals, as they offer strong support systems and create coping mechanisms for stressors such as poor physical or mental health (Liang et al. 2005). Marital happiness is associated with both higher sexual frequency and continued sexual activity throughout the life course (Karraker and DeLamater 2013).

A predominant goal of this study was to develop what is known about gender differences in sexual satisfaction. Therefore, understanding the gendered differences in older Americans' sexual lives is relevant for interpreting the results of the current study. Overall, research illustrates that men are more likely than their female counterparts to be sexually active, report a high-quality sex life, and to be interested in sexual activity (Lindau and Gavrilova 2010). In fact, this gender gap widened with age. That is, as men and women age, men are much more likely to be sexually active and report a good quality sex life compared to their female counterparts. This could be due to the fact that less older women are engaging in sexual activity. Older women are less likely to be sexually active even within marital relationships (Karraker and DeLamater 2013;

Gray et al. 2018). However, sexual satisfaction increases with age in women but not for men (Gray et al. 2018). Older women report relatively higher rates of sexual satisfaction than older men. So, although men may be having sex more frequently (Karraker and DeLamater 2013; Lindau and Gavrilova 2010), older women report higher levels of sexual satisfaction compared to their male counterparts (Gray et al. 2018).

Division of household labor, satisfaction, and sexual relationships. Older married couples are still faced with determining how to divide household labor. And although women's participation in the labor force has increased dramatically over the past few decades, mothers are still disproportionately responsible for housework and childcare (Bianchi, Milkie, Sayer, and Robinson 2000; Zimmerman 2000; Sayer 2005; Hochschild and Machung 1989/2012; Blair-Loy et al. 2015; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2015). However, there is evidence that men participate in household labor and childcare more so than their counterparts of decades ago (Blair-Loy et al. 2015). Yet, on an average day, women spend almost an hour more doing household activities than men (U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics 2015). It makes sense that most women are still relatively dissatisfied in how the household labor is divided among spouses and would like their husband to do more (Barstad 2014).

The division of labor between men and women is not a new phenomenon. It developed early in hunter-gatherer societies and was a crucial part of survival for couples and family units (Coontz 2005). Just as hunter-gatherers divided labor in order to survive, couples of recent decades often find a way to divide household labor in order to keep their relationships, marriages, and families functional. Not only is the division of household labor an important factor in relationship functionality, but the division of household labor also affects marital quality.

A division of household labor between husbands and wives became very pronounced in American society with the introduction of the “separate spheres” ideology. Although the division of labor between men and women was not a new idea, rapid industrialization in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries brought about the growth of the *separate spheres ideology* (Wade and Ferree 2015). The separate spheres ideology refers to the idea that the woman’s place was in the home, and the man’s place was in the labor force. That is, the working world became masculinized and the home was feminized. This division of household labor was gendered. Referred to as the “breadwinner/housewife marriage” (Wade and Ferree 2015), this arrangement allowed both women and men to contribute to their marriages and families in different ways. Women were expected to perform housework and domestic services for men, whereas men were legally required to support their wives financially.

In practice, the separation of paid work outside the home and family functions and responsibilities strained marriages and marital quality. After World War II, less than one-third of married couples described their marriages as happy or very happy (Wade and Ferree 2015). Middle-class wives were particularly affected by the separation of spheres; even though they were living the “American Dream,” women often felt bored, lonely, and isolated. Some of these, mostly white, women had college degrees but were pushed out of the workforce at the end of World War II. Thus, middle-class women felt like their talents were wasted in the home (Wade and Ferree 2015). In fact, *The Feminine Mystique*, by Betty Friedan (1963) highlighted the realities of marriage and housewifery. The “feminine mystique” refers to a mythology – the idea that women were passionate and happy about being mothers and housewives. Friedan’s (1963) book highlights the real feelings of housewives and mothers in the 1950s and 1960s; Friedan argued that the separate sphere ideology left women unhappy and unfulfilled.

Both men's and women's marital quality was affected by the separate sphere ideology. Some men were unhappy in breadwinner/housewife marriages, and they often felt pressure to be the perfect "family man" and excelling in their jobs and financially supporting their families (Wade and Ferree 2015). Women, however, were the most vulnerable and carried most, if not all, of the economic risk in the breadwinner/housewife dichotomy. The masculine "sphere" was seen as admirable and worthy, while the feminine sphere of the home was seen as inferior and less admirable (Wade and Ferree 2015). The breadwinner/housewife family model failed to offer women much of a semblance of equality, but entry into the workforce eventually did.

Married couples have become less traditional in their beliefs about the division of household labor by gender in marriage (Amato et al. 2007; Kornrich, Brines, and Leupp 2012). Many scholars agree that contemporary marriages are more egalitarian and flexible than prior couple arrangements (Kornrich et al. 2012). New perspectives on family and marriage assert that marriages today are actually more egalitarian and adaptable than those of the past.

Despite the changes in gender ideology surrounding the division of household labor, there is no one clear interpretation of how egalitarianism has changed the institution of marriage. Researchers have theorized that changes toward equality in one area of a marriage (earnings, for example), might induce more equality in another area (housework, for example) (Kornrich et al. 2012). In particular, spouses have become less traditional over time, especially in their beliefs about the division of household labor by gender within the marriage (Amato et al. 2007). Gender differences do exist; wives are consistently found to be less traditional than their husbands in their beliefs concerning the division of household labor within the marriage (Amato et al. 2007).

Dual-earner, or co-provider, couples often report higher levels of egalitarianism and relationship happiness in the home. Dual-earner couples often divide housework more equally,

and persons in dual-earner or co-provider marriages often report higher levels of marital satisfaction as compared to other couple types (Helms, Walls, Crouter, and McHale 2010). Some men seem to prefer an equal sharing of household tasks between spouses (Barstad 2014). Women also report higher levels of relationship quality when there is a more equal division of household labor.

The debate concerning the changing landscape of marriage is often directly related to the division of household labor (Kornrich et al. 2012). We know that women do the overwhelming majority of household work in dual-earner couples, even when husbands and wives work a similar number of paid hours outside of the home (Bianchi et al. 2000; Sayer 2005; Hochschild and Machung 1989/2012; Blair-Loy et al. 2015). Regardless of employment outside of the home, mothers are more likely to take on these responsibilities (Zimmerman 2000; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2015). Similarly, the devaluation of women's work has changed little, which greatly incentivizes women to enter into typical male roles that pay more (England 2010). Thus, this begs the question: when women do enter into the workforce (particularly the traditionally masculine sphere), and their division of household labor shifts, how does this transition affect their sexual frequency and sexual satisfaction? This dissertation explored whether variables like employment and weekly housework hours affect older Americans sexual lives.

When traditional gendered divisions of labor exist, sexual frequency has been shown to be high. Households in which men do more female-typed tasks (laundry, cleaning house, doing dishes) report lower sexual frequency (Kornrich et al. 2012). When men do more male-typed tasks (outdoor work, auto maintenance), they report more sex. These results suggest that sexual behavior is governed by enactments of femininity and masculinity through gendered performances of household labor. That is, sexual frequency depends on which types of

household labor a person is completing; if a man is completing more “manly” tasks his sexual frequency will be higher.

Similar research has found no support for the notion that time spent on household labor will reduce sexual frequency. Gager and Yabiku (2010) found support for the newly coined “multiple spheres perspective” when exploring the relationship between housework hours and sexual frequency. This perspective suggests that Americans have a tendency to be “high achievers” across multiple domains in their lives. Similar to Hochschild’s “supermom” who “does it all” (Hochschild and Machung 1989/2012), the multiple spheres perspective focuses on being an achiever in multiple spheres of one’s life (work, childcare, housework). Gager and Yabiku (2010) found support for the multiple sphere hypothesis in that both husbands and wives who spend more hours in housework *and* in paid work report higher sexual frequency.

Although there is limited literature that focuses on time spent on housework and sexual frequency, there are even fewer articles on the relationship between division of labor and sexual satisfaction. One article, in particular, focuses on division of labor and its effects on sexual satisfaction among first-time parents (Mass, McDaniel, Feinberg, and Jones 2018). Although not directly relevant to my current sample, the relationship between household labor and sexual satisfaction is applicable. Findings suggest that satisfaction with the division of household labor predicts more satisfaction with overall sex life (Mass et al. 2018). These findings are consistent with research highlighting the importance of satisfaction with the division of household tasks for mothers, in particular (Dew and Wilcox 2011).

While literature on the relationship between division of labor and sexual satisfaction is limited, previous research suggests that there is a link between the division of household labor and marital quality. As the number of dual-earner couples continues to increase, couples must

continue to navigate the division of household labor. However, women still perform most of the household labor, and tasks continue to be gendered. As conveyed by the aforementioned studies, the research concerning the division of household labor and marital quality is rich and diverse, but the literature exploring the relationship between the division of household labor and *sexual satisfaction* is sparse and inconsistent. Similarly, there is relatively no research that explores women and men in mid- and later life.

Perceptions of fairness, satisfaction, and sexual relationships. Couples' perceptions of the fairness of household labor (that is, how couples perceive the fairness of how the household work is divided within the home) has become an important research topic, as ongoing changes in workplace and family life have occurred in recent decades. However, the research that does exist on perceptions of fairness surrounding household labor focuses primarily on marital quality. This dissertation addresses the gaps in the literature by illustrating how older individual's perceptions of fairness surrounding household labor affect sexual frequency *and* sexual satisfaction.

Research illustrates that a perceived "unfair" division of household labor is negatively related to both husbands' and wives' marital quality (Frisco and Williams 2003). That is, when husbands and/or wives perceive the division of household labor as unfair, they have lower marital happiness. Furthermore, an unfair division of household labor not only decreases women's marital happiness but also leads to role strain that makes women more likely to end their unsatisfying marriages with divorce. For example, Frisco and Williams (2003) found that marital quality only partially mediated the relationship between unfair perceptions of household labor and the likelihood of divorce. Frisco and Williams (2003) suggest that even if marital

happiness is considered high, perceived unfairness of housework often leads to unhappiness and role strain among women, which increases likelihood of divorce.

Research consistently shows that perceptions of fairness affect marital quality. Frisco and Williams (2003) asked respondents to estimate what percentage of certain household tasks they complete and whether or not they thought that they completed a fair amount, or whether they completed more than their fair share. They found that unfair *perceived* inequality was associated with decreased marital quality among both men and women. Other researchers (e.g., Barstad 2014) explored whether gendered household tasks affected overall perceptions of fairness in the division of household labor and relationship quality. In fact, when men complete more routine housework (i.e., cooking, washing and ironing clothes, doing dishes, and cleaning), they report lower levels of relationship quality, in contrast, women are more satisfied in their marriages (Barstad 2014). In addition, other researchers find support for the notion that higher levels of perceptions of fairness lead to greater overall happiness (Nakamura and Akiyoshi 2015).

Over the past century, as the emotional functions of marriage have emerged and persisted (Coontz 2005; Dew and Wilcox 2011), the relationship among the division of household labor, perceived fairness of household labor, and marital quality has become more complex. As individualism and emotional sanctity have become essential components of marital quality (Coontz 2005; Dew and Wilcox 2011) a number of functions historically associated with marriage, such as reproduction and childrearing, are less important to marital quality for many couples (Dew and Wilcox 2011). Using the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH), Dew and Wilcox (2011) illustrate that perceived unfairness in the division of household labor mediates the relationship between motherhood and marital satisfaction. That is, motherhood introduces an entirely new set of household tasks and is associated with an increase

in housework, which in turn increases women's perceptions of unfairness in household labor. These findings suggest that wives find the increases in housework associated with becoming a mother unfair and unequal, which then decreases their marital quality. In fact, research finds that increased emotional support from husbands during the first few months following childbirth, including conscientiousness regarding a fair division of household labor, increases wives' marital quality (Chong and Mickelson 2016). Prior studies have concluded that when couples perceive their childcare and division of household labor to be fair, they are more satisfied with their relationships (Dew and Wilcox 2011; Hochschild and Machung 1989/2012; Tai and Baxter 2018).

Not only do perceptions of fairness affect marital and relationship quality, but they also play a role in a couple's sexual relationship. Although research on sexual satisfaction is lacking, some researchers attempt to illustrate the relationship between perceptions of fairness and sexual frequency. Researchers find that sexual frequency is higher among couples with traditional gendered divisions of household labor (Kornrich et al. 2012). Specifically, households where men do more traditionally female-oriented tasks (i.e., folding laundry and washing dishes) report lower sexual frequency, and households where men do more traditionally male-oriented tasks (i.e., mowing the lawn and repair work) report higher sexual frequency. Kornrich and colleagues (2012) suggest that these results illustrate that sexual frequency is higher among couples that express traditional masculinity and femininity through gendered household tasks.

Lastly, some research illustrates a negative relationship between fairness and frequency. That is, when there is less perceived equity surrounding the time spent on housework, couples report lower sexual frequency (Barrett and Raphael 2018). This finding is particularly resilient among younger samples, and not much is known about older married Americans. Although

some researchers have explored the relationship between perceptions surrounding the division of household labor and sexual frequency, there is less research on the relationship between perceptions of fairness surrounding household labor and sexual satisfaction.

My dissertation summarizes key findings on the relationship between perceptions of fairness surrounding household labor and marital quality. The preexisting research shows a strong relationship between perceptions of fairness and marital quality. That is, perceived unfairness, especially among wives, lowers marital quality. A number of mechanisms contribute to this relationship. New motherhood, spousal support, and sexual frequency all affect the relationship between perceptions of fairness and marital quality. However, this dissertation addresses two major gaps that exists in the literature: how do perceptions of fairness of household labor relate to married individuals' sexual frequency and sexual satisfaction? And how do these factors affect older women and men?

Religiosity, satisfaction, and sexual relationships. The relationships among religiosity, sexual frequency, and sexual satisfaction are important to understand and explore. Research shows that there is a relationship among religiosity, sexual frequency, and sexual satisfaction (Iveniuk et al. 2016). However, much literature on the aforementioned variables is incongruent and mixed.

Some of the literature on religiosity and sexual relationships illustrates a positive relationship between the variables. That is, when religiosity increases, or someone identifies as more religious, research finds that an individual's reported sexual satisfaction and sexual frequency also increase. Similarly, research shows that after controlling for marital satisfaction, being holier and more religious predicts greater levels of sexual frequency and sexual satisfaction (Hernandez-Kane and Mahoney 2018). Other research also illustrates that greater

religiosity predicts greater sexual satisfaction (Hernandez, Mahoney, and Pargament 2011). Comparably, those that view sex as a holy act have increased sexual behavior (Murray-Swank, Pargament, and Mahoney 2005). Belief in the sanctification of sexual intercourse is also associated with sexual satisfaction. Thus, there is evidence to support the notion that increased religiosity increases sexual frequency and sexual satisfaction in romantic relationships.

Other research illustrates that religion and religiosity have little to no effect on sexual relationships. Literature shows no differences in sexual satisfaction between women who attend church frequently compared to those who frequent irregularly (Davidson, Darling, and Norton 1995). These findings suggest that religion and attendance of religious services might not have much of an effect on sexual relationships. Similarly, research shows that religion is largely unrelated to sexual frequency and sexual satisfaction (McFarland, Uecker, and Regnerus 2011). These research findings imply that religiosity and religious beliefs may not be as influential on romantic and sexual relationships as some may believe. This dissertation research addresses some of these incongruences in the literature by exploring how religiosity effects the sexual frequency and sexual satisfaction of midlife to older Americans.

Although the literature on sexual relationships and religion is mixed, there is some research on the relationship between religion and marital quality. Religion plays a central role in marriage and the family (Baucom 2001). Thus, religion is an important aspect of many familial relationships. In terms of marital relationships, religiousness is often positively related to marital quality (Cirhinlioglu, Cirhinlioglu, and Tepe 2018). That is, as level of religiousness increases, so too does perceived marital quality within a marriage. Similarly, literature illustrates a significant positive relationship between religious beliefs and marital satisfaction (Jahromi and Keshavarz 2018). Again, when a person or married couple has stronger religious beliefs, they

also have greater marital satisfaction. In fact, higher religiosity (or being more religious) has a profound effect on the solidarity of marriage and the family (Karami, Heidarisharaf, Kamari, and Abasi 2018). Thus, having a faith-based family and marriage increases the strength of the marital and familial relationships within a family.

A central goal of this dissertation is to explore gender differences in sexual experiences among older Americans. Thus, exploring the relationship between religiosity and sexual relationships and how/if that relationship differs by gender is important for purposes of this research. Research shows there to be some gender differences in how religiosity affects sexual frequency and satisfaction (Iveniuk et al. 2016). Religious influence is associated with higher self-reported satisfaction with frequency of sexual intercourse, but only for male respondents (Iveniuk et al. 2016). This means that men's sexual relationships, in particular, are influenced by their religion/religiosity. Men are also significantly more likely than their female counterparts to report that they would only have sex with a person that they love (Iveniuk et al. 2016). Thus, the influence of religiosity on sexual behavior is gendered and diverse.

Although the research on the relationship between religiosity and sexual experiences is mixed, there is no literature on how age affected this relationship. This dissertation addresses this gap by exploring how religiosity affects the sexual relationships of midlife to older Americans.

The importance of sexual frequency and sexual satisfaction in romantic relationships.

Sexual frequency and sexual satisfaction are the two dependent variables analyzed in this dissertation. Understanding the factors associated with sexual frequency and sexual satisfaction among midlife and older Americans is important for purposes of this research. Many scholars have focused on the onset of sexual activity early in the life course, but little is known about the

sexual experiences of individuals in mid- to later-life. Thus, the following section reviews what is known about sexual frequency and sexual satisfaction in romantic relationships. This dissertation addresses some of the gaps in the literature pertaining to midlife and older Americans' sex lives.

Conducting research on sexual frequency and sexual satisfaction remains important and relevant. First, married couples have higher sexual frequency than their unmarried counterparts (Twenge et al. 2017). Sexual frequency also declines with age (James 1981; Twenge et al. 2017), so it is important to explore what other factors might be correlated with age, sexual frequency, and sexual relationships. In addition, sexual satisfaction is a key component to both relationship happiness (Yoo et al. 2014) and overall satisfaction with life (Dogan et al. 2013). These findings suggest that both sexual frequency and sexual satisfaction are core components to both marital and romantic relationships. Despite a plethora of research on these variables, key questions remain unanswered.

First, I will explore and discuss the preexisting literature on sexual frequency and how it relates to my key independent variables. Findings regarding sexual frequency are mixed. Sexual frequency has a significant association with relationship satisfaction and happiness (Muise, Schimmack, and Impett 2016). However, other research has found that sexual frequency is not related to marital satisfaction (Schoenfeld et al. 2017). Although I am not specifically exploring how sexual frequency affects marital satisfaction, it is important to get a background understanding of the role sexual frequency plays in marital and romantic relationships.

There is a strong relationship between sexual frequency and romantic and marital relationships. Specifically, married individuals have sex more than unmarried individuals (Twenge et al. 2017). Similarly, research has illustrated that sexual frequency increases overall

well-being, but only for people in relationships (Muise et al. 2016). Thus, being in a romantic or marital relationship increases sexual frequency and overall well-being.

However, increases in sexual frequency do not always predict greater marital satisfaction. Research illustrates that having a warm interpersonal relationship with one's spouse is more important than the couple's sexual frequency (Schoenfeld et al. 2017). Having a satisfied sex life, or higher sexual satisfaction, is more important to married couples than the amount or frequency in which they are having sexual intercourse.

Sexual satisfaction is the other key dependent variable of this dissertation. Understanding and exploring the literature surrounding sexual satisfaction is important and relevant to this research project. Because the literature on sexual satisfaction is somewhat limited, I chose to review literature on both marital satisfaction and sexual satisfaction because the variables are interrelated yet unique.

Both marital quality and sexual satisfaction are necessary components of a lasting, successful marriage. And although this dissertation focuses solely on older Americans' sexual lives, it is important to understand how sexuality is related to marital quality. One of the most consistent research findings in the sexual satisfaction literature is that there is a positive relationship between sexual satisfaction and overall relationship satisfaction (Schwartz, Puente, and Young 2007; McNulty et al. 2014; Yoo et al. 2014; Gadassi et al. 2016). Therefore, examining the correlates of both marital quality and sexual satisfaction is important.

Although marital quality and sexual satisfaction are definitely correlated, they also differ in several ways. Marital quality pertains to one's overall satisfaction in his or her marriage. Marital quality is often measured using a number of indicators. For instance, Dillaway and Broman (2001) use a Likert-scale in which answers ranged from *Strongly Agree* to *Strongly*

Disagree. Respondents in their 2001 study were asked to answer the following questions using the scale mentioned above: 1) There is a great deal of love and affection expressed in our marriage, 2) My spouse doesn't treat me as well as I deserve to be treated, 3) I sometimes think of divorcing or separating from my spouse, and 4) There have been things that have happened in our marriage that I can never forgive. Responses were averaged and levels of marital satisfaction were determined (the Cronbach's Alpha for this scale was .72). Thus, these indicators created a comprehensive measure of marital satisfaction/quality. Others have used a similar approach (Yoo et al. 2014; Gadassi et al. 2016).

Sexual satisfaction, on the other hand, is often measured more directly using a single-item indicator. For instance, Gadassi and colleagues (2016) used a single-item question to measure sexual satisfaction: how happy were you today with your sexual relationship with your spouse? Yoo and colleagues (2014) also measured sexual satisfaction using a single item. Sexual satisfaction, therefore, differs from marital quality because it solely measures the subjective sexual quality of one's relationship, rather than the entire quality of one's marital union. Following previous research, I also use a single-item measure to assess individual's sexual satisfaction.

The connection between sexual intimacy and satisfaction and overall romantic relationship satisfaction has been well established in the literature. Although we know sex can exist without romance, research illustrates that sexuality is an integral piece of most romantic relationships, with society emphasizing marriage as the primary acceptable relationship in which sex occurs (Butzer and Campbell 2008). Sexual satisfaction in committed relationships is positively related to overall relationship satisfaction, commitment, and stability (Schwartz et al. 2007). This finding has held true in longitudinal studies of individuals' own sexual satisfaction

and marital satisfaction (McNulty et al. 2014), although the direction of causality is sometimes difficult to assess (Elliot and Umberson 2008). In fact, marital instability and discord are lower among couples that have healthy, sexually content marriages (Schwartz et al. 2007). Thus, sexual satisfaction is sometimes a predictor of marital quality and romance.

Similarly, sexual satisfaction and love are correlated. This is especially true in marital unions. Married individuals, who are more sexually satisfied in their relationships, report more love for their partners (Schwartz et al. 2007). These findings suggest that being highly satisfied sexually may increase feelings of love and adoration for one's marriage partner. For most men and women, both the value and amount of sex in a committed relationship are associated with their overall love for a partner. Thus, the importance of sexual satisfaction in the determination of marital relationship satisfaction cannot be overstated.

Not only is sexual satisfaction an important predictor of love and relationship quality, but it is also a predictor of one's overall happiness and satisfaction with life. Research illustrates that women's sexual quality is an important predictor of their happiness and satisfaction with life (Dogan et al. 2013). Thus, the study of sexuality and sexual satisfaction is an important one; sexual satisfaction is a key predictor of marital quality, love, psychological well-being, and overall happiness.

Understanding gender differences in marital and sexual relationships is a key component of this dissertation. There are some gender differences in the importance of sexual satisfaction to overall relationship happiness for men and women. Sexual satisfaction is somewhat more important to men's relationship quality than to women's (Schwartz et al. 2007). Although sex is important to women, women are more likely to view unsatisfactory sexual relations as simply a misfortunate aspect of the relationship. In contrast, men are more likely to view unsatisfactory

sexual relations as a deal-breaker, or as a reason to end a relationship or marriage (Schwartz et al. 2007). In addition, perceptions of their partner's sexual satisfaction are also an important factor in determining relationship satisfaction. Husbands have higher relationship satisfaction when their wives report higher levels of sexual satisfaction, but wives' relationship satisfaction is not related to husbands' sexual satisfaction (Yoo et al. 2014).

Men and women also differ in how they conceptualize sexual satisfaction. Men often think of sexual satisfaction relating directly to sexual behavior (Traeen, Stulhofer, and Carvalheira 2013). That is, men rate their sexual satisfaction based on sexual frequency, sexual variety, and sexual creativity in the bedroom. In contrast, women often rate their sexual satisfaction based on emotional closeness, as well as the love that exists within the relationship (Traeen et al. 2013). As the aforementioned research demonstrates, gender differences in sexual satisfaction exist, but little is known about the gender differences in sexual satisfaction that persist in older Americans marital relationships.

Review of the Literature and Focus of the Current Study

In this study, I conceptualized and measured division of household labor and perceived fairness of household labor as predictors of older married individuals' sexual frequency and sexual satisfaction. The overarching research question for this study was as follows: "How do division of household labor and perceptions of fairness surrounding division of household labor affect older married women's and men's sexual satisfaction and sexual frequency?" Well-validated measures (weekly housework hours and perceptions of fairness: housework that is unfair to me, fair for both, or unfair for spouse) were used to predict overall sexual satisfaction and monthly sexual frequency for both older married men and women.

The family is often viewed as an institution with strong guiding ideological norms (White and Klein 2008). Particularly, the societal definition of family is defined not by its membership, but by the prevailing ideology that a traditional division of household labor between husbands and wives is normal or natural (Ferree 1990). Feminist theory suggests that full equality in the workforce is stalled by the organization of the private sphere of the household (White and Klein 2008). In addition, feminist theory argues that patriarchal values are sustained through the division of household labor.

Hochschild and Machung's (1989/2012) *The Second Shift* provides an excellent overview of changes in the patriarchy, the household, and the American family. Although more mothers are working outside the home, women continue to do more of the housework and have less leisure time than their husbands (Hochschild and Machung 1989/2012; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2015). Not only do men do less household work by the hour, but also the division of household labor perpetuates an unequal gendered structure in the public sphere. Thus, even though millions of women entered into the paying labor force, which comprised a major change in the twentieth century American family (Hochschild and Machung 1989/2012), this gender revolution is stalled due to uneven divisions of household labor in the private sphere. In addition, this inequality in housework affects happiness, health, and marital quality. Thus, Hochschild and Machung's (1989/2012) conceptualization of the stalled gender revolution provides a theoretical rationale for the disjunction between changes in the American family and gender ideology.

The Second Shift illustrated that the revolution toward gender equality at home and in America has been stalled due to three primary reasons: (1) women continue to take on most of the second shift, (2) there is inadequate flexibility in the workplace for family caregiving needs,

and (3) there are a lack of public sector benefits, such as paid parental leave (Hochschild and Machung 1989/2012; Blair-Loy et al. 2015). Since the original publication of Hochschild's book, many aspects of the gender structure remain the same. For instance, a wage gap between men and women still exists. The gender pay gap is still present in all sectors of occupations (Bishu and Alkadry 2017). However, women have now overtaken men in educational attainment (Blair-Loy et al. 2015). Also, men's time attending to domestic and caregiving tasks has increased, yet women still do two to three times more routine housework than their male counterparts (Blair-Loy et al. 2015). In terms of workplace flexibility, a number of policies (flextime, telecommuting, compressed workweeks) intended to help families with work-life-home balance were implemented and grew until the Great Recession of 2008. In conclusion, the revolution is still stalled (Blair-Loy et al. 2015). Many feminist scholars (Hochschild and Machung 1989/2012; Blair-Loy et al. 2015; Schulte 2015) suggest that we need to implement more care into our culture; we need everyone to care about our nation's children. Therefore, implementing such things as paid sick leave, mandates for parental-leave, flexible work weeks, and government subsidized childcare could help in un-stalling the revolution.

This review of the literature illustrates how the division of household labor and perceptions of fairness correlate with marital quality. However, studies have yet to explore how these factors affect older married individuals' sexual frequency and sexual satisfaction. The relationship between marital quality and sexual satisfaction is well established. However, due to the differences in measurement and the conceptual meanings between marital quality and sexual satisfaction, the proposed study is important and unique.

We know that the division of household labor has an effect on marital quality and relationship satisfaction. However, sometimes the extent of that relationship is unclear, as

oftentimes gender ideology and the gender division of labor do not align (Glauber and Gozjolko 2011; Hochschild and Machung 1989/2012). That is, even though couples adhere to egalitarianism (or traditional) beliefs, their division of household labor does not always reflect those beliefs. Oftentimes, women complete the majority of the household labor, and the specific tasks remain gendered (Hochschild and Machung 1989/2012). This inequality affects marital relations, as many contemporary women are less traditional in their beliefs, and therefore, unhappy with how the housework is divided, although men of today are performing more household labor than men of past decades (Amato et al. 2007). Co-providing, egalitarian couples often have happier and more satisfied relationships (Helms et al. 2010).

My other primary research focus is on the perceived fairness of household labor. There is a distinct relationship between perceived fairness of household labor and marital quality. Both husbands and wives report lower marital quality when they perceive the household labor as unfair (Frisco and Williams 2003; Barstad 2014). Women tend to experience role-strain if they perceive unfairness in the division of household labor, which leads to dissatisfaction within their relationships. Paradoxically, even when the gendered division of household labor is unequal, couples oftentimes still perceive the division to be equal and fair (Hochschild and Machung 1989/2012). Thus, although I cannot speak to couples' sexual satisfaction, it is reasonable to make some assumptions regarding the nature of married individuals' sexual relationships based on the aforementioned literature. These findings lead me to the following four research questions and hypotheses which are as follows:

Research Question 1: Are weekly housework hours associated with older women's and men's sexual frequency?

Hypothesis 1: I hypothesize that as hours of housework increase, participants' sexual frequency will decrease. Thus, I hypothesize that the association between weekly housework hours and sexual frequency is negative for both men and women.

Research Question 2: Are the perceptions of fairness surrounding weekly housework hours associated with older women's and men's sexual frequency?

Hypothesis 2: I hypothesize that as perceptions of fairness increase, that is, weekly housework hours are perceived as fairer, sexual frequency will increase.

Research Question 3: Are weekly housework hours associated with older women's and men's sexual satisfaction?

Hypothesis 3: I hypothesize that as hours of housework increase, participants' sexual satisfaction will decrease. Thus, I hypothesize that the association between weekly housework hours and sexual satisfaction is negative for both men and women.

Research Question 4: Are the perceptions of fairness surrounding weekly housework hours associated with older women's and men's sexual satisfaction?

Hypothesis 4: I hypothesize that as perceptions of fairness increase, that is, weekly housework hours are perceived as fairer, sexual satisfaction will increase.

CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH METHODS

Sample

My research brings together and develops seemingly diverse bodies of research on household labor, perceived fairness, sexual frequency, and sexual satisfaction among older married Americans. I used the National Survey of Families and Households Wave 3 (NSFH 2001-2003) as my dataset for this dissertation. The NSFH is a longitudinal survey, consisting of three waves of data collection. The NSFH is a survey of a national sample, representative of American households. The National Survey of Families and Households is the only secondary data source that included all of the variables needed to conduct this research. Thus, it is the only possible dataset that could be used to answer the aforementioned research questions. A number of social surveys include variables on sexual satisfaction, but they do not include measures of hours of weekly household labor. Other surveys include measures of the hours of weekly household labor, but they do not include measures of sexual frequency and/or sexual satisfaction. The results of this study are generalizable to older Americans, ages 40-70.

Wave 1 data collection of the NSFH began in 1987; random household screening in the 48 contiguous states was used to gain access to research participants. One adult per household was randomly selected as the primary respondent. The national sample of 13,007 participants included a main cross-section of 9,637 households plus an oversampling of blacks, Puerto Ricans, Mexican Americans, single-parent families, families with stepchildren, cohabiting couples, and recently married persons. Data was collected through face-to-face interviews and self-administered questionnaires. At Wave 2, data was collected from 10,007 of the original 13,007 sample participants. For data collection at Wave 3, all interviews were conducted via telephone using CATI technology.

As previously stated, I am using Wave 3 of the NSFH (2001-2003). The Wave 3 sample included 7,277 cases. There were 2,888 males and 4,389 females. I restricted the sample in a number of ways. First, the sample was restricted so that each respondent was matched to their spouse. If a respondent did not have a spouse, they were removed from the study. This resulted in 1,802 females and 1,802 males. The sample was then also restricted to those who were between the ages of 40 and 70. This resulted in the final sample, which includes 1,920 individuals (954 men and 966 women). The mean age of women in the sample is 53, while the mean age of men is 55.

Measures

The definitions of weekly housework hours, perceptions of fairness, sexual frequency, and sexual satisfaction used in previous research have varied depending on the theoretical framework in which the research is based, the data available, and the discipline (sociology, psychology, and family studies, for example, often use somewhat different measures). The current study measured the variables as follows:

Weekly housework hours. Respondents indicated the hours that they spent per week on nine separate tasks, which included: (1) preparing meals, (2) washing dishes, (3) cleaning house, (4) outdoor tasks, (5) shopping, (6) washing and ironing, (7) paying bills, (8) auto maintenance, and (9) driving (see Appendix A for the exact survey question wording). Table 1 from Appendix A provides mean weekly hours and standard deviations for the nine separate tasks.

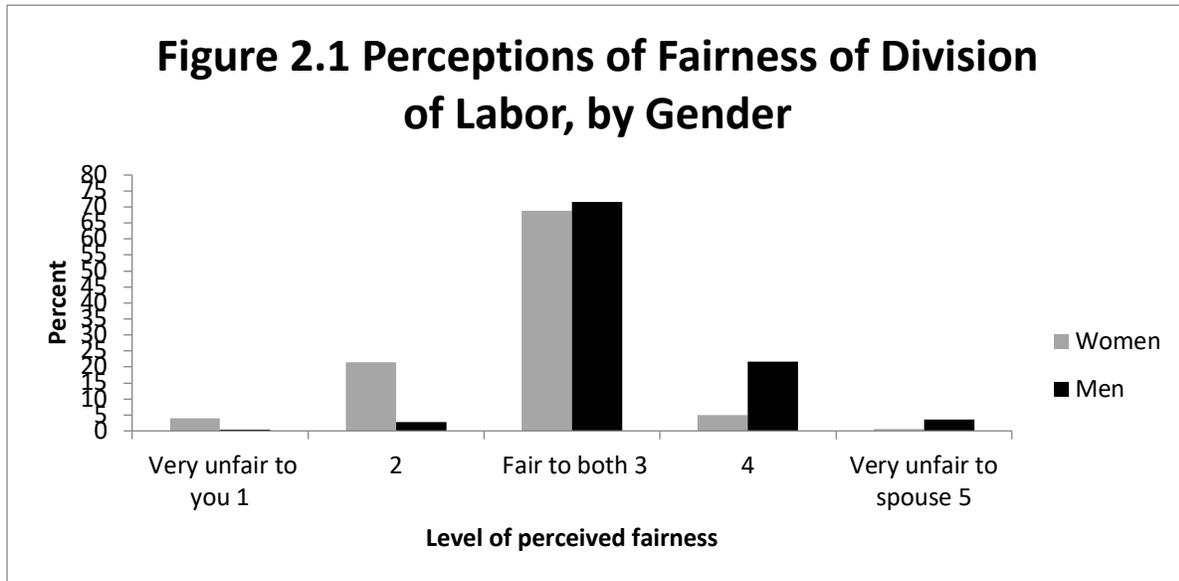
Following South and Spitze (1994) and Kornrich and colleagues (2012), I summed the number of hours spent on each of the nine tasks. Cronbach's Alpha for these items is .656. Following South and Spitze (1994) and Kornrich and colleagues (2012) I also recoded values above the 95th percentile for each household task to the value at that percentile. I did this

because a few respondents reported spending an excessive number of hours on specific household tasks. Second, and again following South and Spitze (1994) and Kornrich et al. (2012), I imputed mean values for those who failed to respond to one or two of the questionnaire items. The few individuals who failed to respond to more than two of the questionnaire items are excluded from the analysis. Omitting these respondents and excluding cases with missing values on the other variables in these analyses leaves 1,920 respondents for my study's sample.

The research literature on housework is inconsistent regarding the inclusion of childcare as a household task. As in Kamo (1988), Blair and Lither (1991), and South and Spitze (1994), I do not include time devoted to childcare because the work component of childcare (e.g., feeding and bathing the child) cannot be clearly or adequately separated from the leisure component (e.g., playing with the child). Given that childcare cannot be distinctly separated into its "work" and "leisure" components, it is not included in this study.

Perceptions of fairness of division of labor. This variable is measured using the following question: "How do you feel about the fairness in household chores in your relationship? Is it very unfair to you, somewhat unfair to you, fair to both of you, somewhat unfair to your (husband/wife), or very unfair to your (husband/wife)?" Blair and Johnson (1992) and Greenstein (1996) explored perceptions of fairness using this exact measure from the NSFH. The NSFH asked respondents to provide ratings on a scale of 1-5, with the following values: 1 = very unfair to you, 2 = somewhat unfair to you, 3 = fair to both, 4 = somewhat unfair to spouse, and 5 = very unfair to spouse. Figure 2.1, below, shows the distribution across these categories. I recoded perceptions of fairness into three categories: 1 = unfair to me, 2 = fair for both, and 3 = unfair to spouse. Twenty respondents were missing information for this variable. About fourteen

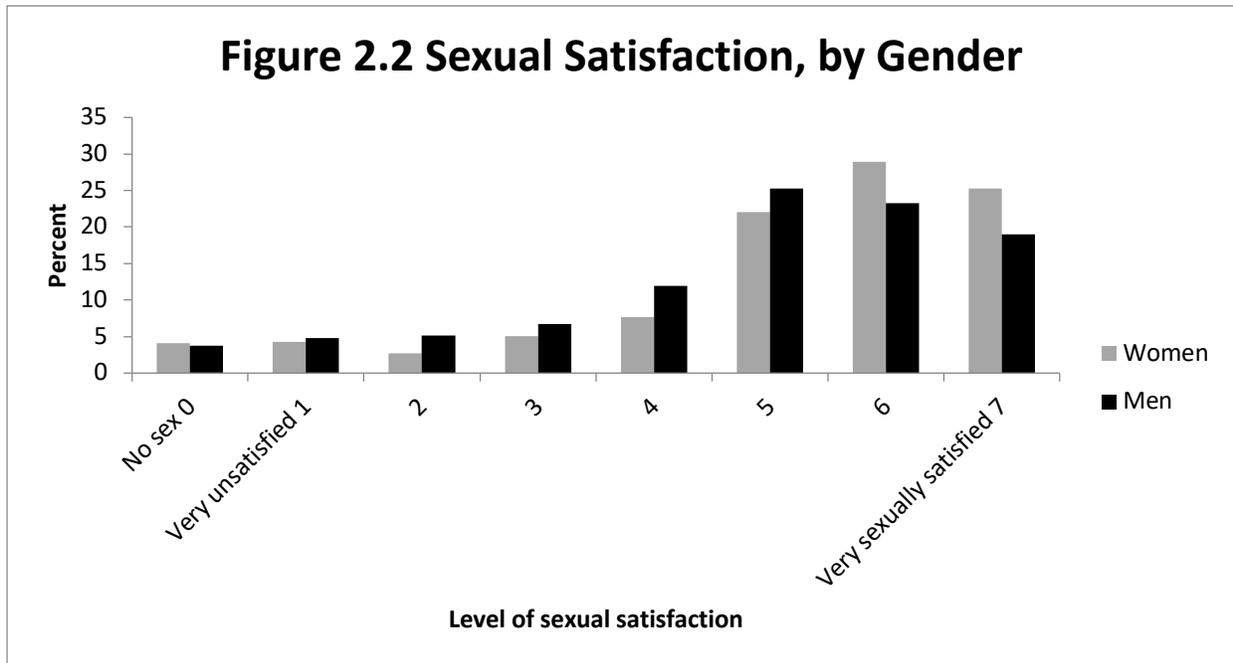
percent (14.4%) of respondents believe housework is unfair for themselves, 70.20% believe that housework is fair for both spouses, and 15.4% believe housework is unfair for their spouses.



Female’s proportion of weekly housework. This variable was measured by dividing women’s overall weekly housework by the total number of housework hours completed by both men and women.

Sexual frequency. Sexual frequency was measured using the following question: “About how many times did you and your (husband/wife) have sex last month?”

Sexual satisfaction. The NSFH asked respondents: “On a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 is very dissatisfied and 7 is very satisfied, overall, how satisfied are you with your sex life?” Figure 2.2 illustrates the distribution of answers to this question. For these analyses, those at the top of the scale (responding at a 6 or 7) were recoded as very sexually satisfied; the rest (0-5) were recoded as having no sex or not sexually satisfied. About 52% (51.76) of married respondents have no sex or are dissatisfied and 48% (48.24) are sexually satisfied. Fifty-five respondents were missing information for this variable.



Control variables. Finally, it is important to also control for other possible factors that could better explain the correlations among division of household labor, perceptions of fairness, sexual frequency, and sexual satisfaction. Following previous research, I included a measure of religiosity that was measured on a 1-4 scale where 1 is very religious and 4 is not at all religious. I included age as a control variable because age is often an important predictor of sexual frequency and, therefore, sexual satisfaction. In addition, I included education as a control variable. Education was coded using the categories of less than high school education, high school degree, some college or associate’s degree, and bachelor’s degree or more. I also controlled for self-reported health and health satisfaction. Self-reported health was measured using the categories of very poor, poor, fair, good, and excellent. Health satisfaction was measured dichotomously where 0 equals not satisfied with health and 1 equals satisfied with health. I controlled for employment, which was measured dichotomously where 0 equals not employed and 1 equals employed. Lastly, I included measures of the number of children under the age of 18 living in the household. All of these control variables are used in my analyses.

Table 2.1 Means and Standard Deviations of Sexual Satisfaction, Sexual Frequency, Weekly Housework Hours, Female's Proportion of Weekly Housework, Perceived Fairness, and Controls				
	Women's Report		Men's Report	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Sexual Satisfaction	.860	.347	.840	.366
Monthly Sexual Frequency	4.82	4.84	4.56	4.81
Weekly Housework Hours	33.06	18.12	21.12	14.22
Female's Proportion of Weekly Housework	.607	.179	.608	.177
Perceived Fairness				
Unfair to Me	.249	.433	.039	.193
Fair for Both	.694	.461	.703	.457
Unfair for Spouse	.056	.231	.258	.438
Age	53.31	7.35	54.95	7.36
Religiosity				
Very Religious	.399	.490	.286	.452
Somewhat Religious	.465	.499	.492	.500
Not that Religious	.089	.284	.148	.355
Not Religious at All	.048	.214	.075	.263
Education				
Less than a High School Degree	.106	.308	.107	.309
High School Degree	.367	.482	.326	.469
Some College or Associate's	.263	.441	.269	.444
Bachelor's Degree Plus	.263	.441	.297	.457
Self-Reported Health				
Very Poor	.012	.111	.007	.085
Poor	.037	.189	.053	.225
Fair	.139	.345	.158	.365
Good	.469	.499	.464	.498
Excellent	.342	.474	.316	.465
Health Satisfaction	.929	.258	.920	.271
Employed	.876	.330	.882	.323
Number of Children Living in Household	1.18	1.34	1.23	1.34
Total Number of Cases = 1,920	966		954	

In addition to descriptive analyses of primary variables, I used logistic regression and ordinary least squares (OLS) regression to analyze the relationships among weekly housework hours, perceptions of fairness, sexual frequency, and sexual satisfaction net of the other factors mentioned above. Table 2.1 provides means and standard deviations for all variables used in my analyses.

As Table 2.1 displays, women continue to contribute more hours per week to household labor. Women complete, on average, about 33 hours of housework per week. Men, on the other hand, complete around 21 hours of housework per week. This finding is consistent with previous research.

Statistical Models and Research Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: I hypothesize that as hours of housework increase, participants' sexual frequency will decrease. Thus, I hypothesize that the association between weekly housework hours and sexual frequency is negative for both men and women.

Hypothesis 2: I hypothesize that as perceptions of fairness increase, that is, weekly housework hours are perceived as fairer, sexual frequency will increase.

Hypothesis 3: I hypothesize that as hours of housework increase, participants' sexual satisfaction will decrease. Thus, I hypothesize that the association between weekly housework hours and sexual satisfaction is negative for both men and women.

Hypothesis 4: I hypothesize that as perceptions of fairness increase, that is, weekly housework hours are perceived as fairer, sexual satisfaction will increase.

I tested Hypotheses 1 and 2 using an ordinary least squares (OLS) regression, as the dependent variable, sexual frequency, is a continuous variable. Each regression model tested the effects of gender, the independent variable (weekly housework hours, female's proportion of weekly housework, or perceived fairness), both gender and the independent variable, or the interaction between gender and the independent variable. I tested Hypotheses 3 and 4 using a logistic regression of sexual satisfaction because it is a dichotomous variable (which is coded as satisfied or not satisfied). All regression models also controlled for age, religiosity, education, self-reported health, health satisfaction, employment, and number of children living in the household.

Focus of the Current Study

This dissertation moves beyond past research on the division of household labor, perceptions of fairness, and sexual relationships in four major ways. First, little is known about the sexual relationships and experiences of older Americans. Furthermore, little is known about how housework and perceived fairness surrounding housework, in particular, affect the sexual relationships of midlife and older Americans. Second, we know that men experience more work-

family conflict than 30 years ago (Aumann, Galinsky, and Matos 2011). Men are much more involved in their family lives and housework than in the past (Aumann et al. 2011), so this leads to the question: how have all of these changes affected sexual frequency and, importantly, *sexual satisfaction*? Third, this study also adds to the literature on the correlates of sexual satisfaction. A vast literature exists on marital quality, marital happiness, and marital satisfaction, but few have focused on sexual satisfaction. Fourth, this dissertation used a nationally representative sample of married couples. Previous research has used very small, non-nationally representative samples.

Taking all of these ideas into consideration, I decided it was important to explore how weekly housework hours and perceptions of fairness surrounding household labor affect sexual frequency and sexual satisfaction among midlife and older married Americans. This dissertation addressed these important and understudied relationships.

CHAPTER 3: WEEKLY HOUSEWORK HOURS AND PERCEPTIONS OF FAIRNESS AND THEIR EFFECTS ON SEXUAL FREQUENCY AND SEXUAL SATISFACTION

In this chapter, I explore midlife and older married women's and men's sexual frequency and sexual satisfaction based on their time spent completing household work and the perceived fairness of said household work. I conducted OLS regressions of sexual frequency and logistic regressions of sexual satisfaction. First, I examined the associations among weekly housework hours, female's proportion of weekly housework hours, perceived fairness, and sexual satisfaction and frequency. Then, I investigated whether weekly housework hours, female's proportion of weekly housework hours, perceived fairness, and each of these variable's interaction with gender were related to sexual frequency and satisfaction for both women and men.

Weekly Housework Hours and Sexual Frequency

One relationship that this dissertation explored was the one between housework and sexual frequency. Table 3.1 features an OLS regression predicting men's and women's monthly sexual frequency using gender, weekly housework hours, and their interactions. I chose not to present gender separately for men and women in this table (and all subsequent tables), because preliminary analyses where gender was analyzed separately showed no major gender differences between men and women. Table 3.1 illustrates some interesting findings.

Before analyzing the results in Table 3.1, it is useful to review some of the expected findings based on previous research. When traditional gendered divisions of labor exist, sexual frequency has been shown to be higher. In households in which men do more female-typed tasks (laundry, cleaning house, doing dishes), partners' (men in particular) often report lower sexual frequency (Kornrich et al. 2012). Research has also illustrated that when there is less perceived

equity surrounding the time spent on housework, couples report lower sexual frequency (Barrett and Raphael 2018). This finding is particularly true among younger samples, and not much is known concerning older Americans' sexual frequency. The literature that does exist suggests that age is the factor most highly associated with marital sexual frequency among older individuals (Call et al. 1995). Thus, I predict that when housework increases, sexual frequency will decrease. Age will also likely be a significant predictor of sexual frequency for this older sample of married Americans.

Table 3.1 presents estimates from OLS regression models that predicted the sexual frequency of midlife and older married Americans. Model 1 of Table 3.1 shows the association between gender, all of the control variables used in this analysis, and sexual frequency. Model 2 is similar to Model 1, but it also introduces one of my primary independent variables, weekly housework hours. Lastly, Model 3 introduces the interaction between gender and weekly housework hours.

Table 3.1 OLS Regressions Predicting Men and Women's Monthly Sexual Frequency from Gender, Weekly Housework Hours, and Gendered Interactions

	<i>Model 1</i>		<i>Model 2</i>		<i>Model 3</i>	
	Coeff	S.E.	Coeff	S.E.	Coeff	S.E.
<u>Female</u>	-0.256	0.247	-0.432	0.262	-0.407	0.476
<u>Weekly Housework Hours</u>			0.015*	0.008	0.016	0.013
<u>Interaction between Weekly Housework Hours and Gender</u>						
Weekly Housework Hours and being Female					-0.001	0.016
<u>Age</u>	-0.123*	0.022	-0.125*	0.022	-0.125*	0.022
<u>Religiosity</u>						
Somewhat religious	-0.169	0.275	-0.269	0.275	-0.170	0.275
Not that religious	-1.112*	0.409	-1.069*	0.410	-1.070*	0.410
Not religious at all	-0.970	0.507	-0.889	0.508	-0.890	0.508
<u>Education</u>						
High School Degree	0.051	0.421	0.060	0.420	0.060	0.420
Some College or Associate's	-0.234	0.436	-0.230	0.436	-0.231	0.436
Bachelor's Degree +	-0.259	0.435	-0.205	0.435	-0.206	0.435
<u>Self-Reported Health</u>						
Poor	-0.151	1.385	-0.148	1.380	-1.475	1.385
Fair	-0.776	1.329	-0.786	1.327	-0.785	1.328
Good	0.074	1.328	0.087	1.326	0.088	1.327
Excellent	0.835	1.337	0.871	1.335	0.871	1.336
<u>Satisfied with Health</u>	0.286	0.522	0.317	0.521	0.316	0.522
<u>Employed</u>	0.280	0.409	0.387	0.413	0.388	0.413
Constant	10.837	1.895	10.491	1.901	10.473	1.921
R-squared	0.1115		0.1140		0.1140	
Number of Observations	1,396		1,396		1,396	

* indicates a significant relationship at $p < .05$

Note: Since there are so many cases missing on the education variable, it limits the sample size of the final model. Each model also includes a control variable for the number of children living in the household. Reference categories for each variable are as follows. Female: male; religiosity: very religious; education: less than a high school degree; self-reported health: very poor; satisfaction with health: not satisfied; employed: not employed.

In Table 3.1, I surprisingly find no evidence in favor of the proposed aforementioned relationships. Model 1 shows that gender is not a significant predictor of sexual frequency among midlife to older married Americans. This contradicts some previous research concerning gender, religiosity, and sexual frequency. Religious influence is associated with higher self-

reported satisfaction with frequency of sexual intercourse, but only for older male respondents (Iveniuk et al. 2016). And, although, religion is a significant predictor of sexual frequency in Model 1, gender is not. Iveniuk and colleagues (2016) noted some major differences among religious dominations, though, and my analysis did not explore differences among religious dominations. Perhaps, gender differences would present themselves in my analysis if I more thoroughly explored the effects of different religious faiths and their influences on older married individuals' sexual frequency. Also, research suggests that, within religious couples, women may be less able to refuse or avoid sex because religious norms characteristically dictate that women should be compliant with and subservient to their husbands (Levitt and Ware 2006; Iveniuk et al. 2016). Thus, it could be that women actually want to be having more (or less) sex but feel pressured to adhere to their husbands' desires. This could potentially affect the influence of gender on sexual frequency. However, it does seem important to note that both religiosity and age are consistent significant predictors of sexual frequency throughout every model in Table 3.1. Perhaps age is a stronger predictor of sexual frequency than being male or female. For instance, in a multivariate analysis conducted by Call and colleagues (1995), results indicated age was the factor most highly associated with marital sexual frequency. Thus, it seems that for this sample, age is a strong predictor of sexual frequency, while gender is not.

Interesting findings present themselves regarding weekly housework hours and sexual frequency. Model 2 from Table 3.1 shows an OLS regression predicting men and women's sexual frequency from gender, weekly housework hours, and controls. Results showed that when housework increased, sexual frequency also increased slightly by 0.015. This result is confounding because it does not support previous research that exists on division of household labor and *marital quality*. However, Gager and Yabiku (2010) found support for the multiple

sphere hypothesis in that both husbands and wives who spend more hours in housework *and* in paid work report higher sexual frequency. Initially, I assumed that it could be that these older Americans are simply enjoying being successful in multiple domains of their lives. However, I controlled for employment, and it was not a significant predictor of sexual frequency. Thus, the multiple sphere hypothesis (Gager and Yabiku 2010) does not hold up.

However, it is important to note, that the increase in sexual frequency was so slight, that the introduction of new explanatory variables (the interaction between gender and weekly housework hours presented in Model 3 of Table 3.1) erased the relationship between weekly housework hours and sexual frequency. Yet, the interaction was also *not* significant. This means that weekly housework hours were not a significant predictor when both gender and its interaction with weekly housework hours were introduced to the model. Thus, the main effect of weekly housework hours was not significant in Model 3, and, thus, not a strong predictor of older married Americans' sexual frequency.

Although the goal of the analyses in Table 3.1 was to test to see if there was a significant association between housework hours and sexual frequency, other variables showed to be significant predictors of sexual frequency. Age and religion were significant predictors of older married Americans' sexual frequency. These findings are on par with previous research. For example, Hernandez-Kane and Mahoney (2018) found that after controlling for marital satisfaction, being holier and more religious predicted greater levels of sexual frequency. Similarly, research has found that age is a factor that is most highly associated with marital sexual frequency (Call et al. 1995), and that age-related decreases in sexual behavior persist among older individuals (Gray, et al. 2018; Thomas et al. 2015).

The estimates reported in Table 3.1 do not support my first hypothesis. I hypothesized that as time spent on housework increased, sexual frequency among older Americans' would decrease. Although Model 2 of Table 3.1 showed associations between housework and sexual frequency, this relationship disappeared when I introduced an interaction between weekly housework hours and gender (Model 3 of Table 3.1). I will attempt to explain and unpack these interesting findings.

Bivariate analyses illustrated similar findings. For instance, when a bivariate regression was run between weekly housework hours and sexual frequency, weekly housework hours alone were not a significant predictor of older married Americans' sexual frequency. Thus, housework does not seem to affect older Americans' sexual frequency. Similarly, gender was not a predictor of sexual frequency (my analysis in Table 3.1 illustrated this finding, too). Only one item of religiosity (not that religious, as compared to being very religious) was significant in the bivariate regression with sexual frequency. Age, unsurprisingly, was a strong significant predictor of sexual frequency. These bivariate analyses showed that there is just not a strong relationship between one of my primary independent variables, weekly housework hours, and older individuals' sexual frequency. Thus, it is not as if age is such a strong predictor that it lessens the relationships between other variables and sexual frequency. Simply, there is not a strong relationship between housework and sexual frequency for older married Americans.

The fact that there is no bivariate relationship between weekly housework hours and sexual frequency makes the findings presented in Model 2 of Table 3.1 even more interesting. In Model 2 of Table 3.1, weekly housework hours *were* a significant predictor of older individuals' sexual frequency. Weekly housework hours were a significant predictor of sexual frequency when all of my control variables were included in the model. Thus, the relationship between

weekly housework hours and sexual frequency was dependent on one or more of the control variables in my model. Yet, the main effect of weekly housework hours was not significant in Model 3 of Table 3.1, and, thus, not a strong predictor of older married Americans' sexual frequency when the interaction between gender and weekly housework hours was accounted for. I tested for multicollinearity, and the correlation value between the weekly housework hours variable and female variable was 0.3549, which suggests some correlation. This may explain the drop in significance of weekly housework hours in Model 3 of Table 3.1. The implications of these interesting findings are explored more in the discussion and conclusion chapter of this dissertation.

Female's Proportion of Weekly Housework and Sexual Frequency

Table 3.2 also presents estimates from OLS regression models that predicted the sexual frequency of midlife and older married Americans, however, the primary independent variable in this table was female's proportion of housework. Model 1 of Table 3.2 shows the associations among gender, female's proportion of weekly housework, all of the control variables used in this analysis, and sexual frequency. Model 2 is similar to Model 1, but it introduces the interaction between gender and female's proportion of housework.

I ran analyses using female's proportion of housework as a predictor variable because I was interested to see if, in particular, female's contribution to housework had an effect on sexual frequency or sexual satisfaction of older married Americans. Findings did not show this to be the case. However, no previous literature has illustrated that *midlife to older* female's contribution to housework affects either wives' or husbands' sexual frequency or sexual satisfaction. In fact, the only significant predictor of older individuals' sexual frequency in Models 1 and 2 from Table 3.2 were, again, age and religiosity.

Table 3.2 OLS Regressions Predicting Men and Women's Monthly Sexual Frequency from Gender, Female's Proportion of Weekly Housework Hours, and Gendered Interactions

	<i>Model 1</i>		<i>Model 2</i>	
	Coeff	S.E.	Coeff	S.E.
<u>Female</u>	-0.250	0.247	-0.651	0.857
<u>Female's Proportion of Weekly Housework</u>	-0.585	0.681	-0.932	0.985
<u>Interaction between Female's Proportion of Weekly Housework Hours and Gender</u>				
Female's Proportion of Weekly Housework Hours and being Female			0.662	1.358
<u>Age</u>	-0.121*	0.022	-0.124*	0.021
<u>Religiosity</u>				
Somewhat religious	-0.178	0.275	-0.181	0.275
Not that religious	-1.116*	0.410	-1.116*	0.410
Not religious at all	-1.035*	0.509	-1.032*	0.509
<u>Education</u>				
High School Degree	0.044	0.421	0.043	0.421
Some College or Associate's	-0.255	0.437	-0.254	0.437
Bachelor's Degree +	-0.289	0.436	-0.285	0.436
<u>Self-Reported Health</u>				
Poor	-1.537	1.386	-1.530	1.387
Fair	-0.806	1.330	-0.802	1.330
Good	0.044	1.329	0.041	1.329
Excellent	0.800	1.338	0.799	1.338
<u>Satisfied with Health</u>	0.286	0.522	0.281	0.522
<u>Employed</u>	0.272	0.410	0.269	0.411
Constant	11.171	1.937	11.406	1.997
R-squared	0.1116		0.1117	
Number of Observations	1,394		1,394	

* indicates a significant relationship at $p < .05$

Note: Since there are so many cases missing on the education variable, it limits the sample size of the final model. Each model also includes a control variable for the number of children living in the household.

Reference categories for each variable are as follows. Female: male; religiosity: very religious; education: less than a high school degree; self-reported health: very poor; satisfaction with health: not satisfied; employed: not employed.

Perceptions of Fairness and Sexual Frequency

Another primary relationship that this dissertation explored was the one between perceptions of fairness surrounding housework and sexual frequency. Table 3.3 presents estimates from OLS regression models that predicted the sexual frequency of midlife and older

married individuals, however, the primary independent variable in this table was perceptions of fairness surrounding housework. Model 1 of Table 3.3 shows the associations among gender, perceptions of fairness surrounding housework, all of the control variables used in this analysis, and sexual frequency. Model 2 is similar to Model 1, but it introduces the interaction between gender and perceptions of fairness.

Before analyzing the results from Table 3.3, it is useful to review some of the expected findings based on previous research pertaining to perceptions of fairness and sexual frequency. Some research illustrates a negative relationship between fairness and frequency. That is, when there is less perceived equity regarding the time spent on housework, both men and women report lower sexual frequency (Barrett and Raphael 2018). This finding was particularly relevant for younger samples, and not much is known about older married Americans. Also, regarding sexual frequency, researchers find that sexual frequency is higher among couples with traditional gendered divisions of household labor and when women do the majority of the household work (Kornrich et al. 2012).

Table 3.3 presents some interesting results. In Model 1 of Table 3.3, perceived fairness of household labor was, in fact, a significant predictor of older married Americans' sexual frequency. Specifically, compared to those who perceived housework as unfair to themselves, for those who perceived housework as fair for both partners, their sexual frequency increased by 0.973 times per month. This finding supports previous literature. For example, Barrett and Raphael (2018) found that when housework was perceived as unfair, couples had lower sexual frequency. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that those who perceive housework as fair for both partners would have higher sexual frequency. In addition, it seems that perceptions of fairness surrounding housework matter more than actual hours spent on housework.

Table 3.3 OLS Regressions Predicting Men and Women's Monthly Sexual Frequency from Gender, Perceived Fairness, and Gendered Interactions

	<i>Model 1</i>		<i>Model 2</i>	
	Coeff	S.E.	Coeff	S.E.
<u>Female</u>	-0.112	0.266	0.550	0.895
<u>Perceived Fairness</u>				
Fair for both	0.973*	0.359	1.603	0.858
Unfair for spouse	0.596	0.467	1.109	0.893
<u>Interaction between Perceived Fairness and Gender</u>				
Fair for both and being Female			-0.779	0.941
Unfair for Spouse and being Female			-0.338	1.186
<u>Age</u>	-0.128*	0.022	-0.128*	0.022
<u>Religiosity</u>				
Somewhat religious	-0.130	0.276	-0.128	0.277
Not that religious	-1.091*	0.409	-1.086*	0.409
Not religious at all	-0.922	0.507	-0.918	0.507
<u>Education</u>				
High School Degree	0.053	0.421	0.055	0.421
Some College or Associate's	-0.225	0.437	-0.241	0.438
Bachelor's Degree +	-0.211	0.436	-0.231	0.437
<u>Self-Reported Health</u>				
Poor	-1.313	1.385	-1.262	1.387
Fair	-0.610	1.330	-0.547	1.332
Good	0.201	1.328	0.261	1.331
Excellent	0.931	1.336	0.986	1.339
<u>Satisfied with Health</u>	0.241	0.525	0.239	0.526
<u>Employed</u>	0.315	0.411	0.294	0.412
Constant	10.115	1.921	9.550	2.039
R-squared	0.1170		0.1176	
Number of Observations	1,390		1,390	

* indicates a significant relationship at $p < .05$

Note: Since there are so many cases missing on the education variable, it limits the sample size of the final model. Each model also includes a control variable for the number of children living in the household.

Reference categories for each variable are as follows. Perceived fairness: unfair to me; female: male; religiosity: very religious; education: less than a high school degree; self-reported health: very poor; satisfaction with health: not satisfied; employed: not employed.

In Model 2 of Table 3.3, perceived fairness of household labor loses significance. I tested for multicollinearity, and the correlation value between the perceived fairness variable and female variable was 0.3756, which suggests some correlation. This may explain the drop in significance of perceived fairness in Model 3 of Table 3.1. However, it is important to note that the “fair for both” item of the variable was very close to retaining its significance, with a p-value of 0.058.

Again, I found that gender was not a significant predictor of older individuals’ sexual frequency. Though, this finding was consistent with previous literature. For instance, Barrett and Raphael (2018) found that perceptions of fairness surrounding housework influences sexual frequency for *both* individuals within a couple. That is, both men and women report lower sexual frequency when housework is perceived as unequal or unfair between partners. Thus, my results align with previous research.

Lastly, two of my control variables were also significant predictors of older married individuals’ sexual frequency. In both Models 1 and 2 of Table 3.3, age and religiosity were significant predictors of respondents’ sexual frequency. For every year increase in age, sexual frequency decreased by 0.128 (this was the amount of decrease in both Models 1 and 2). In terms of religiosity, as compared to those who identify as very religious, those who were not that religious had decreases in sexual frequency (1.091 decrease in Model 1; 1.086 decrease in Model 2). Although these variables were not included in my hypotheses, these findings are consistent with previous research. As age increases, sexual frequency decreases (Call et al. 1995; Gray et al. 2018; Thomas et al. 2015), and individuals who identify as more religious often have greater sexual frequency (Hernandez-Kane and Mahoney 2018).

Weekly Housework Hours and Sexual Satisfaction

Before discussing the results related to the relationship between weekly housework hours and sexual satisfaction, as presented in Table 3.4, it will be helpful to reiterate some of the expected findings based on past literature. First, satisfaction with the division of household labor is particularly important to wives and mothers (Dew and Wilcox 2011). Similarly, when both partners are satisfied with the division of labor in the home, sexual satisfaction is higher (Mass et al. 2018). Thus, I propose that as housework hours increase, sexual satisfaction will decline.

Table 3.4 explores one of the primary research questions of this dissertation (Research question #3): are weekly housework hours associated with older women's and men's sexual satisfaction? Table 3.4 contains logistic regression models that predicted the sexual satisfaction of midlife and older married Americans. Model 1 of Table 3.4 shows the association between gender, all of the control variables used in this analysis, and sexual satisfaction. Model 2 is similar to Model 1, but it also introduces one of my primary independent variables, weekly housework hours. Lastly, Model 3 introduces the interaction between gender and weekly housework hours.

Model 1 of Table 3.4 illustrates no gender differences in individuals' sexual satisfaction. This was a confounding finding, as some research shows gender differences in sexual satisfaction among older women, specifically. For instance, research shows that despite declines in physical health and sexual activity/frequency, sexual satisfaction appears to be stable for older women (Thompson et al. 2011). For older women, ages 60-89, regardless of declines in sexual functioning/frequency, sexual satisfaction often remains stable. These findings are not similar for men. Yet, my results do not speak to any gender differences. Bivariate analyses also illustrated that no relationship exists between gender and sexual satisfaction for this small sample

of older married Americans. It is difficult to say for sure why no gender differences exist in predicting sexual satisfaction for my sample of older Americans, although it is important to consider that my sample is relatively small. Or perhaps age just matters more. In fact, as bivariate analyses between age and sexual satisfaction illustrated, age is a strong and significant predictor of older Americans' sexual satisfaction, as was the same with sexual frequency.

Table 3.4 Logistic Regressions Predicting Men and Women's Sexual Satisfaction from Gender, Weekly Housework Hours, and Gendered Interactions

	<i>Model 1</i>			<i>Model 2</i>			<i>Model 3</i>		
	Coeff	S.E.	Odds Ratio	Coeff	S.E.	Odds Ratio	Coeff	S.E.	Odds Ratio
<u>Female</u>	-0.107	0.153	0.899	-0.050	0.163	0.951	-0.510	0.291	0.600
<u>Weekly Housework Hours</u>				-0.004	0.005	0.996	-0.015*	0.007	0.985
<u>Interaction between Weekly Housework Hours and Gender</u>									
Weekly Housework Hours and being Female							0.017	0.009	1.018
<u>Age</u>	-0.044*	0.013	0.957	-0.043*	0.013	0.958	-0.045*	0.013	0.956
<u>Religiosity</u>									
Somewhat religious	-0.311	0.179	0.733	-0.304	0.179	0.739	-0.288	0.179	0.750
Not that religious	-0.501*	0.249	0.606	-0.506*	0.250	0.603	-0.512*	0.250	0.599
Not religious at all	-1.304*	0.273	0.271	-1.326*	0.275	0.266	-1.309*	0.275	0.270
<u>Education</u>									
High School Degree	0.044	0.253	1.045	0.039	0.253	1.040	0.049	0.253	1.050
Some College or Associate's	-0.203	0.261	0.817	-0.202	0.261	0.817	-0.184	0.261	0.832
Bachelor's Degree +	0.220	0.271	1.246	0.208	0.271	1.232	0.228	0.272	1.255
<u>Self-Reported Health</u>									
Poor	-1.047	0.689	0.351	-1.055	0.689	0.348	-1.107	0.692	0.331
Fair	-0.482	0.666	0.617	-0.477	0.666	0.621	-0.508	0.669	0.602
Good	-0.195	0.689	0.823	-0.205	0.669	0.815	-0.229	0.671	0.796
Excellent	0.031	0.679	1.031	0.021	0.679	1.021	-0.004	0.681	0.996
<u>Satisfied with Health</u>	1.321*	0.250	3.749	1.319*	0.250	3.740	1.336*	0.250	3.802
<u>Employed</u>	0.204	0.215	1.226	0.184	0.217	1.202	0.172	0.218	1.188
Constant	3.153	1.050	23.417	3.233	1.053	25.357	3.552	1.068	34.871
Number of Observations		1,518			1,517			1,517	

* indicates a significant relationship at $p < .05$

Note: Since there are so many cases missing on the education variable, it limits the sample size of the final model. Each model also includes a control variable for the number of children living in the household.

Reference categories for each variable are as follows. Female: male; religiosity: very religious; education: less than a high school degree; self-reported health: very poor; satisfaction with health: not satisfied; employed: not employed.

Model 2 of Table 3.4 does not illustrate any significant findings related to housework hours and sexual satisfaction. Weekly housework hours are not a predictor of the sexual satisfaction of older married Americans. No research shows otherwise for older Americans, in particular. However, given some past research on sexual satisfaction, I hypothesized that as weekly housework hours increased, sexual satisfaction would decrease. For instance, when both partners within a couple are satisfied with the division of labor in the home, sexual satisfaction has been found to be higher (Mass et al. 2018). However, these findings are true for a sample of first-time parents. No literature exists on midlife to older married individuals. Thus, I hypothesized that perhaps the inverse would be true (large increases in housework would lower sexual satisfaction), particularly for older married Americans.

Although weekly housework hours were not a significant predictor of sexual satisfaction in Model 2 of Table 3.4, interestingly enough, they were a predictor of sexual satisfaction in Model 3 (when the interaction between gender and weekly housework hours was added to the model). As weekly housework hours increased, men and women's odds of sexual satisfaction decreased by 1.02 (the inverse of the odds ratio, 0.985). This suggests that when individuals engage in more weekly housework hours, it negatively affects their sexual satisfaction. Research is mostly lacking on how housework and hours spent on housework affect sexual satisfaction. However, the limited research that does exist, suggests that when both partners are satisfied with the division of labor in the home, sexual satisfaction is higher for both partners (Mass et al. 2018). Thus, it could be argued that when housework hours increase, partners perceive their housework contribution as unfair and therefore tend to be dissatisfied. Increases in weekly housework hours could decrease satisfaction surrounding housework, and this dissatisfaction may then present itself in the bedroom, as well.

Although some research supports the finding from Model 3 of Table 3.4, what is most confounding is that weekly housework hours are not a predictor of older married Americans' sexual satisfaction in Model 2, yet they are in Model 3. However, it is important to point out that the interaction between weekly housework hours and gender was very close to being statistically significant, with a p-value of 0.054. Thus, the introduction of the interaction between weekly housework hours and gender had some influence over the variables in Model 3 of Table 3.4. Previous research finds that the introduction of an interaction effect can influence variables that are non-significant in an initial analysis to become significant in a multivariate analysis (Lo et al. 1995). Another explanation for why weekly housework hours are a significant predictor of sexual satisfaction in Model 3 of Table 3.4 but not in Model 2 could be statistical suppression. That is, when the interaction between weekly housework hours and gender is introduced to the model, in Model 3 of Table 3.4, it suppresses the true relationship between weekly housework hours and sexual satisfaction. Namely, the true relationship between weekly housework hours and sexual satisfaction only emerges once the interaction between the variables is statistically controlled for. These are a few possible explanations for why weekly housework hours become significant in Model 3 of Table 3.4, but it is difficult to say for sure.

Lastly, findings from Table 3.4 suggest that age, religiosity, and being satisfied with one's health are all predictors of older Americans' sexual satisfaction. Although not unique or necessarily new, these findings are consistent with previous research. For instance, Hernandez, Mahoney, and Pargament (2011) have found that greater religiosity predicts greater sexual satisfaction. Thus, my findings add to this literature. Similarly, research finds that age-related decreases in sexual behavior persist among older individuals (Thomas et al. 2015; Gray et al.

2018). Relatedly, as previously stated, these predictors were also significant in determining sexual frequency.

Female's Proportion of Weekly Housework and Sexual Satisfaction

The next relationship that this dissertation explored was the one between female's proportion of weekly housework and sexual satisfaction. Table 3.5 presents estimates from logistic regression models that predicted the sexual satisfaction of midlife and older married Americans, however, the primary independent variable in this table was female's proportion of housework. Model 1 of Table 3.5 shows the associations among gender, female's proportion of housework, all of the control variables used in this analysis, and sexual frequency. Model 2 is similar to Model 1, but it introduces the interaction between gender and female's proportion of housework.

The primary finding from Table 3.5 illustrates a relationship between female's proportion of weekly housework hours and sexual satisfaction. In Model 1, before an interaction effect between female's proportion of weekly housework hours and gender was introduced, female's proportion of weekly housework hours was a significant predictor of sexual satisfaction. When female's proportion of weekly housework hours increased, the odds of sexual satisfaction increased by 2.574. However, when an interaction between female's proportion of weekly housework hours and gender was introduced, female's proportion of weekly housework is no longer significant. This suggests that female's proportion of weekly housework hours do not influence sexual satisfaction and there are no gender differences in how female's proportion of weekly housework hours affects sexual satisfaction. I tested for multicollinearity, but there was no strong correlation between the female's proportion of housework variable and the female variable. However, female's proportion of housework was created from the weekly housework

hours variable, which *was* slightly correlated with the female variable. This might possibly explain the drop in significance from Model 1 to Model 2 in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5 Logistic Regressions Predicting Men and Women's Sexual Satisfaction from Gender, Female's Proportion of Weekly Housework Hours, and Gendered Interactions

	<i>Model 1</i>			<i>Model 2</i>		
	Coeff	S.E.	Odds Ratio	Coeff	S.E.	Odds Ratio
<u>Female</u>	-0.104	0.153	0.902	-0.421	0.502	0.656
<u>Female's Proportion of Weekly Housework</u>	0.946*	0.405	2.574	0.663	0.588	1.941
<u>Interaction between Female's Proportion of Weekly Housework Hours and Gender</u>						
Female's Proportion of Weekly Housework Hours and being Female				0.536	0.808	1.710
<u>Age</u>	-0.046*	0.013	0.955	-0.046*	0.013	0.955
<u>Religiosity</u>						
Somewhat religious	-0.302	0.149	0.739	-0.305	0.179	0.737
Not that religious	-0.503*	0.250	0.605	-0.501*	0.251	0.606
Not religious at all	-1.280*	0.274	0.278	-1.275*	0.275	0.279
<u>Education</u>						
High School Degree	0.049	0.254	1.050	0.046	0.254	1.045
Some College or Associate's	-0.178	0.262	0.837	-0.181	0.262	0.835
Bachelor's Degree +	0.248	0.273	1.282	0.243	0.273	1.275
<u>Self-Reported Health</u>						
Poor	-1.056	0.692	0.348	-1.049	0.693	0.350
Fair	-0.454	0.669	0.635	-0.454	0.670	0.635
Good	-0.168	0.671	0.845	-0.170	0.672	0.843
Excellent	0.050	0.681	1.051	0.048	0.682	1.049
<u>Satisfied with Health</u>	1.329*	0.250	3.779	1.324*	0.251	3.759
<u>Employed</u>	0.207	0.216	1.230	0.204	0.216	1.270
Constant	2.652	1.071	14.186	2.845	1.112	17.207
Number of Observations		1,515			1,515	

* indicates a significant relationship at $p < .05$

Note: Since there are so many cases missing on the education variable, it limits the sample size of the final model. Each model also includes a control variable for the number of children living in the household.

Reference categories for each variable are as follows. Female: male; religiosity: very religious; education: less than a high school degree; self-reported health: very poor; satisfaction with health: not satisfied; employed: not employed.

Table 3.5 illustrates results similar to those found in most of my regression tables thus far. Age, religiosity, and health satisfaction were significant predictors of sexual satisfaction among older Americans. First, for every one-year increase in age, the odds of being sexually satisfied decreased by 1.05 (the inverse of 0.055). Thus, as age increased, sexual satisfaction decreased. This finding is consistent for both models (Model 1, without a gender interaction, and for Model 2 when an interaction between female's proportion of weekly housework hours and gender was introduced). Similarly, compared to those who are very religious, both those who are not that religious and those who are not religious at all have decreased odds of sexual satisfaction. Heightened religiosity increases sexual satisfaction. Lastly, compared to those who are not satisfied with their health, those who do identify as being satisfied with their health had greater odds of sexual satisfaction (3.779 higher odds in Model 1 with no gender interaction and 3.759 higher odds in Model 2 when an interaction between female's proportion of weekly housework hours and gender was introduced). Again, these findings continue to be consistent with previous research.

Perceptions of Fairness and Sexual Satisfaction

The final primary relationship that this dissertation explored was the one between perceptions of fairness surrounding housework and sexual satisfaction. Table 3.6 presents estimates from logistic regression models that predicted the sexual satisfaction of midlife and older married individuals, however, the primary independent variable in this table was perceptions of fairness surrounding housework. Model 1 of Table 3.6 shows the associations among gender, perceptions of fairness surrounding housework, all of the control variables used in this analysis, and sexual frequency. Model 2 is similar to Model 1, but it introduces the interaction between gender and perceptions of fairness.

Table 3.6 Logistic Regressions Predicting Men and Women's Sexual Satisfaction from Gender, Perceived Fairness, and Gendered Interactions

	<i>Model 1</i>			<i>Model 2</i>		
	Coeff	S.E.	Odds Ratio	Coeff	S.E.	Odds Ratio
<u>Female</u>	0.094	0.170	1.098	0.257	0.446	1.289
<u>Perceived Fairness</u>						
Fair for both	1.111*	0.205	3.036	1.194*	0.433	3.301
Unfair for spouse	0.809*	0.272	2.245	1.087*	0.458	2.966
<u>Interaction between Perceived Fairness and Gender</u>						
Fair for both and being Female				-0.056	0.486	0.945
Unfair for Spouse and being Female				-0.936	-0.936	0.392
<u>Age</u>	-0.054*	0.013	0.948	-0.054*	0.013	0.948
<u>Religiosity</u>						
Somewhat religious	-0.258	0.182	0.773	-0.261	0.183	0.771
Not that religious	-0.495*	0.252	0.610	-0.497*	0.254	0.608
Not religious at all	-1.314*	0.278	0.269	-1.327*	0.278	0.265
<u>Education</u>						
High School Degree	0.042	0.256	1.043	0.047	0.257	1.048
Some College or Associate's	-0.216	0.265	0.806	-0.214	0.265	0.807
Bachelor's Degree +	0.231	0.274	1.260	0.255	0.276	1.290
<u>Self-Reported Health</u>						
Poor	-0.940	0.705	0.391	-1.091	0.716	0.336
Fair	-0.336	0.682	0.715	-0.498	0.695	0.608
Good	-0.055	0.684	0.946	-0.231	0.607	0.793
Excellent	0.133	0.694	1.141	-0.045	0.706	0.957
<u>Satisfied with Health</u>	1.301*	0.254	3.674	1.289*	0.256	3.630
<u>Employed</u>	0.169	0.221	1.184	0.174	0.223	1.190
Constant	2.642	1.079	14.039	2.672	1.125	14.473
Number of Observations		1,511			1,511	

* indicates a significant relationship at $p < .05$

Note: Since there are so many cases missing on the education variable, it limits the sample size of the final model. Each model also includes a control variable for the number of children living in the household.

Reference categories for each variable are as follows. Perceived fairness: unfair to me; female: male; religiosity: very religious; education: less than a high school degree; self-reported health: very poor; satisfaction with health: not satisfied; employed: not employed.

The most interesting and relevant finding that presented itself in this dissertation was the relationship between perceptions of fairness surrounding housework and sexual satisfaction. Findings from Table 3.6 illustrate that compared to those who perceived the housework as unfair for themselves, when housework was perceived as fair for both and unfair for one's spouse, respondents had greater odds of sexual satisfaction. In Model 1 of Table 3.6, compared to those who perceived the housework as unfair for themselves, those who perceived the housework as fair for both had 3.036 higher odds of sexual satisfaction. Similarly, compared to those who perceived housework as unfair for themselves, those who perceived housework as being unfair for their spouse also had greater odds of sexual satisfaction (2.245 greater odds). In Model 2 of Table 3.6 when an interaction between perceived fairness and gender was introduced to the analysis, perceived fairness (and not the interaction between gender and perceived fairness) was a significant predictor of sexual satisfaction. Compared to those who perceived housework as unfair for themselves, those who perceived housework as fair for both had 3.301 greater odds of sexual satisfaction. Additionally, compared to those who perceived housework as unfair for themselves, those who perceived housework as being unfair for their spouse also had greater odds of sexual satisfaction (2.966 greater odds). These findings suggest that when housework is perceived as either fair for both or unfair for one's spouse, older married individuals have greater sexual satisfaction. The implications of these findings are explored more in final chapter of this dissertation.

As consistent with my previous regression tables, age, religiosity, and health satisfaction were all significant predictors of sexual satisfaction, as illustrated in Table 3.6. These findings have been established in the preexisting research literature.

Review of Research Findings and Hypotheses

In summary, I found that relationships among weekly housework hours, perceptions of fairness, sexual frequency, and sexual satisfaction were somewhat different than predicted. Hypotheses 1 and 2 were not supported. Weekly housework hours and perceived fairness surrounding household labor do not affect older women's and men's sexual frequency. However, Hypotheses 3 and 4 were supported. Both weekly housework hours and perceived fairness surrounding household labor affect older married women's and men's sexual satisfaction. Findings are discussed below.

Housework, fairness, and sexual frequency. In this section, I briefly summarize the answers to Research Questions 1 and 2. These questions focused on the effects of both weekly housework hours and perceptions of fairness surrounding housework hours on sexual frequency. I hypothesized that as hours of housework increased, men's and women's sexual frequency would decrease (Hypothesis 1). Findings from my analyses suggest, overall, weekly housework hours did not impact married individuals' sexual frequency. In Table 3.1, Model 2, results show that weekly housework hours were a significant predictor of sexual frequency, but when an interaction between gender and weekly housework hours was introduced in Model 3, the relationship disappeared. Thus, the answer to Research Question 1 is: no, weekly housework hours are not consistently associated with older Americans' sexual frequency. Similarly, my first hypothesis was disproven.

For perceived fairness, I hypothesized that when weekly housework hours were perceived as fairer, sexual frequency would increase (Hypothesis 2). Findings from my research suggest that perceived fairness surrounding household labor does not impact married individuals' sexual frequency. Similarly, Model 1 of Table 3.3 shows that perceived fairness was a

significant predictor of sexual frequency, but when an interaction between gender and perceived fairness was added to the regression in Model 2, the relationship disappeared. Thus, older individuals' sexual frequency does not seem to be consistently impacted by weekly housework hours or perceived fairness of housework. Therefore, the answer to Research Question 2 is, again, no. No, perceived fairness is not consistently associated with older Americans' sexual frequency. Thus, my second hypothesis was disproved.

Housework, fairness, and sexual satisfaction. In this section, I briefly summarize the answers to Research Questions 3 and 4. These questions focused on the effects of both weekly housework hours and perceptions of fairness surrounding housework hours on sexual satisfaction. I hypothesized that as hours of housework increased, men's and women's sexual satisfaction would decrease (Hypothesis 3). Findings from my analyses suggest that, although no gender differences exist, weekly housework hours were a significant predictor of men and women's sexual satisfaction. Results showed that as weekly housework hours increased, men's and women's odds of sexual satisfaction decreased. This suggests, that when individuals have to engage in more weekly housework hours, it negatively affects their sexual satisfaction. The answer to Research Question 3 is: yes, weekly housework hours are associated with older women's and men's sexual satisfaction. Thus, my third hypothesis is supported.

For perceived fairness, I hypothesized that when weekly housework hours were perceived as fairer, sexual satisfaction would increase (Hypothesis 4). Findings from my research suggested that perceived fairness was, in fact, a significant predictor of men's and women's sexual satisfaction, though no significant gender differences existed. Findings illustrate that compared to those who perceived the housework as unfair for themselves, when housework was perceived as fair for both and unfair for one's spouse, respondents had greater odds of sexual

satisfaction. As perceived fairness increased, and was perceived as “fair for both,” older married Americans’ sexual satisfaction increased. In addition, when housework was perceived as “unfair for one’s spouse,” and presumably fairer for oneself, sexual satisfaction was also greater. The answer to Research Question 4 is: yes, perceptions of fairness surrounding housework are associated with older women’s and men’s sexual satisfaction. Additionally, my fourth and final hypothesis is supported.

After reviewing these research findings, key questions remain unanswered. First, what is the difference between sexual frequency and sexual satisfaction for older Americans? Particularly, why do weekly housework hours and perceived fairness affect older Americans’ sexual satisfaction, but not their sexual frequency? Also, why do weekly housework hours seem to matter *less* than perceived fairness? The implications of these research findings and unanswered questions are discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Discussion

In general, the findings from this research support a growing body of literature related to older Americans' sexual behaviors and relationships (Call et al. 1995; Gralla et al. 2008; Dogan et al. 2013; Karraker and DeLamater 2013; Thomas et al. 2015; Gray et al. 2018). My analysis extends the discourse on sexual relationships of older Americans by considering the effects of time spent on housework and perceptions of fairness surrounding housework. Two primary (relatively unique) findings emerged (as illustrated in Table 4.1). My findings suggest that a number of variables affect married men's and women's *sexual satisfaction*, in particular. My first primary finding is that weekly housework hours are related to men's and women's sexual satisfaction. Specifically, as weekly housework hours increased, men and women's odds of sexual satisfaction decreased. My second primary finding is that perceived fairness of household labor plays a unique role in determining older Americans' sexual satisfaction, in particular. That is, compared to when housework is perceived as fair for the respondent, when housework is perceived as fair for both partners and/or unfair for one's spouse, sexual satisfaction increased. Although, the odds for increased sexual satisfaction are a bit lower (though only slightly) when housework is perceived as unfair for one's spouse. Implications of all of these findings are discussed throughout this chapter.

Table 4.1 Summary of Primary Research Findings		
Independent Variables	Dependent Variables	
	Sexual Frequency	Sexual Satisfaction
Weekly Housework Hours	-Table 3.1 (Model 2) shows that weekly housework hours were a significant predictor of sexual frequency, but not in an expected direction. When housework hours increased, so, too, does older individuals' sexual frequency. When the interaction effect was added in Model 3 of Table 3.1, the relationship between housework hours and sexual frequency disappeared. Thus, weekly housework hours do not seem to be a strong predictor of older Americans' sexual frequency.	-Table 3.4 (Model 3) shows that weekly housework hours were a significant predictor of older married Americans' sexual satisfaction. There was a negative relationship between these variables. That is, when weekly housework increased, sexual satisfaction decreased. Thus, there is a strong, negative relationship between weekly housework hours and sexual satisfaction.
Perceived Fairness Surrounding Household Labor	-Table 3.3 (Model 1) shows that as compared to when housework is perceived as fair for oneself, when housework is perceived as fair for both, sexual frequency increased for older Americans. When the interaction effect was added in Model 2 of Table 3.3, the relationship between perceived fairness and sexual frequency disappeared. Thus, perceived fairness does not seem to be a strong predictor of older American's sexual frequency.	-Table 3.6 (Model 2) shows that perceptions of fairness surrounding household labor were a significant predictor of older Americans' sexual satisfaction. There was a positive relationship between these variables. When housework was perceived as fairer, individuals' sexual satisfaction increased. Thus, there is a strong, positive relationship between perceived fairness and sexual satisfaction.

Thus, as mentioned at the end of Chapter 3, there are two questions that arose from my research that still need to be fully addressed. The first is: what is the difference between sexual frequency and sexual satisfaction for older Americans? Particularly, why do weekly housework hours and perceived fairness affect older Americans' sexual satisfaction, but not their sexual frequency? The second is: why do weekly housework hours seem to matter less than perceived fairness? I attempt to address and answer these questions throughout this chapter.

First, I will expand on why sexual satisfaction seems to be different than sexual frequency for married older Americans. As established in the literature, sexual frequency and sexual satisfaction are interrelated, but they are also distinct. For instance, measures of sexual satisfaction sometimes include items on sexual frequency. That is, when researchers define

sexual satisfaction, sometimes amount of sex is used as a way to indicate overall sexual satisfaction. Sexual frequency focuses on amount of sexual interactions alone, whereas sexual satisfaction focuses solely on the sexual quality of a relationship.

However, for older married Americans, sexual satisfaction seems to be much different than sexual frequency. When we consider the predictors of weekly housework hours and perceived fairness surrounding housework, these two variables only impact older married Americans' sexual *satisfaction*. Research that exists on older Americans' sexual frequency, often discusses the relationship between age and sexual frequency. For instance, sexual frequency decreases as marital duration increases (Jasso 1985). My research also found inverse relationships between age and sexual frequency, as well as between age and sexual satisfaction. This is not a new finding. Yet, no research explores how household labor and perceptions of fairness surrounding household labor affect both the sexual frequency and sexual satisfaction of older Americans. Thus, because weekly housework hours and perceptions of fairness surrounding housework affect older married Americans' sexual satisfaction and not their sexual frequency, these variables must be quite different according to this sample.

Research illustrates that inequality in housework affects happiness, health, and marital quality (Hochschild and Machung 1989/2012). And we also know that marital quality/relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction are closely intertwined (Schwartz et al. 2007; McNulty et al. 2014; Yoo et al. 2014; Gadassi et al. 2016). However, some research finds that sexual frequency is not related to marital satisfaction (Schoenfeld et al. 2017). Thus, because sexual frequency is sometimes conceptualized very differently than sexual satisfaction (as an objective number of times a person has had sex, compared to the subjective interpretation of "satisfaction"), perhaps, housework and perceived fairness just do not have much of an impact

on older individuals' monthly sexual frequency. This is something that future research needs to explore.

The second question that remains is: why do weekly housework hours seem to matter less than perceived fairness? For older married Americans, it seems that perceptions of fairness surrounding housework, as compared to actual hours spent completing household tasks, have a more consistent effect on sexual satisfaction. It is challenging to say why this might be the case. However, previous research shows that perceptions of fairness surrounding housework really matter. For instance, Hochschild and Machung (1989/2012) suggest that regardless of how many hours of housework are actually being completed, if couples perceived housework as fair for both partners, they are happier and more satisfied. Similarly, numerous prior studies conclude that when couples perceive their childcare and division of household labor to be fair, they are more satisfied with their relationships (Dew and Wilcox 2011; Hochschild and Machung 1989/2012; Tai and Baxter 2018). Thus, it is not that surprising that perceptions of fairness, as compared to an average number of hours of housework, repeatedly had a consistent impact on older Americans' sexual satisfaction. Again, this question needs to be fully explored in future research.

Contributions. This dissertation addressed the relationships among weekly housework hours, perceptions of fairness of household labor, sexual frequency, and sexual satisfaction of midlife to older married Americans. In conclusion, this study adds to and supports preexisting literature. It also addressed many gaps that exist in the literature. The research findings presented in this dissertation are related to time spent on housework and perceptions of fairness surrounding housework. They also speak to literature on age, religiosity, family, marriage, and the romantic and sexual relationships of midlife to older Americans. The findings presented also

build upon existing research on men's and women's sexual frequency and sexual satisfaction in several important ways.

This dissertation repeatedly showed the significance of age as a predictor of sexual frequency and sexual satisfaction. As age increases, sexual frequency and sexual satisfaction of older married Americans decrease. This finding, although not new to the discourse on sexual relationships among older individuals, was important, consistent, and significant.

Religion was also a key predictor variable in this dissertation. The relationship between religiosity and sexual relationships has been established somewhat in the literature, but this dissertation added to many gaps that exist. First, the finding that as religiosity increases so, too, does sexual satisfaction and sexual frequency is important. This finding was consistently shown to be true throughout my research findings. This finding speaks to the importance of religion and religiosity. Religion is a core component of family life, and it was shown to be extremely important in my research findings. The relationships with the aforementioned control variables and sexual frequency and sexual satisfaction were not new or unique, they simply corroborated past research.

The primary contributions of this dissertation are related to my two key independent variables: weekly housework hours and perceived fairness surrounding housework. I will first discuss the contributions related to the weekly housework hours variable. My findings showed that as weekly housework hours increased, men's and women's odds of sexual satisfaction decreased. There is hardly any literature that focuses on the relationship between household labor and sexual satisfaction. One article, in particular, focuses on division of labor and its effects on sexual satisfaction among first-time parents (Mass et al. 2018). Although not directly related to my current sample, the relationship between household labor and sexual satisfaction is

applicable. Findings suggest that satisfaction with the division of household labor predicts more satisfaction with overall sex life (Mass et al. 2018). Thus, it is reasonable to assume that when weekly housework hours increase, couples are less satisfied with the time they spend on housework. This increase in time spent on housework, negatively affects older women's and men's sexual satisfaction. This finding is unique and adds to the literature on older Americans' sexual relationships.

Also, important to note, we do not know much about how household labor affects older individuals' sexual relationships. First, we do know that the division of labor between men and women is not a new experience. It developed early in hunter-gatherer societies and was a crucial part of survival for couples and family units (Coontz 2005). However, as the separate spheres ideology was introduced and became the norm in American society throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, women were expected to take care of the home (the private sphere), while men were expected to take on the breadwinner role (the public sphere). Thus, although married individuals are becoming more egalitarian in their beliefs about the division of household labor (Amato et al. 2007; Kornrich et al. 2012), perhaps my sample of older Americans was still very much living the separate spheres ideology, and, thus, their sexual satisfaction was negatively impacted. My data was collected in the early 2000s, and my sample ranges from 40-70 years of age. Thus, these individuals could very much have lived and experienced the separate spheres phenomenon which was persistent throughout the 20th century.

The separate spheres ideology could explain why there were no gender differences in sexual satisfaction as well. The fact that the sample included older, possibly more traditional, individuals could have negatively impacted my increases in household labor. For instance, we know that women do the overwhelming majority of household work in dual-earner couples, even

when husbands and wives work a similar number of paid hours outside of the home (Bianchi et al. 2000; Sayer 2005; Hochschild and Machung 1989/2012; Blair-Loy et al. 2015). My descriptive results illustrated that women complete an average of thirty-three hours a week, compared to men's twenty-one hours a week. Thus, if women have to deal with the possibility of completing more housework, it makes sense that this possibility could decrease an individual's sexual satisfaction. Similarly, we know that this inequality in housework affects happiness, health, and marital quality (Hochschild and Machung 1989/2012). And we also know that marital quality/relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction are closely intertwined (Schwartz et al. 2007; McNulty et al. 2014; Yoo et al. 2014; Gadassi et al. 2016). So, it is safe to assume that increases in housework could likely affect women's sexual satisfaction. In addition, wives are consistently found to be less traditional than their husbands in their beliefs concerning the division of household labor within the marriage (Amato et al. 2007). This also would explain the lack of gender differences in my analyses. If men are more traditional in their beliefs, they are likely to be very dissatisfied when household labor increases. Similarly, if wives are less traditional, their sexual satisfaction would also be negatively impacted if they continued to perform increased levels of housework.

The last and, what I perceive to be, the most important contribution of this dissertation is the relationship found between perceptions of fairness surrounding household labor and older women's and men's sexual satisfaction. When housework was perceived as "fair for both," and "unfair for one's spouse," the men and women from my sample were more sexually satisfied. Research illustrates that a perceived "unfair" division of household labor is negatively related to both husbands' and wives' marital quality (Frisco and Williams 2003). This literature does not speak to sexual satisfaction, but my research adds to this gap in the literature. When housework

is perceived as fair for both, men and women are more sexually satisfied. This is a unique research finding that adds to the literature on housework and sexual satisfaction.

There has been some research on perceived fairness and sexual frequency, but the literature on perceived fairness and sexual satisfaction is nonexistent. However, I attempt to explore my unique research finding based on what we do know about the relationships among perceived fairness surrounding household labor, sexual frequency, and marital relationships. First, research has established that when there is less perceived equity surrounding the time spent on housework, couples report lower sexual frequency (Barrett and Raphael 2018). So, we do know that when housework is perceived as unfair, this has a negative effect on individuals' sexual frequency. However, this finding is particularly strong among younger samples, and not much is known about older married Americans' sexual satisfaction. Yet, because sexual frequency and sexual satisfaction are often related, it could be that perceptions of fairness would have similar negative effects on sexual satisfaction. Similarly, research illustrates that a perceived "unfair" division of household labor is negatively related to both husbands' and wives' marital quality (Frisco and Williams 2003). This research suggests that even if marital happiness is considered high, perceived unfairness of housework often leads to unhappiness and role strain among women, which increases likelihood of relationship troubles and even divorce. Plus, we know that marital quality/relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction are closely related to one another and often predict each other (Schwartz et al. 2007; McNulty et al. 2014; Yoo et al. 2014; Gadassi et al. 2016). In addition, other researchers have found support for the notion that higher levels of perception of fairness lead to greater overall happiness (Nakamura and Akiyoshi 2015). Thus, although we do not explicitly have previous research that illustrates a negative relationship between perceptions of fairness and sexual satisfaction, using past research

on sexual frequency, marital relationships, and overall happiness we can shed light on why this relationship may exist among my current sample of older married Americans.

Explanations and Theoretical Implications

Many studies have explored the relationship among household labor, perceptions of fairness surrounding household labor, and *marital quality* (Pina and Bengtson 1993; Frisco and Williams 2003; Goldberg and Perry-Jenkins 2004; Barstad 2014), but my study is one of the first to consider how time spent on housework and perceptions of fairness surrounding housework affect the *sexual frequency* and *sexual satisfaction* of midlife to older Americans. Older Americans' sexual relationships are affected by a number of factors including weekly housework hours, perceptions of fairness, age, religiosity, and health. I discuss these relationships and their implications in the coming paragraphs.

First, I would like to thoroughly discuss the explanations and theoretical implications surrounding one of my primary independent variables: weekly housework hours. The division of household labor, or how couple's divide the labor within the home, is a common variable in the family and marriage literature. However, this variable has not been thoroughly explored in relation to individuals' sexual satisfaction. Especially when those individuals are midlife to older married Americans.

Some literature exists concerning the relationship between weekly housework hours and sexual frequency. When traditional gendered divisions of labor exist, sexual frequency has been shown to be higher. For instance, households in which men do more female-typed tasks (laundry, cleaning house, doing dishes) report lower sexual frequency (Kornrich et al. 2012). Thus, the reverse is also true: when men engage in more manly tasks, their sexual frequency is higher.

Other researchers find that the relationship between housework hours and sexual frequency is a positive one. Gager and Yabiku (2010) find support for the multiple sphere hypothesis in that both husbands and wives who spend more hours in housework *and* in paid work report higher sexual frequency. Thus, couples who are successful at “doing it all,” are actually engaging in more sexual behaviors and activities. This data cannot speak to the relationship between housework versus paid work. However, Model 2 in Table 3.1 did show a relationship between weekly housework hours and sexual frequency that partially supports the findings of Gager and Yabiku (2010). When weekly housework hours increased, so too did sexual frequency. However, this relationship disappeared when an interaction between weekly housework hours and gender was introduced into the model (also not significant). Therefore, although preliminary results suggested a relationship between weekly housework hours and sexual frequency, the final model with the interaction effect showed no relationship between the variables. However, limited research exists on the relationship between these variables, particularly among older Americans. Yet, research has thoroughly illustrated that a marital/spousal relationship remains the most crucial relationship in an older individual’s life (Hsieh and Hawkey 2018; Liang et al. 2005). Thus, maybe something as mundane as how housework is divided does not bother or affect older Americans the way it might younger Americans. It is possible that among older Americans other variables matter more at predicting sexual frequency than weekly housework hours. For instance, a variable that is outside of one’s control, such as aging, influences the sexual frequency of older Americans in ways other variables do not. I discuss these relationships in detail in the coming paragraphs.

As stated, literature on the relationship between household labor and sexual frequency is sparse. There are even fewer articles on the relationship between division of labor and sexual

satisfaction. Mass and colleagues (2018) found that the division of household labor in the home does affect sexual satisfaction for first-time parents. Although the sample used is not applicable to my current sample, the relationship explored between household labor and sexual frequency relates to my findings and research. Findings from this article suggest that satisfaction regarding the division of household labor predicts more satisfaction with overall sex life (Mass et al. 2018). Although these findings are generalizable to first-time parents, the basic premise was reiterated in my own findings. When individuals are satisfied with how much housework is being performed, their sexual satisfaction increases. However, my findings only explain the sexual relationships of midlife to older married Americans.

Another primary goal of this dissertation was to explore and better understand gender differences in the sexual relationships of older Americans. Literature illustrates that gender differences do exist concerning division of household labor; wives are consistently found to be less traditional than their husbands in their beliefs concerning the division of household labor within the marriage (Amato et al. 2007). That is, oftentimes, wives want the hours spent on household labor to be more egalitarian. However, this research does not speak to the relationships among gender, the division of household labor, and sexual frequency and satisfaction. Additionally, my analysis did not show gender to be a significant predictor of either sexual frequency or sexual satisfaction among older married Americans. Moreover, an interaction effect between weekly housework hours and gender was also not statistically significant. This may likely be due to the fact that other variables (such as age and religiosity) were stronger predictors of both sexual frequency and sexual satisfaction among older married adults.

There are a few possible explanations for why no gender differences exist for older married Americans. As previously discussed, we know that even when both marital partners work outside the home, wives consistently contribute more to household labor (Bianchi et al. 2000; Sayer 2005; Hochschild and Machung 1989/2012; Blair-Loy et al. 2015). Previous research on housework and marital quality illustrate a negative relationship between the variables. That is, when housework increases, marital satisfaction decreases. Thus, it makes sense that the relationship between housework and sexual satisfaction would be similar, as we know that marital quality and sexual satisfaction are often intertwined. Yet, it also makes sense that increases of household labor would also negatively affect men's sexual satisfaction. This could especially be true for older, and possibly more traditional, men. In addition, when traditional gendered divisions of labor exist, sexual frequency has been shown to be high, especially for men (Kornrich et al. 2012). Thus, if hours of weekly housework increased and household labor hours are split more evenly among wives and husbands, this could likely negatively affect husbands' sexual satisfaction. That is, if men are more traditional in their beliefs, they are likely to be very dissatisfied when household labor increases. Similarly, if wives are *less* traditional, their sexual satisfaction could also be negatively impacted if they continued to perform increased levels of housework. Findings also suggest that satisfaction with the division of household labor predicted more satisfaction with overall sex life (Mass et al. 2018). Thus, the inverse makes sense. This sheds some light on why gender differences do not exist within my current sample.

Perceived fairness is another primary independent variable of this dissertation. In terms of its relationship with sexual frequency, results show that no consistent relationship exists between perceived fairness of household labor and the sexual frequency of older married

Americans. However, Model 1 in Table 3.3 shows a relationship between perceived fairness and sexual frequency that partially supports previous research findings. Perceived fairness of household labor was, in fact, a significant predictor of older married Americans' sexual frequency. Specifically, compared to those who perceived housework as unfair to themselves, for those who perceived housework as fair for both partners, their sexual frequency increased. These findings somewhat support previous research findings. For instance, Barrett and Raphael (2018) find that when housework is perceived as unfair, couples have lower sexual frequency. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that those who perceived housework as fair for both partners could have higher sexual frequency. However, when an interaction between perceived fairness and gender was introduced into the regression model, the statistically significant relationship between perceived fairness and sexual frequency disappeared. Thus, although preliminary results implied a relationship between perceived fairness and sexual frequency, the final model with the interaction effect showed no relationship between the variables. This finding could be due to statistical multicollinearity, as discussed in Chapter 3. Yet, this finding is still concerning, as previous research has established that a relationship between perceived fairness and sexual frequency exists. Could it be that, for older Americans, age and religiosity are stronger predictors of one's sexual frequency than how one perceives the fairness of the division of household labor? This complex question should be explored in future research.

The next important relationship to explore is the one between perceived fairness and older married Americans' sexual satisfaction. One of the most important findings from this dissertation concerns the relationship between perceived fairness of the division of housework and how it affects sexual satisfaction. When housework is perceived as "fair for both," and "unfair for one's spouse," midlife to older married American men and women are more sexually

satisfied. Previous research has illustrated that a perceived “unfair” division of household labor is negatively related to both husbands’ and wives’ marital quality (Frisco and Williams 2003). No literature to date has thoroughly discussed how perceived fairness could potentially affect older Americans’ sexual satisfaction.

Again, the research that does exist concerning perceived fairness often focuses on marital and relationship quality (Frisco and Williams 2003). Yet, literature suggests that marital quality and sexual satisfaction often go hand-in-hand. Both marital quality and sexual satisfaction are necessary components of a lasting, successful marriage. In fact, there is a strong relationship between sexual satisfaction and marital quality/relationship satisfaction. Specifically, there is a positive relationship between sexual satisfaction and overall relationship satisfaction (Schwartz et al. 2007; McNulty et al. 2014; Yoo et al. 2014; Gadassi et al. 2016). That is, when sexual satisfaction increases one’s marital quality/relationship satisfaction also increases. Thus, because perceived fairness of household labor and marital quality are correlated, and because sexual satisfaction and marital quality are also strongly related, it seems safe to assume that even though no literature exists on the relationship between perceived fairness of the division of household labor the statistically significant relationship between perceived fairness and sexual satisfaction makes sense. Thus, my research adds to current gaps in the literature concerning how perceived fairness of household labor affects older married Americans’ sexual satisfaction.

There are not many gender differences that exist concerning the relationship between perceived fairness surrounding household labor and sexual frequency and satisfaction. There is simply a lack of literature exploring these relationships. However, literature does exist on marital quality. Perceptions of fairness surrounding the division of household labor affect marital quality. Frisco and Williams (2003) find that unfair *perceived* inequality is associated

with decreased marital quality for both men and women. Thus, no apparent gender differences exist, which was also illustrated in my own research findings. Although my research explored perceived fairness and its effects on both sexual satisfaction and frequency, no other research has explored these relationships to date.

Again, in terms of gender differences in sexual frequency and sexual satisfaction, not much literature exists (especially on older married Americans). Sexual satisfaction is sometimes shown to be a stronger predictor of men's relationship quality than women's relationship quality (Schwartz et al. 2007). Although sex is also important to females, women are more likely to view unsatisfactory sexual relations as simply an unfavorable aspect of the relationship. In contrast, men are more likely to view unsatisfactory sexual relations as a reason to terminate a relationship or marriage (Schwartz et al. 2007). In addition, perceptions of their partners' sexual satisfaction are also an important factor in determining relationship satisfaction. Husbands have higher relationship satisfaction when their wives report higher levels of sexual satisfaction, but wives' relationship satisfaction is not related to husbands' sexual satisfaction (Yoo et al. 2014). Although literature illustrates that gender differences exist, gender was not a significant predictor of either sexual frequency or sexual satisfaction in my analyses.

Sexual satisfaction is somewhat more important to men's relationship quality than to women's (Schwartz et al. 2007). Although sex is important to women, women are more likely to view unsatisfactory sexual relations as simply a misfortunate aspect of the relationship. In contrast, men are more likely to view unsatisfactory sexual relations as a deal-breaker, or as a reason to end a relationship or marriage (Schwartz et al. 2007). In addition, perceptions of their partners' sexual satisfaction are also an important factor in determining relationship satisfaction. Husbands have higher relationship satisfaction when their wives report higher levels of sexual

satisfaction, but wives' relationship satisfaction is not related to husbands' sexual satisfaction (Yoo et al. 2014). As the aforementioned research demonstrates, gender differences in sexual satisfaction exist, but little is known about the gender differences in sexual satisfaction that persist in older Americans marital relationships.

However, the research that does exist on age and sexual satisfaction indicates that gender differences exist. That is, older men differ in their sexual lives compared to older women. For instance, as men and women age, men are much more likely to be sexually active and report a good quality sex life compared to their female counterparts (Lindau and Gavrilova 2010). In fact, men are more likely than their female counterparts to be sexually active, report a high-quality sex life, and to be interested in sexual activity (Lindau and Gavrilova 2010). This could be due to the fact that less older women are engaging in sexual activity; thus, they have lower levels of sexual frequency. Older women are less likely to be sexually active even within marital relationships (Karraker and DeLamater 2013; Gray et al. 2018). However, sexual satisfaction has shown to increase with age in women but not for men (Gray et al. 2018). Older women report relatively higher rates of sexual satisfaction than older men. So, although men may be having sex more frequently (Lindau and Gavrilova 2010; Karraker and DeLamater 2013), older women report higher levels of sexual satisfaction compared to their male counterparts (Gray et al. 2018). My findings did not corroborate this previous research. My results do not speak to any gender differences. Preliminary bivariate analyses also illustrated that no relationship exists between gender and sexual satisfaction for this small sample of older married Americans. It is difficult to say for sure why no gender differences exist in predicting sexual satisfaction or sexual frequency for my sample of older Americans, although it is important to consider that my sample is relatively small. Some research included numerous subjective measures of

relationship and marital satisfaction, and these variables were shown to be so significant that even age was not a strong predictor of sexual satisfaction (Thomas et al. 2015). Thus, perhaps if my research included more variables on romantic relationship satisfaction, gender differences in sexual satisfaction would present themselves. Or perhaps, for my small sample, age just matters more. In fact, as bivariate analyses between age and sexual satisfaction (and sexual frequency) illustrated, age was a strong and significant predictor of older Americans' sexual satisfaction, as was the same with sexual frequency. However, without further testing or analyses, it is difficult to explain with certainty why no gender differences present themselves in my research.

Weekly housework hours and perceived fairness surrounding the division of household labor are key predictors of older married Americans' sexual satisfaction. But why were neither of these two primary independent variables significant predictors of sexual frequency? Perhaps it is because age and religiosity were such strong predictors that they erased any potential of a relationship between weekly housework hours, perceptions of fairness, and sexual frequency. Or it may simply be that the housework variables just do not have an impact on the number of sexual encounters per month for older married individuals. Instead, only subjective perceptions surrounding the satisfaction of one's sexual experiences are affected by housework and perceived fairness.

The final variables to review, discuss, and explore are a number of control variables that were used in my analyses: age, health, and religiosity. Age and religiosity were both consistent significant predictors of *both* sexual frequency and sexual satisfaction, while satisfaction with one's health was a consistent significant predictor of solely sexual satisfaction.

First, I will explore the effects that age has on older married Americans' sexual frequency and sexual satisfaction. Age was a consistent predictor of both sexual frequency and sexual

satisfaction. This is not a new or unique finding. Numerous studies have established the relationships between age and sexual frequency and age and sexual satisfaction (Call et al. 1995; Thomas et al. 2015; Gray et al. 2018). Predominantly, when age increases, both sexual frequency and sexual satisfaction decrease.

The negative relationship between age and sexual frequency likely exists for a number of reasons. First, the availability of social partners is limited once individuals age (Jensen and Rauer 2015). Thus, this would directly affect one's level of sexual frequency. Similarly, sexual frequency has been shown to decrease as marital duration increases (Jasso 1985). As the research supports, age is correlated with sexual frequency. Research on sexual satisfaction is sparse; most research focuses on sexual frequency.

Satisfaction with one's health is another control variable that was correlated with older married American men's and women's sexual satisfaction. Both physical and mental health can affect a number of occurrences and interactions that midlife to elderly individuals experience. Health is shown to be correlated with sexual behaviors and experiences, particularly among older individuals. Physical health can directly limit an older individual from engaging in sexual intercourse (Karraker and DeLamater 2013). Results from my analyses suggested that compared to those who are not satisfied with their health whatsoever, those who do identify as being satisfied with their health have greater odds of sexual satisfaction. Thus, health related concerns for older individuals do affect how satisfied said older individuals are with their sexual relationships and experiences.

Interestingly enough, my study illustrated that satisfaction with one's health was not at all associated with older married men's and women's sexual frequency. Research illustrates that one's physical health can directly deter him or her from engaging in sexual intercourse (Karraker

and DeLamater 2013). Thus, this creates a decline in sexual frequency among older adults. Older women's sexual frequency is affected by being physically overweight and relatively unhealthy (Kwon and Schafer 2017). Men's weight is not associated with decreased rates of sexual frequency. However, decreasing physical health among men is shown to be a consistent predictor of sexual inactivity (Karraker and DeLamater 2013). Thus, health is usually negatively related to an older individuals' sexual frequency. This was not the case for my sample of older married Americans. This could be because age and religiosity are greater predictors of changes in sexual behaviors and frequency among older married men and women.

Lastly, religiosity was highly associated with both the sexual frequency and sexual satisfaction of older married Americans. My research consistently illustrated that religiosity was a significant predictor of both sexual frequency and sexual satisfaction. The more religious a person is, the greater his or her sexual frequency and sexual satisfaction are. Being more religious increases a person's likelihood of having more sexual intercourse and experiencing more satisfied sexual interactions. Research illustrates very similar findings. For instance, Hernandez, Mahoney, and Pargament (2011) find that greater religiosity predicts greater sexual satisfaction. It is a bit unclear on why this is the case. It could be that religious couples find the sanctity of their relationships and marriages more special/important, which heightens both their sexual experiences and increases their sexual drives.

Limitations

Although this study adds to the literature on the sexual relationships of midlife to older Americans, there are limitations that need to be discussed. There are a number of limitations related to the variables used in this analysis. First, there are potentially different ways to measure sexual satisfaction that could better answer research questions. For example, sexual

satisfaction usually measures the subjective quality of one's sexual relationship, rather than the entire quality of one's marital union. I used a single-item indicator to measure sexual satisfaction, following a large majority of existing research. However, sexual satisfaction could potentially be measured with multiple items. Measuring sexual satisfaction with multiple items might better answer certain research questions.

Next, the independent variable, female's proportion of housework, has not been explored thoroughly in previous research. How to measure this variable and why including it in the analyses is important are both unestablished and unclear. Another variable-related issue exists with the control variable, education. There are many cases missing for this variable, which limited sample sizes and analyses.

Lastly, for my primary independent variable, weekly housework hours, the alpha for the itemized household labor tasks is relatively weak. Although I followed the lead of previous researchers (South and Spitze 1994; Kornrich et al. 2012), after I summed the number of hours spent on each of the nine tasks the Cronbach's Alpha for these items was .656. This is not considered a very strong alpha. Thus, perhaps, we should consider a new measure for itemized household labor in future research studies. Although myriad limitations exist, I believe the current study will act as a catalyst for future work to examine the complex relationships that may exist between older married American men and women.

Directions for Future Research

I believe this study paves the way for future research on sexual frequency and sexual satisfaction. Future research should focus on younger and older adults, and, perhaps, include a comparison between the two age groups. In addition, a qualitative study on housework, perceived fairness, sexual frequency, and sexual satisfaction would be beneficial. Understanding

the micro-level social processes that take place in marriages would be useful and contribute to existing literature. Although I included weekly housework hours and perceptions of fairness of housework in my regression models, the National Survey of Families and Households cannot tell us about the more qualitative aspects of older Americans' sexual relationships. We need more qualitative research in this area. Social scientists need to ask older married Americans about their sexual relationships, about the factors that affect those relationships. Although health, religiosity, weekly housework hours, and perceived fairness of housework sometimes predicted the sexual frequency and sexual satisfaction of older married Americans, what other variables, not included in my analyses, have a significant effect?

In addition, I believe that it would be beneficial to explore these analyses with much more recent data. Unfortunately, the data used for these analyses were somewhat outdated. Although approved by my dissertation committee, there were qualms concerning the relevancy and applicability of the data used for this dissertation (Wave 3 of the National Survey of Families and Households). Ultimately it was decided that because the National Survey of Families and Households was the only dataset that existed that contained every variable I needed for my analyses, that it was an acceptable data source to utilize. However, exploring data from the past five, or even ten, years and comparing the results to my own, could be useful in explaining relationships and addressing the persistent gaps in the literature.

I also believe it would be useful to explore the sexual relationships of older Americans from a variety of demographic and social groups. For instance, the older married couples in my sample identified as heterosexual. Exploring the division of household labor patterns and sexual relationships of older same-sex couples would be both interesting and enlightening. Especially considering the effects of traditional gendered divisions of labor. Also, exploring these

relationships among different racial and ethnic groups could help us understand racial differences and sexual relationships among older married Americans.

Most importantly, we need research that helps to answer the key questions uncovered from my research study. First, why do no gender differences present themselves when considering older Americans' sexual frequency and sexual satisfaction? I attempted to address this question throughout this dissertation, but further analyses need to be conducted to shed more definitive answers on this query. Also, why do results differ so much for sexual frequency as compared to sexual satisfaction? Again, I attempted to explain the difference, but future research is needed. Lastly, why does perceived fairness of household labor seem to matter more to older married Americans, as compared to actual time spent on housework? Future researchers need to explore these questions in greater detail.

Conclusion

It is apparent that sexual relationships are deeply understudied among midlife to older Americans, offering an opportunity for future research that uses a more complex and detailed analytical approach. The findings from this dissertation indicated that sexual relationship among older adults are complex and ever-changing. General implications of my research suggested that because of the difference of gender roles in the household, who contributes to the household labor and how much one contributes matter. Therefore, it may remain for other researchers to investigate both the consequences of the division of household labor for married older individuals and the multitude of ways in which perceived fairness surrounding household labor plays a role in affecting their sexual relationships. This should be done in hopes that both partners in a marriage experience satisfaction with their sex life during a time of high social isolation and increases in health issues after the transition to old age.

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APPENDIX A: TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1. Measures of the Weekly Housework Hours and Descriptive Statistics					
<i>Variable description</i>	<i>Question wording</i>	<i>Wives' Report</i>		<i>Husbands' Report</i>	
		<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Preparing meals	How many hours per week do YOU, YOURSELF, normally spend PREPARING MEALS?	8.67	6.57	3.31	4.23
Washing dishes	How many hours per week do YOU, YOURSELF, normally spend WASHING DISHES AND CLEANING UP AFTER MEALS?	5.89	6.22	2.76	3.10
Cleaning house	How many hours per week do YOU, YOURSELF, normally spend CLEANING HOUSE?	7.47	7.67	2.38	3.32
Outdoor tasks	How many hours per week do YOU, YOURSELF, normally spend on OUTDOOR AND OTHER HOUSEHOLD MAINTENANCE TASKS SUCH AS LAWN AND YARD WORK, HOUSEHOLD REPAIR, OR PAINTING?	2.77	4.77	6.75	7.88
Shopping	How many hours per week do YOU, YOURSELF, normally spend SHOPPING FOR GROCERIES AND OTHER HOUSEHOLD GOODS?	2.99	2.79	1.97	2.48
Washing and ironing	How many hours per week do YOU, YOURSELF, normally spend WASHING, IRONING, AND MENDING CLOTHING?	4.21	3.78	0.90	1.67
Paying bills	How many hours per week do YOU, YOURSELF, normally spend PAYING BILLS AND KEEPING FINANCIAL RECORDS?	1.67	2.26	1.60	2.56
Auto maintenance	How many hours per week do YOU, YOURSELF, normally spend on AUTOMOBILE MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR?	0.26	1.21	1.22	2.70
Driving	How many hours per week do YOU, YOURSELF, normally spend DRIVING OTHER HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS TO WORK, SCHOOL, OR OTHER ACTIVITIES?	1.48	4.13	1.03	2.33